MODERN INDIAN
POLITICAL THOUGHT
VI SEMESTER
CORE COURSE
POL6 B01
B.A. POLITICAL SCIENCE
(2019 Admission onwards)

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VI Semester

Core Course (POL6 B01)

B.A. POLITICAL SCIENCE

MODERN INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

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INDEX

Module I: Indian Renaissance


Module II: Nationalism and Religion


Module III: Contributions of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru


Module IV: Socialist Thinkers


Module V: Social Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indian Renaissance</td>
<td>5 –35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nationalism and Religion – V.D. Savarkar</td>
<td>36 – 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Contributions of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru</td>
<td>59 – 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Socialist Thinkers</td>
<td>94 – 109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>110 - 138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MODULE I
INDIAN RENAISSANCE

Resurgence or Renaissance of modern Asia is one of the most significant phenomena of world history during the last two hundred years. Since the middle of the 19th century the mind and soul of Asia have definitely awakened. The intellectual renaissance of India has been a great casual factor in the rise of modern Indian nationalism. The awakening of the Indian spirit manifested its relativism first in the realms of philosophy, religion and culture and political self-consciousness came as an inevitable consequence. The European Renaissance was mainly intellectual and aesthetic. But the renaissance in India was characterized primarily by moral and spiritual aspirations. Revivalism was far more dominant in the Indian Renaissance. Some of the leaders of the Indian Renaissance movement advocated a deliberate modeling and molding of the present life on the basis of the past scriptures like the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and Gita.

One of the greatest forces in the making of renaissance in India is the Brahma Samaj founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The Brahma Samaj has done considerable cultural, humanitarian and social work in north India during the mid-19th century. The Brahma Samaj is based on a synthesis of stern monotheism, intellectual rationalism, the monism of the Upanishad and the religious principles of Christianity. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of the earliest scholars of comparative religions. In his writings and deeds, Roy launched a vigorous attack on the archaic social principles and more dividing Indian along caste and religious cleavages. For him, the priority was to create a society free from decadent feudal values that stood in the way of
attaining the goal of liberty, equality and fraternity. Arya Samaj, founded by Dayananda Saraswathi, has been another powerful religious and social movement successfully fought for Indian renaissance.

Arya Samaj has done a great service to Indian nationalism especially in Punjab. It created a new progressive and militant spirit among the Hindus. Another movement which has championed Hinduism in all its comprehensiveness was started by Swami Vivekananda, the foremost disciple of Ramakrishna. Vivekananda was a great intellectual and orator and had a remarkable insight both in the Vedanta scriptures and European philosophy. His historic role at the Chicago parliament in 1893 prepared the ground for the propagation of Hinduism in America and Europe. The renaissance in Northern India and southern India was mainly spiritual and religious in character.

RAJARAM MOHAN ROY (1772-1833)

Raja Ram Mohan Roy stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch which spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and science and between despotism and democracy. He was the first cosmopolitan religious thinker and father of modern India. Roy was deeply imbued with the culture of the west and East, and was a scholar and reformer. He was a nationalist but had profound contempt for narrow-minded nationalism. In religion, Ram Mohan pointed to a universal inner spiritual synthesis, far from the external forms represented through meaningless practice. In pursuit of these religious objectives, Ram Mohan thought of a concerted action by a band of true reformers. His crusade against Hindu modes of worship roused in the orthodox and fanatical reaction against the reformer.
Reformist propaganda was initiated through books, tracts, articles and translations from the Upanishads. Jeremy Bentham saluted him as “an admired and beloved fellow worker in the cause of humanity.”

Ram Mohan Roy was born in 1774 in the district of Hoogly in Bengal. Born in a notable Brahmin family in an era of orthodoxy, he grew up amid social evils and religious prejudices. At the age of nine, he had to marry two times, and subsequently one more, because it was impossible for him to escape the privilege of Kulinism. As a grown-up man he saw the burning of his brother’s wife as part of sati system, a sight that shocked his conscience. A prisoner of society and religion, he nevertheless enjoyed certain advantages which even the Dark Age provided. Ram Mohan’s predecessors had held high offices under the Nawabs of Bengal. Because of the family status, he was sent to Patna to study Persian and Arabic. From his knowledge of Persian and Arabic he understood the essence of the Koran Sufi Philosophy; from Sanskrit, the deeper philosophies of the Hindu Upanishads. The inner meaning of Hinduism and Islam drew him to monotheism and created an aversion in him towards idolatry. With profound knowledge of Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and English and with a deeper understanding of the philosophies of Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity he became a rare intellectual of his time. He was in search of rationalism and felt resentful towards the prevailing socio-religious customs around him.

Ram Mohan’s vision was broad enough to encompass various aspects of human life. His movement covered religious, social, economic, educational, political and national issues. A Brahmin himself, he peeped into the inner substance of Brahminical Hinduism to discover the existence of one omnipotent being. The ideal of monotheism was itself a supreme force in Hinduism, as it was in Islam
and Christianity. Roy was highly critical of the outer forms of Hinduism, notably, polytheism, worship of images, ritualistic ceremonies, and suspirations rites. Belief in one Almighty god is the fundamental principles of every religion, he said. He established his theories from the Vedanta, the Bible and Koran.

SOCIAL REFORMS

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is regarded as the father of Modern India and Indian renaissance. He was a social reformer par excellence. Most of the reform movements that have revolutionized Hindu society can be traced to his great son of India. He was himself the victim of social evils, and throughout his life he worked for the social and religious uplift of his community. His role in doing away with the evil practice of sati among the orthodox Brahmins was historical. By founding Brahma Samaj, Roy sought to articulate his belief in the Islamic notion of one God’ in his conceptualization, social reform should precede political reform, for the former laid the foundation for liberty in the political sense. Given his priority, Roy did not appear to have paid adequate attention to his political ideas.

Abolition of Sati and the formation of Brahma Samaj

As a crusader against social evils and unscientific and unhealthy practices prevalent in the traditional caste ridden Hindu society, Mohan Roy formed a number of social organisations in North India. In 1816, he started a spiritual society known as ‘Atmiya Sabha’ for religious and social purposes which were later extended to other fields of activity. Atmiya Sabha was sort of discussion club for scholars of religion and philosophy at other fields of activity. In 1818, he began his celebrated crusade for the abolition of sati, and on December 4, 1829, Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor General of India made Sati illegal by
Regulation XVII. Thus the year 1829 may be taken as an important landmark in the social history of India. Ram Mohan Roy certainly won great renown by his crusade to free Hindu women from the dark practice of sati. It must however be noted that along with the European Sanskriti, H.H Wilson, Ram Mohan was opposed to any legal enactment for the immediate suppression of sati. He favoured that the practice ‘might be suppressed quietly and unobserved by increasing the difficulties and by the indirect agency of the police.

The most important event which brought fame to Ram Mohan Roy was the establishment of the Brahma Sabha on 20th August 1928 which became famous as the Brahmo Samaj in 1830. After the failure of the British India Unitarian Association (1827), the followers of Ram Mohan felt the urgent necessity of establishing an institution solely devoted to Unitarian and monotheistic worship. Ram Mohan did not contemplate the Brahma Samaj as an institution of a new religious sect. He wanted the monotheists of all religions to use the premises of the Sabah as their own. He also wished this institution to be a meeting ground the people of all religious denominations who believed in one God, who is formless, eternal unsearchable and immutable. He told one of his friends that after his death the Hindus would claim as their own, the Muslims would do the same, and as also the Christians, but he belonged to no sect as he was the devotee of universal religion. The Samaj stood for the ‘worship and adoration of the eternal unsearchable and Immutable Being-who is the author and preserver of the universe but not under or by any other designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular Being or Beings by any man or set of men whatsoever’. It admitted no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of everything’. It further stood for the promotion of charity,
morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and the strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds.

Thus Ram Mohan began the first great religious movement of the 19th century since religion was the dominating force in Indian society, reform of religion meant reform of society. The Brahma Samaj was thus a socio-religious reform movement. Ram Mohan raised his voice against the social abuses which rendered in calculable harm to Indian society. The caste system appeared to him as the greatest obstacle to national unity. Ram Mohan proceeded even beyond the frontiers of caste. He adopted a Muslim boy and gave the most daring example of human equality. Besides caste, the traditional Hindu society suffered from other social evils, such as, polygamy, degradation of women, untouchability, and, above all, the horrible sati system. Ram Mohan’s endeavour to rouse opinion against these customs marked the beginning of an era of social change. If ultimately the evil practice of sati system was abolished, it was as much due to Ram Mohan as to the Governor General William Bentinck in whose time it was affected.

The principles and ideas of Brahma Samaj gradually spread for beyond Bengal and created an atmosphere of liberalism, rationalism and modernity which greatly influenced Indian thought. As Max Muller has rightly pointed out, ‘If there is ever to be a new religion in India, it will, I believe, owe its very life-blood to the large heart of Ram Mohan Roy and his worthy disciples Debendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen.’ But Max Muller’s prophecy could not be fulfilled, because the condition attached to it—the emergence of a new religion in India was impossible of realization. Hinduism proved strong enough to counteract the growing influence of Brahmanism as it had done in the case of Buddhism.
The philosophy of Brahma Samaj left its decisive influence on the Indian thought. The death of Ram Mohan (1933) was no doubt a great tragedy for the Brahma Samaj since he was the centre of the entire movement. But the mission of the master was taken up by other daring souls. From the beginning, the movement was confined to the intellectually advanced and educationally enlightened minds who believed in reforms. It was not their aim to make it a mass movement, though the purpose was to educate the masses. It is beyond dispute that the legacies of Ram Mohan could not die after him as they were inconsonance with the requirements of the time.

**VIEWS ON LIBERTY AND RIGHTS**

Like Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu, Ram Mohan Roy had a passionate attachment to the concept of liberty. He urged the necessity of personal freedom. Liberty is a priceless possession of the human being and, hence, Ram Mohan was a champion of personal freedom. But liberty is also needed for the nation. Roy had a passion for liberty and equality, yet he showed his respect for property and believed in the freedom of contract. Indeed, he pleaded for state intervention in suppressing evil practices in society and held that it was the duty of the state to protect tenants against the oppression of the landlords;

Like John Locke, Thomas Paine and Hugo Grotius, Roy accepted the immutable sanctity of natural rights. He believed not only in the natural rights of life, liberty, and pursuit of property, but also championed the moral rights of the individual. His theory of natural rights, however, was constructed in the prevailing Indian conditions. Thus although an exponent of the theory of Natural Rights and freedom, he also advocated state legislation for social reform and educational reconstruction. As a champion of freedom
and democratic rights and a believer in parliamentary democracy, Roy whole-heartedly supported the reform Bill agitation in England. In his opinion, the struggle between the reformers and anti-reformers was nothing but a struggle between liberty and tyranny throughout the world, between justice and injustice and between right and wrong. It should be remembered that Ram Mohan Roy championed the struggle for freedom and democratic rights, not for Indians alone but for the entire human beings in the world.

Ram Mohan Roy had a keen appreciation of the uncompromising freedom of the creative spirit. He wanted the people of India to develop a sense of self confidence, and was a crusader against unreason and superstition. He admired the English people who not only enjoyed civil and political liberty but was interested in promoting freedom, social happiness and rationalism in the areas where their influence extended. Bipin Chandra Pal while assessing the contribution of Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Indian freedom wrote: Raja was the first to deliver the message of political freedom to India. He so keenly felt the loss of this freedom by his people that even as a boy, yet within his teens, he left his country and travelled to Tibet, because he found it difficult to tolerate the domination of his country by another nation, though, subsequently, with close acquaintance with culture and character of the British people, who seemed to him to have been more intelligent more steady and moderate in their conduct …’Similarly, Raja Ram Mohan Roy felt quite happy to hear the news of the introduction of constitutional government in Portugal. He supported the struggle for freedom of the Greeks against the Turks. Again, Roy was opposed to the British occupation of Ireland. He collected funds for the relief of the famine stricken people of Ireland.
FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of the earliest champions of the freedom of the press. Like Milton and other scholars who fought for freedom of press, Roy championed the concept of freedom of written expression. Along with Dwarakanath Tagore, Harchandra Gosh, Gouri Charan Banerjee, Ram Mohan had written a petition in 1823, addressed to the Supreme Court, for the freedom of the press. When the Petition was rejected, and appeal was made to the king in council. The appeal contained Ram Mohan’s reflections on the governmental mechanism of the day. It stated men in power hostile to the liberty of the press, which is a disagreeable. Check upon their conduct, when unable to discover any real evil arising from its existence; have attempted to make the world imagine that it might, in some possible contingency afford the means of combination against the government, but not to mention that extraordinary emergencies would warrant measures which in ordinary times are totally unjustifiable. Your majesty in well aware that a free press has never yet caused any revolution in any part of world, because, while men can early by represent their grievances arising from the conduct of the local authorities to the supreme Government,..................’ He strongly believed that not only would the freedom of press provide a device for ventilation of grievances it would also enable the government to adopt steps for their redressal before they caused damage to the administration.

Roy recognized and appreciated British rule in India. Although he despised colonialism, he appeared to have endorsed the British rule presumably, because of its historical role in combating the prevalent feudal forces. Not only was the British rule superior to the erstwhile feudal rulers, it would also contribute to different India by injecting
the values it represented. The continued British rule, he further added, would eventually lead to the establishment of democratic institutions as in Great Britiain. Like any other liberals, Roy also felt that the uncritical acceptance of British liberal values was probably the best possible means of creating democratic institutions in India. He appreciated the British rule as a boon in disguise’ because it would eventually transplant democratize governance in India.

HUMANISM AND UNIVERSAL RELIGION

Being a champion of freedom and rights, Ram Mohan was a great humanist and believed in co-operation, tolerance and fellowship. Roy established the ethical concept of universal love on the basis of the doctrine of ethical personality of God. He was also the exponent of cosmopolitanism and stood for brotherhood and independence. He had begun with the study of comparative religion but later come to visualize the necessity of a universal religion. Finally, he formulated the scheme of a fundamental spiritual synthesis stressing the unity of religious experience based on the worship of a monotheistic God. Thus he carried forward the traditions of social and spiritual synthesis stressed by Guru Nanak, Kabir and other saints. Roy believed in universalism and regarded humanity as one family with the different nations and tribes as its branches. In his famous letter written to the French Foreign Minister in 1832, he suggested the establishment of a ‘Congress’ for the settlement of commercial and political disputes. He was a humanitarian and universalist, and like David Hume he subscribed to the doctrine of universal sympathy. Jeremy Bentham admired Ram Mohan’s Universalism and humanitarianism, and in a letter to him, he said: ‘……Your works are made known to me by a book in which I read a style which but for the name of the Hindu I should certainly have as cribbed to the pen of a superiority
educated and instructed Englishman., Ram Mohan Roy advocated liberal humanitarian nationalism. Emancipation of man from the bondage for ignorance, and social tyranny, his freedom of thought and conscience and his equality with other fellow men were considered as the fundamentals of liberalism. Such free and emancipated individuals, with feeling towards their mother land, could create national unity. It was through a spiritual and mental revival that Ram Mohan wanted to regenerate the Indian people and unite them into a national fraternity.

An Assessment

Ram Mohan Roy was a multifaceted personality with foresight and vision. He was bold, sincere and honest and had the courage to preach his convictions. He was interested in the emancipation and empowerment of women and was earliest feminist in modern India who revolted against the subject of women and preached against the modern encroachments on the ancient rights of Hindu females. He was also a model social reformer who was highly a critical of the prevailing social evils in the traditional Hindu society. He was a prophet of universalism, a keen and ardent champion of liberty in all its phases and apolitical agitator for the freedom of the press and the right of the tenants. He has been called the father of modern India, the first earnest minded investigator of the science of comparative religion and the harbinger of the idea of universal humanism. He stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future.

JYOTHIRAO PHULE (1827-1890)

Jyothirao Phule was an Indian social activist, thinker, anti-caste social reformer and writer from Maharashtra. He is also known as Jyotiba Phule. Phule was born on 11th April, 1827 in present-day Maharashtra
and belonged to the Mali caste of gardeners and vegetable farmers. In 1841, he was enrolled at the Scottish Missionary High School (Pune), where he completed education. His ideology was based on liberty; egalitarianism and socialism. Phule was influenced by Thomas Paine’s book titled The Rights of Man and believed that the only solution to combat the social evils was the enlightenment of women and members of the lower castes. His major publications are Tritiya Ratna (1855); Powada: Chatrapati Shivajiraje Bhosle Yancha (1869); Gulamgiri (1873), Shetkarayacha Aasud (1881). Phule along with his followers formed Satyashodhak Samaj in 1873 which meant ‘Seekers of Truth’ in order to attain equal social and economic benefits for the lower castes in Maharashtra. He was appointed commissioner to the Poona municipality and served in the position until 1883. He was bestowed with the title of Mahatma on 11th May, 1888 by a Maharashtrian social activist Vithalrao Krishnaji Vandekar. In 1848, he taught his wife, Savitribai, how to read and write, after which the couple opened the first indigenously run school for girls in Pune where they both taught. He was a believer in gender equality and he exemplified his beliefs by involving his wife in all his social reform activities.

By 1852, the Phule had established three schools but all of them had shut by 1858 due to the shortage of funds after the Revolt of 1857. Jyotiba realized the pathetic conditions of widows and established an ashram for young widows and eventually became an advocate of the idea of Widow Remarriage. Jyotirao attacked the orthodox Brahmins and other upper castes and termed them as hypocrites. In 1868, Jyotirao constructed a common bathing tank outside his house to exhibit his embracing attitude towards all human beings and wished to dine with everyone, regardless of their caste. He started awareness campaigns
that ultimately inspired the likes of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, stalwarts who undertook major initiatives against caste discrimination later. It is believed by many that it was Phule who first used the term ‘Dalit’ for the depiction of oppressed masses often placed outside the ‘varna system’. He worked for abolishment of untouchability and caste system in Maharashtra.

CASTE SLAVERY

According to Phule, the Indian society was based on inequality between man and man and exploitation of ignorant masses by the cunning Brahmins. Phule believed that God who is the creator of the Universe has created all men and women free and capable of enjoying their rights. The creator has created all men and women as the custodians of all human rights so that a man or a group of men should not suppress an individual. The Maker has bestowed upon all men and women religious and political liberty. Therefore, no one should look down upon anyone's religious faith or political opinion. Every individual has a right to property. The Maker, Phule thought, has given all human beings the liberty of thought and expression. But the thought or opinion one is expressing should not be harmful to anybody. The creator has made all men and women capable of claiming a position in civil service or municipal administration according to their ability. No one should encroach upon the equal liberty of other human beings. Phule believed that all men and women are entitled to enjoy all the things the Maker has created. All men and women are equal before law. Phule held that the magistrates and judges of the court of law should be impartial in their judgements. Phule developed a critique of Indian society in the light of these fundamental principles.
Indian society was founded on the Varna system. Phule challenged the view that it was god-ordained. He held that this claim was made to deceive the lower Varnas. Since this claim was made by the religious texts of the Hindus, he decided, to expose the falsehood of these texts. Phule depended upon the contemporary theories and his own creativity to interpret these texts. Accordingly, he believed that Brahmins who were known as Aryans descended upon the plains of North India few thousand years back, possibly from Iran. They came as conquerors and defeated the original inhabitants of this land. Under the direction of the leaders such as Brahma and Parshuram, Brahmins fought protracted wars against the original inhabitants. They initially settled on the banks of the Ganges and later on spread-out over the other parts of the country. In order to keep a better hold over the masses, they devised the mythology, the Varna and caste system and also the code of cruel and inhuman laws. They founded a system of priest craft which gave the Brahmin a prominence in all rituals.

The caste system was a creation of cunning Brahmins. The highest rights and privileges were given to the Brahmins whereas Shudras and Atishudras (untouchables) were regarded with hatred and contempt. Even the commonest rights of humanity were denied to them. Their touch or even their shadow was considered as pollution. Phule reinterpreted the religious text of the Hindus to show how Aryans had conquered the original inhabitants. The nine avatars of Vishnu were seen by him as various stages of Aryan conquest. From those days, the Brahmins have enslaved the Shudras and Atishudras. For generations they have carried the chains of slavery of bondage. A number of Brahmin writers like Manu have added from time to time to the existing legends which enslave the minds of the masses. Phule compared the system of slavery fabricated by the
Brahmins with slavery in America and pointed out that Shudras had to suffer greater hardships and oppression than the blacks. He thought that this system of selfish superstition and bigotry was responsible for the stagnation and all the evils from which India was suffering for centuries.

After narrating the story of Brahmin domination in the past, Phule tells us how in his times things had not changed much except for advent of the enlightened rule of Britain. The Brahmin continued to exploit the Shudra from his birth to death. Under the guise of religion, the Brahmin intervened and meddled in each and everything the Shudra did. A Brahmin tried to exploit him not only in his capacity as a priest, but did so in a number of other ways also. Due to his higher education, he had monopolized all the positions in the administration, judiciary, social, religious and political organisations. In a town or village, the Brahmin was all in all. He was the master and the ruler. The Patel of the village had become a nonentity. Instead the Brahmin village accountant known as Kulkarni had acquired power in the village. He was the temporal and spiritual adviser of the people, a money-lender and a general referee in all matters. Same was the case at Tehsil level where a Tehsildar used to harass to illiterate masses.

Phule tells us that the story holds good at all levels of administration and in judiciary as well as various departments of the government. The Brahmin bureaucrats used to exploit the poor and ignorant masses in each and every case by misguiding the British superiors. It is essential at this stage to note that Phule who belonged to the gardner caste - Shudra caste -was concerned about not only Shudras but also Atishudras, i.e. the untouchables also. He advocated that these lower castes and untouchables should organise against the dominance of the Brahmins and strive for an egalitarian society. It is not, therefore, surprising that Dr.
Ambedkar whose ideas you are going to study of later regarded Phule as his Guru.

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (1863-1902)**

The process of Renaissance in Hinduism started with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and it was further developed by the Arya Samaj of Swami Dayanad Saraswthi, the Prarthana Samaj and the Satyashodhak Samaj of Jotiba Phule. Sri Ramakrishna Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda, played a key role in renaissance and reformation of Hindu society. There was a new interpretation of Vedanta philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo Gosh were two major interpreters of Neo-Vedanta philosophy. They were of the opinion that Neo-Vedanta philosophy would increase cultural strength of Hinduism and pave the way for the growth of nationalism in modern India. They interpreted Indian nationalism in the contest of reformation and rejuvenation of Hinduism.

Swami Vivekananda, whose real name was Narendranath Dutta, was born in an aristocratic Kshatriya family of Calcutta on the 20th January, 1863. He was a seer, an illumined soul, very much different from the ordinary run of mankind. His mind was ominous, he had that supreme knowledge of which the Gita speaks and which results from the realization of oneness with the Supreme Being. Besides, he had within himself a fountain of energy to carry his message not only to the different parts of India but to the western countries also. Once Sri Ramakrishna said about his young disciple Narendra, who is known to the world as Swami Vivekananda ‘He is not a pond, he is a reservoir. He is not a pitcher or a jug, he is a veritable barrel…He is not an ordinary sixteen -petalled lotus, he is a glorious lotus with a thousand petal.’ This beautiful summing up of Vivekananda personality suggests about his strength, vigor and endurance.
The world knows him as gigantic that employed his will power and energy to bring about a regeneration of India. He was a pilgrim of the city of God and a warrior for the cause of the suppressed and oppressed all over the world. His personality was notable for its comprehensiveness and deep sensitiveness to the evils prevalent in the socio-economic and moral structure of the country. Due to his heroic mood and sometimes even domineering character, Swami Vivekanand was called, the ‘Hindu Napoleon’.

Vivekananda came under the influence of rationalist thought of his time. He was much impressed by European science, liberalism and democratic pattern of western society as expressed in political and sociological literature. The sources of the philosophy of Vivekananda are three fold. First, the great Vedic and vedantic tradition. Vedantic philosophy of Sankaracharaya influenced a lot to the social philosophy of Vivekananda. Vivekananda was an apostle of the Advaita Vedanta and he belongs to the tradition of the commentators on the Advaita system. He studied the ideas and principles of J. S. Mill, the philosphers of French Revolution, Kant and Hegel. He even entered into correspondence with Herbert Spencer and offered criticism of some of his ideas.

Secondly, a powerful source of Vivekanand’s philosophy was his contact with Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1836–1886), one of the greatest saints and mystics of modern India. While Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had preached his sermons in a style of prophetic simplicity and clarity, Vivekananda was the philosopher combined with the religious teacher. Hence he preached some of these same truths in more philosophical languages and used modern logical terminology. Thirdly, a rich source of Vivekananda’s philosophy was his own experience of life. He traversed the wide world and to the interpretation of his experiences.
Ramakrishna’s death in August, 1886 brought a change in Vivekananda’s life. After the death of his master, he embarked upon extensive travels from the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari) with an urge to spread the message of Ramakrishna and see the natural beauty of Motherland and visited all the important centers of Indian culture. Through his travels he not only saw India’s cultural wealth, the strength of her traditions, but they also saw her socio-economic backwardness, evils of caste system and her mental inertia into which she had fallen.

Swami Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission to serve the people. He wanted to find a new path of progress for Hinduism because he was not happy with the reform movements as they were mere imitations of the western world. He had three alternatives before him. First, to follow the path shown by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and join Brahma Samaj. Secondly, to follow the path of total renunciation and go to Himalayas to attain the goal of liberation. Thirdly, to follow the path of service to the society and create social awakening in the minds of people about modernization of the Indian society. Swami Vivekananda chose the third path and told the Indians to see Narayana (God) in the form of a poor beggar dying of starvation. Thus for Vivekananda the Ramakrishna Mission should stand for selfless service of the people, ceaseless efforts to find truth and thereby for reawakening of the spirit of India. During Vivekananda’s life time and after his death, Sri.Ramakrishna Mission played a key role in the renaissance of Hinduism.

VIEWS OF NATIONALISM

Swami Vivekananda is considered as one of the prophets of the Indian nationalism because he tried to awaken Indian people who were lying in deep slumber. He wanted to see the emergence of a strong and self-confident
India which would give the message of the Vedanta to the world. He strongly believed that the Indians should be proud of their rosy history, tradition, culture and religion and should try their level best to reform them. The awakening of the spirit of India was the goal for young people. Hence he advised them to ‘arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached’

Vivekananda believed that there is one all dominating principle manifesting itself in the life of each nation. According to him, religion had been the guiding principle in India’s history. He maintained thus: In each nation as in music there is main note, a central theme, upon which all others turn. Each nation has a theme: everything else is secondary. India’s theme is religion. Social reform and everything else are secondary’. He worked to build the foundations of a religious theory of nationalism which was later advocated by Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh. Vivekananda was the passionate advocate of the religious theory of nationalism because religion, according to him, had to be made the backbone of the national life. He believed that the future greatness of the nation could be built only on the foundations of its past greatness.

Vivekananda was highly critical of the British rule in India because he held that due to their rule Indians lost confidence, famine engulfed the land, farmers and artisans were reduced to poverty and deprived. The British governments, East India Company etc., were exploiting Indians in all spheres of socio-economic activity. Due to discriminatory and exploitative economic policies of the British government, Indian’s could not develop their natural resources and raw materials.

According to Vivekananda, the national regeneration of India would begin when people became fearless and
started demanding their rights. He asked the Indians to develop solidarity and oneness of the spirit by the eradication of social evils, superstitions and evils of caste system. He was of the opinion that the evils of caste system divided the Indian society into classes and created the feeling of inferiority and superiority among them. As a prophet of Indian nationalism, Vivekananda held that though there was a variety for languages, cultures and religions in India, there existed a common ground between Indian people. For the Indians religion was unifying force as the spirituality was Blood in the life of India.

Vivekananda was an ardent patriot and had tremendous love for the country. He was the embodiment of emotional patriotism. He had established almost a sense of identity- consciousness with the country, its peoples and its historic ideals’. According to him, it was the duty of the educated Indians to make its knowledge available to the people in their oneness and solidarity. He exhorted Indians not to get involved in the divisive issue of race and language and imbibe the spirit of unity. He said that Hindus should not blame Muslims for their numerous invasions because the Muslim conquest came as a salvation to the downtrodden masses in India. National unity, according to him, could not be fostered by caste conflict but it would be secured by raising the lower to the level of higher classes and not by bringing the upper to the lower level. For the growth of national spirit in India, independence of mind was necessary. Indians should be proud of their motherland and declare that all Indians, despite their caste, linguistic and religious differences, are brothers.

The main component of Vivekananda concept of nationalism is follows.
1) There was unity and oneness of the Indian people despite their outward diversity.

2) It was necessary to remove the evils of caste system in order to inculcate the spirit of social solidarity.

3) There was similarity in the teachings of different religions and India consisted of all religious communities.

4) National spirit in India could be developed by young people by devoting their life to social service and national awakening.

**VIEWS ON DEMOCRACY**

Though Vivekananda Swami had no interest in politics yet he threw light on some aspects of political theory. He opposed autocracy and monarchy because in these systems the ruler grabs the power. The power resides concentrated in the hands of a single person. Oppression and tyranny are the characteristics of these systems. Swami advocated for democracy. He considered it as the best form of the government. In this rule people remain independent. Under this system people get the opportunity to grow which propels the people to proceed on the path of progress.

Swami had very high respect for the revolutionary slogan of French revolution “Liberty, equality and fraternity.” In his opinion, liberty means a system of positive opportunity and rights but it does not mean the absence of obstacles in the path of misappropriation of wealth and power. He wanted to provide individual the right to use his own body, intelligence or wealth freely without doing any harm to others in the society. He strongly favoured individual liberty. Vivekananda said that an individual should be granted utmost liberty for his free and independent growth. He also advocated that the same opportunity should
be given to all the members of the society for obtaining wealth, education and knowledge. According to him equality means absence of all special privileges. He said, “No privilege for anyone, equal exchange for all and everyone will work for his own salvation.”

Vivekananda connected freedom and equality with India’s ancient Vedantic spirituality and the philosophy of Advaita, which proclaims the divinity and solidarity of all human being. It shows his urge to replicate democratic principles in spiritual life. He stated, “All beings great or small, are equally manifestations of God. Difference is only in manifestations” In the light of the spirituality, Swami showed that there is no place for any special privileges for any group or section of the society.

He wanted to remove inequality form both social and economic field. Swami did not fail to observe that how capitalism leads to exploitation as well as ferocious struggle for Supremacy. He was against capitalism but he was not against capitalist class. He inspired capitalist class to do something for the welfare of the country. Similar view was aired by Mahatma Gandhi.

He also wanted to destroy capitalism but not the capitalist class. He wanted to convert the heart of capitalists for the welfare of poor section. Swami did not believe in political revolution because he thought that it will bring only chaos and confusion in the country. By revolution he meant a spiritual and moral revolution which alone could bring about a fundamental change in human society. It will bring a fundamental transformation of human nature. R.K Dasgupta rightly comments that Marxian philosophy which worked behind the Russian revolution is mostly concerned with economic and material life. It has no connection with spiritual upliftment of people but Vivekananda’s view on
revolution gives it a universal significance. It will bring spiritual and moral development. Swami’s vision was to create an ideal state where there would not be any class or caste distinction. It should be combination of merits of all the different classes without any demerits. He visualized an ideal state in which the knowledge of the priest, the culture of the military, the distributive skill of commercial and the ideal of equality of the Shudras will be assimilated without their evils. Vivekananda Swami wanted to mould a state based on knowledge, culture, commercial advancement and equality which are essential for an effective democratic society. Therefore, Vivekananda was a great advocate of democracy and he wanted to awaken the young people to establish free and democratic government in India.

**An Assessment**

Swami Vivekananda was a great nationalist of India who wanted to revitalize the nation through the vitality of religion. He believed that religion constituted the ‘centre, the keynote of the whole of music of national life of India. He is regarded as the patriot and prophet of modern India. It was due to his message of courage and fearlessness that he was described as ‘tamer of souls’ and ‘cyclonic monk from India’.

**PANDITA RAMA BAI (1858-1922)**

Ramabai was born to Ananta Shastri, a liberal Brahmin Pandit, in 1858. As a child, Ramabai lived the life of a Brahmin pilgrim and travelled the Indian subcontinent with her parents and two older siblings. Her father had withdrawn to a forest area to run a residential school for Brahmin boys and to teach Sanskrit to his young wife. This was especially remarkable considering the fact that in those times women were denied even the basic right to get literate. Her unconventional upbringing facilitated the rejection of a rigid
gender-specific role unlike other girls who were forced into wifehood and motherhood at an early age, denied education and made to restrict their lives within the private domain of a joint family. After the death of her parents and sister in the mid-1870s, Ramabai along with her brother travelled throughout India until they reached Calcutta (now Kolkata). In Calcutta, Keshab Chandra Sen, the supporter of Brahmo Samaj, suggested to Ramabai that she read the Vedas and Upanishads.

This was the beginning of a new phase in her life, a period in which she grappled with several contradictions in her life that later fructified into liberal feminism. In her personal life, Ramabai ignored caste restrictions and married a man of Shudra varna (lower caste), Bepin Bihari Medhavi, an active member of the Brahmo Samaj. However, after 19 months of a happily married life, her husband died leaving her with a little daughter, Manorama. Ramabai decided to return to her native land Poona to embark upon the journey of learning from the social reformers of that time. She was readily welcomed by the leaders there.

Ramabai founded the Arya Mahila Sabha in 1881. This may be termed as the first feminist organization of India. However, Ramabai, entered the feminist discourse of those times through her first Marathi book, Stri Dharma-Niti (Morals for Women), which was published in 1882. After reaching England she became the disillusionment with elite liberalism and Brahmanical tradition began to lead her away from Hinduism. In England, she drew closer to Christianity. In 1887, she published The High Caste Hindu Women, India’s First feminist manifesto with an agenda for women’s emancipation and empowerment. Published in 1887 with the help of Women’s Christian Temperance Union, the book
turned out to be the most popular of all Ramabai’s educationist ventures. The content of this book offers a feminist critique of the Indian women’s condition. After staying for about three years in England, she went to the United States of America (USA) in 1886. Her sojourn in the USA helped her concretise her plans for opening a home for high caste Hindu widows in India by raising funds under the aegis of The Ramabai Association of Boston. In the end, she returned to India in 1889 and remained busy with activities aimed at fostering the cause of women till her death in 1922. For her social reform activities, she was conferred with the Kaiser-e-Hind gold medal in 1919 by the British government.

In February 1889, Ramabai returned to India and in March she opened a secular residential school for high-caste widows, the Sharada Sadan, in Bombay. In the meanwhile, the Indian Christian Community began objecting to the Sharada Sadan’s policy of religious neutrality. Ultimately, conversions began taking place in good numbers. Hindu widows began reading the Bible, and this led to great criticism of Ramabai’s women home. Social reformers slowly dissociated themselves and those few who were the members of the governing body of this house, left by their own choice. Press began calling Sadan, a ‘Widows mission house’.

In the midst of all this, bubonic plague epidemic of the late 1890s in Western India made Ramabai to shift her Sharada Sadan from Pune to Kedgaon. Over two thousand women took shelter in this newly constituted, Mukti Mission. It began consisting of not only Hindu widows but also famine victims, sexually assaulted women, blind and the old women all kept in separate sections. This section came to be known as the Kripa such as (Home of Mercy). In this Mukti Sadan, girls did everything in it—from weaving, dairy
farming, cooking, gardening, and farming to running a printing press.

In 1908, Ramabai embarked on her ambitious task of translating the Bible into the Marathi language so that the Maharashtrian audience could understand the teachings of Christianity. During her last days, Ramabai’s newsletter titled, Mukti Prayer Bell, contained writings showing increasing frustration and resentment.

EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

The reform movements of those times focused on the caste and gender issues. Gender issues had become the preoccupation of the upper castes, whose women were the most oppressed. In Poona, Ramabai, working towards the aim of gender reform, formed the Arya Mahila Sabha in 1882, and established branches throughout the Mumbai region. The object of this institution was to promote education among native women and discouragement of child marriage. Ramabai urged women to free themselves from the tyranny of Hinduism. She made use of lectures and writing as a medium to bring about change in the lives of women in India. The earliest available text from her literary output was her Sanskrit poem ‘Lamentation of Divine Language’, submitted to the Oriental Conference at Berlin in 1881, highlighting the violence of colonialism.

It was during these young days that Ramabai’s political thoughts started getting firmly grounded and expressed. She connected the teachings of the ancient literature with the inferior status of women in society. The caste system that was prevalent in the society during those times did not have any impact on the progressive thinking of Ramabai. She firmly believed that in ancient times people were assigned to the four castes according to their work and merit and not on the basis of their birth. It was much later
that caste system became identified with birth and turned discriminatory. These caste-based differences coupled with gender-based differences deeply affected the Indian women. Ramabai understood that the patriarchal ideology of the society placed women within the domestic sphere as a wife/mother/housewife according to her sexual, reproductive and home-making roles. In this caste-ridden, patriarchal society, the Highest status for a woman was that of a Saubhagyavati (or blessed woman whose husband was alive) and a mother of sons, rather than daughters. A woman only with daughters or one without children had a lower status and lived under the fear of being deserted by her husband. A widow had the lowest status, especially a child widow or one without children. A widow had to wear a plain borderless sari, no ornaments and had to shave her head which had to be carefully covered. A widow was expected to sleep on floor, spend time in ritual acts and eat little food. Pandita Ramabai considered women of lower castes to be much better off in terms of self-reliance and freedom since they are obliged to depend upon themselves. As a suggestion to improve the condition of these widows, Pandita suggested three areas where focus had to be made: self-reliance, education and native women teachers.

Ramabai’s study of Upanishads, Manusmriti and the Vedas made her realize how the caste system, the Hindu Shastras, society and social customs helped patriarchy to not only thrive but to grow larger. She thought that the low account of women’s nature and character depicted in Manusmriti was, to a large extent, responsible for their seclusion and suppression. Manu’s laws deprived women of the house of all their freedom. Ramabai soon realized that all sacred books in Sanskrit literature shared hateful sentiments about women. Child marriage, polygamy and enforced widowhood thus turned out to be the great social evils in
India which were responsible for the pathetic condition of Indian women and which needed to be changed. It was in this context that Ramabai also shared her views on religion which according to her had two distinct natures in the Hindu law: the masculine and the feminine. Both these kinds had their own peculiar duties, privileges and honors. For women, it was believed to be her duty to look upon her husband as God, to always obey him and seek salvation only through him.

Pandita’s most popular academic venture ‘The High Caste Hindu Women’ contained a critical account of miseries that were faced by girls and women in the domain of a high-caste Hindu joint family system. Daughters were taught to do all household works right at the tender age of 9–10 so that they get well trained to adjust to the lives of young married women. They get married off without getting a chance to express their opinions. Women in these families were not permitted to read the sacred scriptures and were found fit only for housekeeping works. As a class, women were never to be trusted. Through this book, Ramabai tried to become the voice of these millions of women. She has particularly drawn the attention of people towards what she considers the biggest curse for a Hindu woman—her becoming a widow, especially a child widow. The hardships that a Hindu widow had to face have all been highlighted and an appeal made to help them to become independent identities.

It will not be wrong to say that Ramabai entered the feminist discourse through her book Stri Dharma Niti. This book turned out to be a guide of morality for women, asking illiterate, ignorant women to recast themselves in a more cultural mould through self-reliance and through self-education. Through this book, Ramabai advises the women of India on how to prepare for marriage by choice, be a companion to her husband who is worthy of trust, achieve
ideal motherhood by nurturing sons who would free India and attain spiritual welfare. It needs to be understood here that Ramabai’s feminist consciousness itself began to be questioned through this book. Her endorsement of Sita–Savitri model of feminity could be easily debated within the gender discourse of India. However, by advocating late marriages for women and marriages by choice, Ramabai turns out to be a radical nevertheless.

Her next academic venture Cry of Indian Women more explicitly reflected her feminist thinking and her desire to seek gender justice. The change in the approach between Stri Dharma Niti and the Cry of India Women in June 1883 was a result of many factors. Her close proximity with early feminists like Tarabai Shinde, Anandibai Joshee and Rakhmabai is clearly visible in Ramabai’s new book.

Another influence that brought an impact on Ramabai’s feminist consciousness was her exposure to the more progressive and less asymmetrical gender relations in America and England. Imparting education to women was thought to be the best remedy of the problems. Pandita’s hope was that women’s education would lead to the rejection of Brahminism and realize the deception of sacred literature. But Ramabai was aware of the mindset of the Indian society which was skeptical of educating women. The few schools that were available as options were often run by missionaries and, as a rule, high-caste Hindu women would prefer death than go to such schools where there was fear of losing their caste. In her testimony before the Education Commission set up in 1882, Ramabai demanded women teachers for girls and schools. She noted that ‘women being one half of the people of this country are oppressed and cruelly treated by the other half’. She also asked for training women as medical doctors to save women who could not consult male physicians.
All the writings of Ramabai reveal her liking for all non-imperialistic western world in general and for United States in particular. For her, America was a nation of progress, equality, opportunity and of citizen’s rights—a liberal country that suited to be followed by a colonial country like India as an example to gain political freedom and social reform. Few people however realized that all her praise for America was specially highlighted in support of her nationalist and anti-colonial ideas— that of building a modern India. This model for emulation was however resisted by the traditional Indian Nationalists like Tilak who refused to recognize her as an icon of progressive Indian womanhood.

In America Ramabai was largely impressed by women’s entry into the public sphere in the realm of all kinds of jobs and organizations founded with the aim of social reform. All women’s societies and clubs in the United States were inclined towards charity, promoting education, helping the destitute and so on. Such kind of organizations also existed in Britain, Germany, France, Norway, etc. According to Ramabai the reason for the existence of these organizations was that women recognized their own worth and strength and realized that enormous tasks could be accomplished if many undertook an enterprise with a single aim.

**An Assessment**

The life of sketch of Ramabai needs to be analyzed keeping in mind the conventional Indian society of those times which had yet to understand the meaning of ‘freedom’, ‘liberty’, ‘individualism’ and ‘justice’. Liberalism followed by feminism had brightened the western world right in the 16th and 17th century but it had yet to gain acceptance and recognition in the class/caste ridden Indian feudal society.
Hence the actions and preaching’s of Ramabai need to be seen within this context. Ramabai was politically far ahead of her time in the importance she attached to individuals in general and women in particular, the indignation she displayed on their exploitation and her desire for the country to get the benefit of western notion of democracy and freedom. By subscribing to the notions of individualism, pluralistic democracy and absolute freedom Ramabai becomes one of the earliest liberals of her times and by supplementing them with her belief in equal rights for women, she also becomes one of the earliest feminists in India.
School of Distance Education

MODULE II
NATIONALISM AND RELIGION
V D SAVARKAR (1883-1966)

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar represented an unconventional strand of political thought in India in so far as he propounded a theory of cultural nationalism in contrast to the theory of territorial nationalism propounded by the leaders of the mainstream nationalist movement. The uniqueness of the personality and thinking of Savarkar may be gauged from the fact that while one school of thought calls him an ‘ardent nationalist, heroic revolutionary and terrorist’ the other branded him as an angry, resentful, vengeful, violent and intolerant prophet. In fact, Savarkar gave a systematic articulation to the opinions held by many people in the country that the true resurgence of India as a distinguished part of the comity of nations could be facilitated only by rooting Indian nationalism in the cultural ethos of the Hindu religion. As an ardent exponent of Hindu nationalism, Savarkar believes that the real personality of India could be restored to her only by reviving her glorious past and re-establishing Hindu Rastra. The political philosophy of savarkar appeared as a distinct ideological formulation having its focus on the homogeneity of the Hindu population living in a particular tract of land.

The tradition of intellectual explorations by Hindu revivalists found its articulation in two distinct streams that may be called as Hinduism and Hindutva. Despite having the same long term perspective of establishing the vitality, the two streams differed on the idea of conceptualizing the Hindu view of life. Hence, the votaries of Hinduism tried to conceptualise the idea of Hindu view of life as essentially religious-personal in nature without any ramification for other aspects of life. As against the individualistic and
restrictive conceptualization of the idea of Hinduism, the
doctrine of Hindutva was evolved by radical elements of the
Hindu way of life in India. In fact the proponents of the
ideology of Hindutva tried to envisage a comprehensive blue
print for the reconstruction of the politico-cultural system of
the country in such a way that Hindu would get an absolute
preponderance in the affairs of the country. The ideology of
Hindutva, therefore, moves beyond the confines of religious
and personal life of individuals and seeks to reconstruct a
whole new world for Hindus by way of establishing the
Hindu Rashtra in the country.

The ideology of Hindutva was essentially the ideology
of Hindu nationalism. The first prominent Hindu nationalist
ideology was V.D.Savarkar. He wrote a book called
Hindutva in 1924 to explain the basic principles of Hindu
nationalism. In 1925 the Rahtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh
(RSS) was formed to protect the Hindus from the Muslim
aggression. In the subsequent period, Savarkar and RSS
propagated the Hindu nationalist ideology against the
ideology of the composite Indian nationalism expounded by
Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress.

Savarkar was born on 28 May 1883 in a traditional
Brahman family in Maharashtra at a time when the Indian
renaissance was manifested in diverse interpretations of the
past, present and future of the country. While a section of the
Indian society had started presenting an intellectual critique
of the political and economic dimensions of the British rule
in India, certain other sections were busy in reviving the
religious, cultural traditions and legacies of their people.
Hence, Savarkar’s childhood appears to have been made in
deep inculcation of the values of the Hindu religion and
culture and exhortations of reviving the glorious legacies left
by the great Maratha rulers like Shivaji. Besides his deep
pain at the beating to Hindus at the hands of people of other
religions, Savarkar was equally anguished at the brutalities of the British rule in India. He, therefore developed a vengeful attitude towards British rule in India and expressed his willingness to die fighting for the cause and independence of India. Thus from his early childhood, two distinct persuasions of this life appeared to be his passion: to work for the cause of the Hindus and fight for the independence of the country.

His nationalist activities earned him the ire of the British and he was expelled from Fergusson College, Poona. However, with the recommendations of Lokmanaya Tilak, he was offered to study in London by the prominent Indian revolutionary Shyaniji Krishna Varma. Consequently Savarkar remained a student - revolutionary in London during the period of 1906 to 1910, after which he was arrested and sentenced to 50 years of imprisonment at Andaman. His stay and intimate interactions with Indian revolutionaries in London helped sharpen his understanding of the history and causes of the denigration of India as a nation for a long period of time. In fact, his innovative and pioneering interpretation of the revolt of 1857 as India’s first war of independence came in the form of his book entitled ‘The Indian war of Independence of 1857’. After spending rigorous life of more than a decade in Kalapani (Andaman Nicobar Island) Savarkar was brought back to Maharashtra and interned at Ratnagiri till 1937. Thus more than two and half decades of solitary confinement of Savarkar offered him the opportunity to carry out his intellectual explorations into the various aspects of the problems and solutions to the past and present of the Indian people. He was released from confinement in 1937. Instead of joining the rank and file of the Congress party to fight for the independence of the country, he joined the Tilakite Democratic Swaraj party, a relatively unknown outfit espousing the cause of Indian
nationalism based on the lines of the radical swaraj as advocated by Balgangadhra Tilak.

**HINDU NATIONALISM**

Savarkar was the first systematic exponent of the Hindu nationalism. He elaborately analysed his theory of Hindutva in his book entitled Hindutva published in Nagpur in 1923. In the process of developing his doctrine of Hindu nationalism, he rejected some of the arguments of territorial nationalism. He held the view that the existence of a mere territory did not make nation but nation, on the other hand, was made by the people who constituted themselves as a political community bound together by cultural affinities and traditions.

Savarkar was a supporter of cultural nationalism. He believes that identity formation was the essence of nationalism. India had received such identity from the Hindu religion. Despite having outward differences, the Hindus were internally bound together by cultural, religious, social, logistic and historical affinities. These affinities were developed through the process of assimilation and association of countless centuries. It molded the Hindus into a homogeneous and organic nation and above all induced a will to a common national life. This homogeneity was important because other sections in the society had divergent cultural traditions. Savarkar argued that it was cultural, racial and religious unity that counted more in the formation of the nation. While defining nation, Savarkar wrote that nation meant a political community which had occupied a continuous and adequate territory and developed independent national identity. According to Savarkar, Hindus constituted nation because they had developed close affinities with the land bound by Himalayas to the Indian Ocean and the Indus River. Hindus considered India as their
fatherland and holy land. Thus Savarkar effectively excluded those people who did not consider India as their holy land because their sacred religious places were not situated in India. For him, Hindu society and not Hindu religion came first; Hindus were a nation because they were a self-enclosed community. The Hindus shared a common historical past. Savarkar knew that ultimately, nationalism was a psychological feeling and it was necessary to cultivate national consciousness among the Hindus. The common affinities should be used to strengthen the national consciousness.

Savarkar accepted the cultural and organic solidarity of the Hindu nation. He had been devoted to the ideal of Hindu resurrection and believed in the cultural superiority of Hinduism. He stressed the moral and social regeneration of Hinduism. He said thus: ‘Let Hinduism concern itself with the salvation of life after death, the concept of God, and the universe. But so far as the materialistic secular aspect is concerned, the Hindus are a nation bound a common culture, a common history, a common language, common country and a common religion’ The real development of the Hindus could take place only when there was a consolidation of their interests and responsibilities. The spirit of fellowships and community, hence, was to replace the pervasive isolationism of the Hindus.

According to Savarkar, a Hindu means a person who regards this land of Bharatvarsha, from the Indus to the seas, as his Fatherland as well as his Holyland that is the cradle land of his religion. There are three fundamental criteria for being included under Hinduism or being a Hindu. First, the territorial bond or rashtra is a primary requirement’ A Hindu is one who feels attachment to the geographical region extending from the Sindhu river to the Brahmaputra and from the Himalaya to the Cape Comorin. Secondly, the racial
or blood bond of the ‘Jati’. A Hindu is one who inherits the blood of the race “whose first and discernible source could be traced to the Himalayan altitude of the Vedic Saptasindhu”. A third criterion of being a Hindu is culture or sanskriti. A Hindu is one who feels pride in the Hindu culture and civilization represented in common historical memories of achievements and failures, in common artistic, literary and juristic creations and in common rituals or festivals or other media of collective expression.

According to Savarkar, the concept of Hinduism is a broader and more comprehensive than Hinduism. Hinduism has a religious significance and connotes the theology and ritualism of the Hindus, Hindutva comprehends within it this religious bond of Hinduism but goes beyond. Within Hindutva are included the social, moral, political and economic aspects as well. Hindutva connotes the notion of an organic socio-political body knit together by the three bonds of territorial belongings, blood or birth and culture.

Savarkar firmly believes in the doctrine of Hindutva or Hindu solidarity. In a competitive world, full of tensions and struggles for power, the solidification of strength is the sole means of survival. According to Savarkar, Hindutva is not only a concept of organic socio-political unity, it is also the essential elements of nationalism. It is a movement as well as a programme of action. He favours inter-caste marriage between all sections of Hindus. He did not believe in the policy of appeasement. He believes that there is no conflict between Hindutva and nationalism. He said, a Hindu patriot worth the name cannot but be an Indian patriot as well. To the Hindus, Hindustan being the father land and Holyland, the love they bear to Hinduism is boundless’.

The ideology of Hindutva as propounded by Savarkar, was, rooted in the vision of Hindu Solidarity. It was, in fact,
a political construct whose antecedents lay in the cultural ethics of the Hindus. He maintained that despite having numerous external differentiations, internally, Hindus are bound together by certain commonalities which have been brought about by centuries of assimilation and association with each other. To Savarkar, in the making of the Hindu rashtra what counted more than else was the cultural, racial and religious unity of the people.

In a Hindu rashtra, Savarkar offered the minorities some degree of freedom and right to participation in the affairs of the state provided they accept a position of non-aggression to the interests and rights of Hindus. As he clarifies, “We shall ever guarantee protection to the religion, culture and language of the minorities for themselves, but we shall no longer tolerate any aggression on their part on the equal liberty of the Hindus to guard their religion, culture and language as well. If non-Hindu minorities are to be protected, then surely the Hindu majority also must be protected against any aggressive minority in India”. He, therefore, opposed the demand of Muslim for the grant of separate electorate in India. Thus, Savakar’s Hindutva is not a narrow creed. It is claimed to be rationalistic and scientific. It is not opposed to humanism and universalism.

Savarkar was a strong critic of the occupation of India by foreign invaders in the form of the Muslim and English rulers. He held the view that India rightfully belonged to Hindus and her forcible occupation by non-Hindus was a patent act of aggression which must be resented and repulsed by all Hindus of the country. The nationalist interpretation of history found its eloquent articulation in Savarkar in his work, Hindu Pad Padshahi, published in 1925 and written to analyse the rise of Maharashtra, even in the face of Muslim predominance in other parts of the country. He commended the valiance and superb military leadership of Shivaji and
interpreted his victory as a befitting reply to the policy of barbaric aggression, violent usurpation of power, fanatical hatred and intolerance of the Muslim leaders. He praised the system of governance adopted by shivaji as conforming to the system of governance as envisaged in the religious scriptures of the Hindus. His appreciation for the Maratha polity emanated from his perception that it was based on the infallible principles of swadharma and swaraj. Thus, in his interpretation of the history of India during medieval times, savarkar’s theoretical format remained focused on Hindu nationalism which seemed to by an article of faith for him.

Savarker’s interpretation of Indian history is marked by an intense and passionate glorification of Vedic Hinduism. He not only opposed to the cult of pacifism, forgiveness and generosity popularized by Buddhism but even asserts that ‘the Buddhists often times betrayed the cause of Indian independence and Indian empire.

Similarly, in his interpretation of the history of India in modern times, Savarkar’s nationalistic orientations came to their best when he called the revolt of 1857 (Sepoy Revolt) as India’s first war of independence. He has tremendous admiration for the heroes of the struggle. He refuted the claims of British historian that the revolt of 1857 was just a sepoy mutiny having nothing to do with the general masses of the country and not reflecting any inherent disaffection of the people of India towards British rule in the country. Savarkar argued that the revolt of 1857 was India’s first war of independence owing to the fact that it was the natural manifestation of the feeling of independence visiting the hearts and minds of the patriotic soldier’s right from the western to the eastern parts of the country.

An Assessment

Savarkar’s theory of Hindutva has been subjected to
severe criticisms from different corners. He has been branded for providing the intellectual input for the present day right wing extremism in the country. As Jyotirmaya Sharma has rightly pointed out, Savarkar politicised religion and introduced religious metaphors into politics. He pioneered an extreme, uncompromising the rhetorical form of Hindu nationalism in Indian political discourse. His life exhibited an unwavering pursuit of a single ideal to establish India as a Hindu nation. Even today, Savarkar remains the first, and most original, prophet of extremism in India.

Further, he has been charged as being an ideologue whose theoretical constructs failed to cut much ice with the people in the country. Savarkar’s ideology failed to realize its political goal because it lacked the strength that comes from the mass support. His one-dimensional approach to politics – protection of Hindu interests against Muslim encroachment – had no relevance for the Hindu masses.

In addition to the above criticisms, there are obvious tensions and logical inconsistencies in the Hindu nationalism of V.D Savarkar. He could not properly define the concept of nationalism because Hindus, Muslims and Christians shared common traditions and affinities in India even in the religious field. His advocacy of reason, science and technology was instrumental in the sense that for him they were more useful because they helped him forge strong Hindu nation. Reason and science in the west were the culmination of the development of social philosophy which fought against religious prejudices and superstitions. The same could not be used to strengthen the cause of religious nationalism. Also, his distinction between the nation and the state was not convincing because both of them could not be separated and they came together as nation state.
Notwithstanding the attacks on the thoughts of Savarkar from both theoretical as well as practical prospective, the fact cannot be denied that his intellectual explorations have gone to enrich and give newer dimensions to the body of political thought in India. From the standpoint of political theory, the distinction made by Savarkar between Hinduism and Hindutva is remarkable. By and large, Hinduism is a religious and theological category. Hindutva is a political concept and comprehends social, educational, economic, political and cultural matters as well. It is beyond dispute that Savarkar was the first Indian thinker who declared that Hindus formed separate nation in India. He stood for a strong Hindu nation which would withstand and survive ferocious life struggle among nations, He sought to popularize the Hindu nationalism throughout his life with the help of the Hindu Maha Sabha.

MOHAMMED ALI JINNAH (1876-1948)

The Muslim thought in modern India can be understood properly only in its larger historical setting. It is important to note that the evolution and growth of the Muslim political thought was a complex phenomenon involving historical context of the Muslims’ social cultural and political life and interactive process with the colonial rule which had been established in India particularly in the aftermath of the revolt of 1857. Several issues had emerged, such as relative backwardness of Muslims in relation to modern tendencies which had come in the wake of the establishment of the colonial rule. The question of accommodation of various social groups including Muslims in the existing and future power structures became an important issue which was widely debated among all groups. Equally important was the issue of religio-cultural identity of various communities which went through a process of redefinition in the late 19th century as well as the first half of
the 20th century. All these issues emerged over the years with varying responses from different social groups which affected inter-community relations. While all these issues were matter of concern for all, it is important to recognise that the responses of the Muslims to all these issues was not uniform but varied since the Muslims did not constitute a monolithic community. They were divided on lines of language, region and class as any other religious community.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) travelled long distances in his political career finally to become the founding father of Pakistan. He was born on 25th December 1876 in the family of a relatively prosperous business family of Jinnabhai in Karachi. After his initial education in Karachi and Bombay, Jinnah went to England to study law which he completed at the age of 18. At the age of 20 he returned to India to join the Bar first in Karachi and later in Bombay and soon established himself among the legal fraternity of the city. He has won great fame as a subtle lawyer and had acquired a great practice in the legal profession.

Jinanh became a part of the Congress led politics by joining the Indian National Congress in 1906. In 1906, he worked as private secretary to Dadabhai Naoroji. Gopalakrishna Gokhale had high hopes from Jinna has an ambassador of Hindu-Muslimunity. Jinnah had the greatest respect and admiration for Gokhale and in a speech in Bombay in May 1915, he said that Gokhale was “a great political rishi, a master of the finance of India and the great champion of education and sanitation”. He was a nationalist in the earlier days. He had won great applause when he defended Lokmanya Tilak in the sedition case of 1916. In 1910 Jinnah was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council by the Muslim electorate of Bombay and in 1916, also he
was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council by the same electorate.

**VIEWS ON HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY**

Like other Muslim Schools, Jinnah was also keen to work for the well-being of the Muslims. However, his concern for the Muslims was not meant to be at the cost of the Hindu–Muslim unity. It is important to note that till the elections of 1937 he believed that both the communities must join hands to remain strong in order to overcome the difficulties placed on the Indians by the British Government. Some reflection in this regard was manifest at the time of the Lucknow pact of 1916 which envisaged certain seat sharing formula between the Hindus and Muslims in which the Muslim gained better advantages in Muslim minority provinces such as United Provinces while they had conceded more ground to the Hindus and others in the Muslim majority provinces such as the Punjab and Bengal. Jinnah played an important role in bringing about this agreement.

Jinnah was one of the leaders who did not approve of mixing religion with politics. In the contested of the emerging Non-Cooperation-Khilafat movement, he did not approve of religion being pressed in the service of politics. He was sounding certain note of caution that the consequences of such a strategy might prove to be counter-productive. During 1919 – 1920 strong religious feelings were stirred among the Muslims on the issue of the Khilafat, an Islamic institution in the hands of the Ottomans of Turkey for considerably, long time. However after the defeat of Turkey with First World War, it was feared by Muslims that soon Ottoman Empire would be fragmented and many Holy Places would fall in the hands of the non-Muslims, which was acceptable to them. In any case, for quite sometimes, pan-Islamic upsurge had already generated anti-colonial
sentiments among the Muslims. Keeping all these developments in mind, Gandhi decided to go along with the Muslims and agreed to lead the movement. In the context of all these developments the Indian National Congress, despite its initial reluctance finally decided to extend support to Gandhi; this was the movement with which Jinnah did not agree at all and resigned from the Congress in 1920 not to come back to it ever again.

In 1940 in Lahore Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the man who founded Pakistan, gave a seminal speech setting out the need for a separate state for Muslims on the subcontinent. Prior to the division of India in 1947, Hindus and Muslims had lived together across the country. But Jinnah described them as two separate nations. He said “it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality.” “Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs and literary traditions. They neither intermarry nor eat together, and indeed they belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions.” This Two Nation Theory based Hindu Muslim differences, as it came to be known, has become the official Pakistani narrative for the creation of the state and key to how Pakistan defines itself.

Pakistan was perhaps the first country to be formed on the basis not of a common ethnicity or language, but religion. Yet at the same time it is not, and never has been, a theocracy. Before partition, there was real concern among Muslims living in British India at the prospect of becoming a minority in a Hindu-dominated independent India. About one quarter of the population was Muslim. Despite the Congress Party’s assertions of its secular values, many Muslims were sceptical and feared that the Hindu majority would seek to marginalise them. Jinnah himself was an advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity before becoming
disillusioned with the attitude of Congress. There existed vast differences in language, culture and religious interpretations between Indian Muslims, even if they were united by a common faith. Jinnah was not the first to articulate the Two Nation Theory, but with the creation of Pakistan he transformed it into a political reality. The theory is now taught to all school children in Pakistan. It is why many see independence as liberation from India, as opposed to independence from British colonial rule.

Jinnah after his clash of interest with the Congress party, he was of the opinion that Hindus and Muslims had nothing in common other than the fact that they shared a land. Their religion, their values, and their culture were all different. So that was why a new country was needed to get their rights. But when Pakistan was created, more Muslims stayed on in India than left. And then in 1971 Pakistan itself split in two, with the creation of an independent Bangladesh. A social thinker, Ayesha Jalal asks “If the Muslims are supposed to be one nation - then how come they are living in three different states?”

TWO NATION THEORY

In its opposition to the Congress, the Muslim League crossed limits and finally came around to the idea of describing the Muslims of India not as a religious community or a minority in a Hindu-majority country but a distinct nation. Thus according to the League’s formulation, India was home to not one but two nations which led the demand that India be partitioned so that there could be separate home land to the Muslim as well. This understanding was put to crystallization in the annual session of the Muslim League held in here on 23rd March, 1940. The Resolution adopted here is popularly known as the Pakistan Resolution or Two nation theory. In this resolution it was
said that the Muslims of India on account of religious, cultural and historical distinctiveness in contrast with the Hindus, constituted a nation into themselves. In an article contributed to the Time and Tide, March 9, 1940, he wrote thus: What is the political future of India. The declared aim of the British Government is that India should enjoy Dominion Status in accordance with the statute of West Minister in the shortest practicable time. In order that this end should be brought about, the British government, very naturally, would like to see in India the form of democratic institutions it knows best and thinks best, under which the Government of the country is entrusted to one or other political party in accordance with the turn of the elections.

Since then, the Muslim League, under Jinnah, did not look back and never consider any settlement which was not conceding Pakistan. In 1944, in course of Gandhi-Jinnah talks Jinnah vigorously and fanatically stuck to the concept that Muslim are a nation. He wrote in one of his letters to Mahatma Gandhi on September 15, 1944. ‘We maintain and hold that Muslims and Hindu are two major nations by any definition or test as a nation. We are a nation of hundred million, and what is more, we are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilisation, language and literature, art and architecture….. In short, we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of International law we are a nation.’

He was absolutely uncompromising and he insisted that partition was the sole solution to Hindu-Muslim differences. His views were not subscribed to by several Muslim organisations like Jamia-e-Ulema, The Abraras etc. He said on October 4, 1944, in an interview to the representative of London News Chronicle: ‘There is only one practical realistic way of resolving Muslim-Hindu differences’. This is to divide India into two sovereign parts,
of Pakistan and Hindustan, by the recognition of the whole of the North –West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Sindh, Punjab, Bengal and Assam as sovereign Muslim territories, as they now stand and for each of us to trust the other to give equitable treatment to Hindu minorities in Pakistan and Muslim minorities in Hindustan……….The fact is the Hindu want some kind of agreement which will give them some form of control. They will not reconcile themselves to our complete independence.

Jinnah had been inspired by the career of Mustafa Kamal but while Kamal was a modernist, Jinnah pinned his faith in theocracy and Islamic democracy. There was opposition to Jinnah’s formulations of Muslim constituting a nation from within the Muslims, apart from the Congress and others.

Within one month of passing of the ‘Two nation theory’ various Muslim political formations from different parts of the country came to form a coalition called Azad Muslim Conference. In April 1940 a huge convention was organised in Delhi where ‘Two Nation theory’ was challenged. It was argued that while Muslims were a distinct religious community with their cultural world view, they did not constitute a nation as claimed by Jinnah and the Muslim League. In several places the Muslim League had to face electoral challenge from the constituent of this Azad Muslim Conference. It argued that Muslims were not a nation but a religious community and it was an integral part of the single territorial nationhood along with the rest of the people of India.

An Assessment

As a political leader, Jinnah was the product of the contradictions and confusions of Indian nationalism. One of his main supports was the British imperialist policy, of
divide and rule. The Muslim population, which had received a new impetus from the educational impact of the Aligarh movement and the Pan – Islamist affiliations of Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali rallied devotedly round Muhammad Ali Jinnah in its crusade for the theoretic and communal demand for Pakistan.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861-1941)

Rabindranath Tagore, born on 7th May, 1861, was a Bengali poet, short-story writer, song composer, playwright, essayist, and painter who introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature, thereby freeing it from traditional models based on classical Sanskrit. He was highly influential in introducing Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of early 20th-century India. In 1913 he became the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. The son of the religious reformer Debendranath Tagore, he early began to write verses, and, after incomplete studies in England in the late 1870s, he returned to India. There he published several books of poetry in the 1880s and completed Manasi (1890), a collection that marks the maturing of his genius. It contains some of his best-known poems, including many in verse forms new to Bengali, as well as some social and political satire that was critical of his fellow Bengalis.

ON NATIONALISM

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was not a political thinker in the strict sense of the term. Basically a literary figure having profound interest in the spheres of music, painting, poetry and related branches of literary creations, his social and political thoughts appeared to be the product of his insightful grasp of the burning issues of his times. To put it differently, the social and political ideas of Tagore did not
seem to have come by way of any well-thought out long term perspective or theorization on his part. His fundamental passion throughout his life remained confined to the spheres of classical art. Yet, being a vigilant and essentially cosmopolitan figure in Indian society, he came across a number of events, circumstances and ideas on which, intuitively, he found himself compelled to articulate his views to express his vision on such subjects. Therefore, Tagore turns out to be an unconventional thinker. But despite remaining at the periphery of the main stream of Indian political thought, he exerted so much influence on certain aspects of the social and political vision of the country that a useful discourse on the subject would probably remain incomplete without insightfully and critically incorporating the views of Tagore on them.

Like the notion of true freedom, Tagore found the idea of nationalism equally deceptive and counter-productive to the realization of true freedom by individuals all over the world. Contextualizing his analysis on nationalism in the backdrop of the rise of militant and aggressive nationalistic aspirations in certain countries of Europe during first half of the twentieth century, Tagore sought to explain the birth of the idea of nationalism as a product of modern science and technological advancements in that continent. He argued that unlike India where the association of people was for social and moral considerations owing to the innate cultural orientations in the personality of India, in Europe, it seemed a different story altogether. In the wake of rapid advancements in the field of science and technology, the resultant industrial revolution motivated people to join hand together to seemingly maximize the benefits accruing from this invention. He, however, insisted that such mechanical coming together of people without any moral or social considerations ingrained dehumanizing tendencies in them,
as a result of which their nationalism became intimidating and aggressive in nature.

Moreover, Tagore argued that the process of evolution of nationalism in Europe for political and economic purposes inherently carried within it the characteristics of morally unacceptable, politically aggressive and economically insatiable form of nationalism whose impact on the world would invariably be inimical to the larger interests of humanity. Tagore further demonstrated a number of negative repercussions of the rise of militant nationalism in Europe in both domestic as well as international arenas. Within the country, he elaborated, nationalism breeds an intense and unending lust for power and money in the people resulting into more and more devaluation of the dignity of human labour and greater reliance on mechanical power to make quick bucks. Gradually, the social interactions amongst the people start getting bereft of moral and humanistic considerations and one’s political and economic power determines his social position irrespective of moral turpitude of his activities.

In final analysis, when the lust for power and money takes a concentrated form, it creates an urge for unusual organization of people to make their forays outside their place to explore and exploit the material resources of that region. Thus, nationalism ordinarily boils down to colonialism and fierce wars between two or more than two nations to secure a strong foothold in lucrative colonies. The true character of nationalism also gets exposed in its activities in the colonies. Drawing examples from British imperialism, Tagore explained the numerous dehumanizing and exploitative features of colonialism in India, the most despicable of which happens to be the transformation of the personality of man from being his own to become that of the colonisers. What was alarming to Tagore, therefore, was the
seemingly unending march of imperialism in ruining the moral and humanistic character of even the noble souls in the colonies. As he laments, ‘It will go on in its ring dance of moral corruption, linking steel unto steel, and machine unto machine, trampling under its tread all the sweet flowers of simple faith and the living ideals of man’.

Despite being very critical of the context of rise and subsequent incarnations of nationalism in the form of imperialism and colonialism, Tagore was appreciative of what he calls the ‘spirit of the West’. To Tagore, the spirit of the West was not what the nationalism of the West had ordained for the people within and outside the continent of Europe. The spirit of the West, in fact, lies in providing the rest of world the values like freedom, equality, fraternity and remarkable creativity in the field of art and literature. The rise of nationalism, on the other hand, was conditioned by ‘the nation of the West’ by which Tagore meant an entity least human and least spiritual, as its focus remained centred on expanding the tentacles of nationalism through scourges of war, weapons and violence.

Thus, Tagore emphasised the existence of the two seemingly antithetical notions in the forms of the spirit of the West and the nation of the West. What, however, went wrong was the weakening of the ethos and value of spirit and growing predominance of the demon of nation which ultimately led to colonization of the rest of world by European nationalism. What was common between Tagore and Gandhi was the idea that nation was absolutely inapplicable to Indian people. Both of them regarded nationalism as a by-product of the western nation–state system and of the forces of homogenization let loose by the western world view. To them, ‘a homogenized universalism’, itself a product of the uprootedness and deculturation brought about by British colonialism in India,
struck at the root of Indian civilisation. In contrast with an imported category like nationalism, their alternative was ‘a distinctive civilizational concept of universalism embedded in the tolerance encoded in various traditional ways of life in a highly diverse, plural society’. This conceptualisation within an absolutely non-nationalist philosophical framework defused the arguments in favour of Hindu nationalism in the context of freedom movement in India.

So, not only was this critique of nation and nationalism morally acceptable and politically effective, it also laid the foundation of community-based society drawing on the resources of a civilisation of which it was a part. The honeymoon was short-lived and differences between the poet and the Mahatma loomed large in course of time. Disapproving of the Gandhian strategic moves in the forms of boycott, non-cooperation and civil disobedience to compel the British to leave India, Tagore castigated the Indian leaders, including Gandhi, for falling prey to the temptations of nationalism by taking unusually discordant steps in their fight for the independence of the country.

Tagore’s prescription, on the other hand, for the nationalist leaders was to wage a moral and spiritual struggle against the British by trying to convince them of the dehumanising, debasing and morally unacceptable nature of their rule in India. He insisted that in India’s fight for her independence, the intrinsic values of universal brotherhood and spiritual harmony amongst different people must not be sacrificed. As a firm believer of civilisational unity of India, Tagore thus provided a powerful critique of Indian nationalist movement that tended to gloss over India’s well-entrenched diversity to construct a nation.

The strong criticism of certain aspects of the Indian national movement by Tagore put him in an argumentative
position with a number of nationalists in the country who were fighting for the cause of her independence. They pointed out the futility of the notion of nationalism advocated by Tagore in case of India on the plea that Indian nationalism was rooted in the consciousness of the people’s distinct aspiration of getting independence from the yoke of British colonialism. It had nothing in common with the European nationalism whose basic pursuit lied in maximizing the political and economic power of a few people at the expense of the vast mass of humanity within and outside of the Europe.

Hence, the national movement in the country was also a move to ensure the resurgence of the spirit of India which could find its fullest manifestation in an independent nation only. The argument of the Indian nationalists extended to the extent of justifying the ultimate goal of Indian nationalism as nothing but ensuring the essential cosmopolitanism in the world as argued for by Tagore. It was contended that such cosmopolitanism could not be attained as long as the ‘abstract being, the Nation, is ruling India’. In order to ensure that harmonious coexistence amongst the various people is brought about, the resurgence of the spirit of India and its articulation through the means of Indian independence became an unavoidable necessity.

An Assessment

Hence, Tagore’s critique of the march of national movement in the country could not be accepted as it did not fit into the conceptualization of nationalism advanced by most of his colleagues in the nationalist movement. More than a fight against British nationalism, the Indian national movement was an attempt to regain the lost spiritual personality of the Indian nation. Since the fullest articulation of such moral personality of the country could not take place
in a state of subjugation of the country, the national movement also aimed at securing the independence of the country from the British rule. Its ultimate aim was to contribute to the cosmopolitanism of Tagore.
MODULE III

CONTRIBUTIONS OF MAHATMA GANDHI AND JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

GANDHIJI (1869-1948)

Mohandas Karachand Gandhi, popularly Known as Mahatma Gandhi continues to provoke interest even after more than half a century after his assassination in 1948. It is true that Richard Attenborough’s film on Gandhi immensely popularised Gandhi all over the world though Gandhi remains an important topic of research and discussion among those interested in exploring alternative ideological traditions. Gandhi’s own writings on various themes are plenty and less ambiguous. His articulation is not only clear and simple but also meaningful in similar contexts in which he led the most gigantic nationalist struggle of the 20th century. He wrote extensively in Indian opinion, young India, and Harijan, the leading newspapers of the era where he commented on the issues of contemporary relevance. Writing for the ordinary people he usually employed metaphors to teach Indians about their abilities and also their strong traditions. This was one of the ways in which he involved Indians in non-violent struggles against British imperialism, untouchability and communal discord.

Contribution to Indian Nationalism

The contribution of Gandhi to Indian national movement was unparalleled. He made the Indian National Congress a people’s congress and the national movement a mass movement. He made people fearless and bold and
taught them the non-violent methods for fighting against the evils of caste system and injustice. He had a strong passion for individual liberty which was closely bound with his understanding of truth and self-realisation. That Gandhiji was evident from his erstwhile nationalist colleagues was evident when he launched his satyagraha movements in remote areas of Champaran (Bihar), Kheda and Ahmadabad (Gujarat) instead of towns and cities that had so far remained the hub of the nationalist activities. His political strategies brought about radical change in the Congress that now expanded its sphere of influence even in the villages. These three movements projected Gandhi as an emerging leader with different kinds of mobilizing tactics. While explaining the rise of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru thus argued, Gandhiji knew India for better than we did, and a man who could command such tremendous devotion and loyalty must have something in him that corresponded to the needs and aspirations of the masses.

Besides these local movements Gandhi led three major pan Indian movements. The 1919-21 Non-co-operation Movement was the first one that gained significantly with the merger of the Khilafat agitation of the Muslim against the dismantling of the Khalif in Turkey. The Civil Disobedience movement in which Gandhi reigned supreme. The 1942 quit India movement, also known as the open rebellion, was the last of the three Pan–Indian campaigns that Gandhi spearheaded.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF GANDHIAN PRINCIPLES

Gandhi’s social and political thought is multidimensional. His political ideology was a radical departure from the past in the sense that it was neither constitutional loyalist of the Moderates nor extremism of the
revolutionary terrorists. In his articulation of Indian nationalism he sought to incorporate the emerging constituencies of nationalist politics that remained peripheral in the bygone era. Gandhi was perhaps the only effective nationalist leader who truly attempted to transcend the class conflicts by devising a method which for the first time, brought about the national aggregation of an all India character. His social and political ideas were the outcome of his serious engagement with issues reflective of India’s peculiar socio-economic circumstances. Gandhi simultaneously launched movements not only against the British rule but also against the atrocious social structures, customs, norms and values, justified in the name of Indian’s age-old traditions. Hence, Gandhian thought is neither purely political nor absolutely social, but a complex mix of the two.

Gandhian philosophy was a profound engagement with modernity and its pitfalls. Against the evils of industrialisation, materialism and selfish pursuits, Gandhiji suggested swaraj, swadeshi, trusteeship and a minimal state vested only with co-coordinative powers. He was a deeply a religious man. This perspective shaped his politics his economic ideas and his view of society. However, the religious approach that he imbibed was markedly different from other religious man. He accepts the inner oneness of all existence in the cosmic spirit, and saw all living beings as representatives of the eternal divine reality. Gandhiji believed that man’s ultimate goal in life was self- realisation. Self realisation, according to him, meant seeing God face to face, i.e., realising the absolute truth or, knowing oneself. He believed that it could not be achieved unless man identified himself with the whole of mankind. This necessarily involved participation in politics.
According to Gandhi, man’s ultimate aim is the realisation of God and all his activities social political religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. It is only through the means of self-purification that self-realisation can be attained. The fasts, prayers and works of service that he undertook were all directed towards such an end. In his autobiography, Gandhiji says that self-realisation required self-purification as its ethical foundation. Men’s moral life flows from such a search into this own self and express itself in outward activity of fellowship and concern to others. This ethical outlook is backbone of Gandiji’s political philosophy even as his ethics has for its foundation in his metaphysical principles. To him the moral discipline of the individual is the most important means of social construction. Gandiji invoked the five-fold moral principles: truth, non-violence, non-stealing, non-possession and celibacy. The observance of these moral principles would purify man and enable him to strive after self-realisation.

SATYAGRAHA AND NON-VIOLENCE

The basic principles of Gandhian techniques are the Satyagraha and Non-violence or ahimsa. Most authors on Gandhi seem to conflate the two. What is rather relatively less known is the fact that during the period between his South African experiment and the agitation against the Rowlatt Act, it was Satyagraha that held the key to his entire campaign. Only in the aftermath of the 1919 anti-Rowlatt Satyagraha, was non-violence included as integral to Gandhi’s Satyagraha campaign. There is no doubt that ahimsa always remained a significant influence in the conceptualisation of satyagraha, but it was not projected as crucial a component as it later became. As a technique or method, Satyagraha was always informed by ahimsa, though its role was not vividly articulated till their 1919 campaign.
against the Rowlatt Act. From 1919 onwards, Gandhiji paid enormous attention to both conceptualising and justifying the importance of ahimsa in political mobilisation by referring to the ancient scriptures in his defence. Gandhiji was preparing for a pan-Indian non-cooperation movement in the Satyagraha format in which ahimsa was to play a significant role in political mobilisation. The micro experiments of Satyagraha in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmadabad where ahimsa was constitutive of Gandhian model of anti-imperialism, therefore, became decisive in Gandhi’s social and political thought.

**GANDHIAN DOCTRINE OF SATYAGRAHA**

Satyagraha was a formidable weapon in the hands of Gandhiji. It is a natural outcome from the supreme concept of truth. Satyagraha is literally holding on to truth, and it means, therefore, Truth force. Satyagraha means the exercise of the purest soul-force against all injustice, oppression and exploitation. Suffering and trust are attributes of soul-force. Truth is soul or spirit, it is therefore known as soul force. It excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth. Truth or satya, for Gandhiji, is go himself. He, therefore, changed the statement, 'God is truth' later in his life into 'Truth is God' and suggested that it was one of the fundamental discoveries of his life's experiments. The life of man, for Gandhiji, is a march of his pursuit in search of Truth or God.

Satyagraha is not merely the insistence on truth, it is, in fact, holding on to truth through ways which are moral and non-insolent; it is not the imposition of one's will over others, but it is appealing to the reasoning of the opponent, it is not coercion but is persuasion. It means urge for satya or Truth. Gandhi highlights several attributes to Satyagraha. It is a moral weapon and does not entertain ill-feeling towards
the adversary, it is a non-violent device and calls upon its user to love his enemy, it does not weaken the opponent but strengthens him morally; it is a weapon of the brave and is constructive in its approach. For Gandhiji, a satyagrahi is always truthful, morally imbued, non-violent and a person without any malice, he is one who is devoted to the service of all.

Gandhiji firmly believed that truth can be attained only through non-violence which was not negative, meaning absence of violence, but was a positive condition of love. Resort to non-violence is recourse to love. In its positive sense, it seeks non-injury to others, both in words as well as deeds.

Gandhiji recommends several techniques of Satyagraha. The techniques of Satyagraha may take the form of non-cooperation, civil disobedience, Hijrat, fasting and strike. Gandhiji believes that oppression and exploitation were possible only on account of the cooperation of the people. If the people refused to cooperate with the government, the latter could not function properly. Non-cooperation may manifest itself in the form of hartals, Picketing etc. Hartal involved the stopping of work as a measure of protest and its objective was to strike the imagination of the people and the government. According to Gandhiji, hartals in order to be effective were to be voluntarily organized and non-violent method could be used. In the case of picketing also, no force was to be used. Picketing should avoid coercion, intimidation, discourtesy, burning of effigies and hunger strike.

Civil disobedience is another effective method recommended by Gandhiji for the realisation of satyagraha. It was regarded as a ‘complete effective and bloodless substitute of armed revolt’. There can be individual as well
as mass civil disobedience. According to Gandhiji, complete civil disobedience implying a refusal to render obedience to every single state made law can be a very powerful movement. It can become 'more dangerous than an armed rebellion' because the stupendous power of innocent suffering undergone on a great scale has great potency.

Another form of satyagraha suggested by Gandhiji was Hijrat which implied voluntary exile from the permanent place of residence. This was to be done by those who feel oppressed cannot live without loss of self-respect in a particular place and lack the strength that comes from true non-violence of the capacity to defend themselves violently.

Fasting is another method of Satyagraha. This method was considered by Gandhiji as a fiery weapon but it has to be applied only against those who are bound by ties of close personal affection. It required purity of mind, discipline, humility and faith. Gandhiji's views was that fasting stirred the sluggish conscience and fired the loving hearts to action.

Another method of Satyagraha was in the form of strike. Gandhiji's view of strike was different from that advocated by the socialists and communists. According to Gandhiji, strike was a voluntary, purificatory suffering undertaken to convert the erring opponent. He did not believe in the theory of class war. His view was that industry was a joint enterprise of labour and capital, and both of them were trustees. The strikers were required to put forward their demands in very clear terms.

Some scholars have tried to connect and identify the Gandhian doctrine of Satyagraha with passive resistance. While identifying the features of satyagraha in his Hind swaraj, Gandhi was of the opinion that passive resistance fails to convey what he meant. It describes a method, but no hint of the system of which it is only a part. In other words,
the similarity between satyagraha and passive resistance was just peripheral since both of them were clearly defined methods of political resistance which were opposed to violence. Gandhi may certainly have drawn on passive resistance conceptually, but when he defined satyagraha he underlined its unique nature and characteristics. As he elaborated in Hind swaraj, passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is reverse of repugnant to my conscience, I use social-force.’

Passive resistance can never be equated with satyagraha for the simple reason that it involved application of force as well, Hence he was most categorical by saying that passive resistance is an all sided sword, it can be used anyhow, it blesses him who uses at and him against whom it is used without drawing a drop of blood, it produced for reaching results. Satyagraha was not physical force but soul force that drew on the spontaneous sacrifice of self by the participants, which according to Gandhi constituted the core of his campaign. Gandhi associated passive resistance with internal violence. It unleashed forces of prejudice and separatism rather than compassion and incisiveness.

Gandhiji’s Satyagraha was not only a political doctrine directed against the state, it had also social and economic trusts relevant to and drawn on human natures. In contrast with the constitutional and extremist methods of political mobilisation, satyagraha was highly original and creative conceptualisation of social change and political action. The principles governing satyagraha and its participants are illustrative of his endeavour to organise mass protest within a strict format that clearly stipulates the duties and responsibilities of the individual satyagraha. It is beyond dispute that satyagraha was to be a continuous process seeking to transform the individuals by appreciating the human moral values that remained captive due to
colonialism and various social prejudices, and justified in the name of religion.

NON–VIOLENCE

Gandhiji cannot be regarded as the inventor and propounder of this principle. He discovered the principle of non-violence from the pages of history and his greatness lies in the fact that he made it on the basis of his life and adopted to serve the needs of time. He transformed it into social and political technique. He regards it as the supreme concept for the reformation of politics.

According to Gandhiji, Non-violence or Ahimsa is the heart of all religions. Non-violence is truth itself; it is very soul, and its fruit. Truth and non-violence are two sides of a smooth unstamped metallic disc and are so intervened that it is very difficult to separate them. Gandhiji put more emphasis on truth than non-violence because he believed that truth existed beyond and unconditioned by space and time, but non-violence existed only on the part of all finite beings.

Non-violence is, in fact, the acceptance of spiritual metaphysics. It is not merely the negative act of refraining from doing offence, injury and harm to others but really it represents the ancient law of positive self-sacrifice and constructive suffering. Gandhiji interpreted it as signifying utter selflessness and universal love. The ultimate aim of non-violence is even to love the so-called enemies or opponents.

According to Gandhiji, there are three levels of non-violence. The highest form was the enlightened non-violence of resourcefulness or the non-violence of the brave. It was the non-violence of one who adopted it not by painful necessity but by inner conviction based on moral
considerations. Non-violence was not merely political but embraces every sphere of life. The second kind of non-violence was adopted as a measure of expediency and sound policy in some spheres of life. That was the non-violence of the weak or the passive non-violence of the helpless. It is weakness rather than moral conviction which rules out the use of violence. It pursued honestly with real courage so long as it is accepted as a policy. It is capable of achieving results to a certain extent. However, it is not as effective as the non-violence of the brave.

The third level of non-violence is the passive violence of the coward. As Gandhiji has rightly pointed out, cowardice and ahimsa (non-violence) do not go together and more than water and fire. The coward seeks to avoid the conflict and flies from the danger. Cowardice is an impotent worse than violence. Gandhiji believes that non-violence cannot be taught to a person who fears to die and has no power of resistance. There is a hope for violent man to be some day non-violent, but there is none for cowardice. This sound principle is based on the fact that despotism, could never have existed if it did not have fear as its foundation.

Gandhiji believed that self-suffering is an indispensable part of the struggle for the attainment of truth through non-violence. Self-suffering which he regarded as non-violence in its dynamic condition, had to be conscious. Conscious suffering means pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Ahimsa or non-violence, therefore, means infinite love. Gandhiji wrote thus: 'Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed.' It is the imperative duty of 'satyagrahi to make endless endeavours for the realization of truth through non-violence. Gandhiji used this technique of non-violent resistance not only in combating the British occupation in India but also in dealing with India’s internal problems.
For Gandhi, ahimsa or Non-violence meant both passive and active love, refraining from causing harm and destruction to living beings as well as positively promoting their wellbeing. Gandhi defined ahimsa in two contrasting ways: On the one hand, in its narrow sense, it simply meant avoidance of acts harming others, while in its positive sense, it denoted promoting their wellbeing, based on infinite love. Jawaharlal Nehru characterized Gandhian principle of Ahimsa as ‘a positive and dynamic method of action and it was not meant for those who meekly accept the status quo'. Ahimsa, in its positive connotation, was based on highest moral values, epitomized in the unselfish self”.

Ahimsa was complementary to Gandhi's model of conflict resolution that was certainly the most original and creative model of social change and political action even under most adverse circumstances. This was a theory of politics that gradually became the dominant ideology of a national political movement in which Gandhi reigned supreme.

HIND SWARAJ

Gandhiji was highly critical of both western civilisation and western democracies. He challenged the foundations of modern western civilisation. The sophisticated, aggressive and lustful aspects of modern western civilisation repelled him. The modern civilisation was equivalent to darkness and disease. He condemned bitterly western democratic politics because they were infected with three fold contradiction. They believed in limitless expansion of capitalism and this resulted in exploitation of the weaker sections of society. Some of them even took recourse to fascist or totalitarian techniques. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and the fascist tendencies of imperialism. He frankly stated that it was not
through democratic methods that Great Britain had conquered India. He also criticised the policy of racialism followed in South Africa and the southern parts of the USA. Gandhi stressed that non-violence could lead to true democracy. Democracy and violence could not be reconciled.

As an idea and strategy, swaraj gained remarkably in the context of the nationalist articulation of the freedom struggle and the growing democratisation of the political processes that already brought in hitherto socio-economic and cultural differences. Underlying its role in a highly divided society like India swaraj was defined in the following ways;

a. national independence;

b. political freedom of the individual

c. economic freedom of the individual and

d. spiritual freedom of the individual or self-rule.

Although these four definitions are about for different characteristics of Swaraj, they are none the less complementary to each other. Of these, the first three are negative in character while the fourth one is positive one in its connotation. While elaborating on Swaraj, Gandhiji linked it with swadeshi in which his theory of Swaraj was articulated. If Swaraj was a foundational theory of Gandhi’s social and political thought, swadeshi was the empirical demonstration of those relevant social, economic and political steps for a society different from what exists.

According to Gandhi, swaraj was not merely political liberation; it means human emancipation as well. In his own words, ‘mere withdrawal of the English is not independence. It means the consciousness in the average villages that he is
the maker of his own destiny, that he is his own legislator through his own representatives’. The real Swaraj, he felt, will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused. Swaraj is the power of the people to determine their lot by their own efforts and shape their destiny the way they like. Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority. Political freedom is the second important feature of swaraj. For moderates, political freedom meant autonomy within the overall control of the British administration. Even the most militant of the moderates like Surendranath Banerji always supported constitutional means to secure political rights for Indians within the constitutional framework of British India. Unlike the moderates, the extremists did not care much about the methods and insisted on complete independence, which meant complete withdrawal of the British government from India.

Economic freedom of the individual is the third dimension of swaraj. Economic swaraj stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life. For Gandhiji, India’s economic future lay in charkha (Spinning Wheel) and Kadh (Homespun cotton textile). If India’s villages are to live and prosper, the charkha must become universal’. Rural civilisation, argued Gandhiji, “is impossible without the charkha and all it implies, i.e., revival of village crafts”. Fourth, self-rule is probably a unique dimension of Swaraj indicating its qualitative difference with political freedom. As a concept it denotes a process of removing the internal obstacles to freedom. Unlike the first three characteristics where Swaraj is conceptualised in a negative way, self-rule as an important ingredient clearly indicates the importance of moral values which are relative to society. Gandhian idea
of Swaraj as self-rule seems to be based on the philosophical notion of advaita which is etymologically the kingdom or order or dispensation of self, myself or the truth. So Gandhian struggle for Swaraj was rooted in Indian metaphysics and spirituality. He opposed large scale industrialism and mechanization, and condemned western commercialism, imperialism and secularism as disease.

SWADESHI

Gandhi’s concept of “Swadeshi” means belonging to one’s own country. In his wide conceptual framework Swadeshi has a special significance. He always laid emphasis on the value of Swadeshi. He used it comprehensively and constantly endeavoured to apply it to all sphere – social, political, economic, and cultural. Swadeshi is not a negative a concept, it has a political connotation and is also considered as a viable vehicle for the promotion of Nationalism and one’s patriotism.

Satyagraha and Swadeshi are significant in Gandhi’s philosophy of national life. According to Gandhi, the whole gamut of man’s activities constitutes an indivisible whole. Life cannot be divided into watertight compartments like social, economic, political, religious and so on. So the ideas and concepts he developed in the course of his continuous experiments with truth was an attempt to bring together the various tenets of life. The concept of Swadeshi was not merely an economic principle as it covered all aspects of the human life. Gandhi’s vision of Swadeshi is a universal concept even though he propounded it in the context of India’s struggle for freedom. He used Swadeshi as a means to achieve India’s Swaraj.

India’s struggle for independence was a source of inspiration for many non-violent struggles in different parts of the world especially Africa. Swaraj through Swadeshi is a
principle of universal application and it can be emulated by people in their struggle for freedom. It was one of the eleven vows Gandhi prescribed for a Satyagraha way of life. In this section an attempt has been made to understand Gandhi’s concept of Swadeshi and its manifestation in important facets of human life. Swadeshi as a generic concept covers almost every aspect of human life, all his ideas, concepts, methods and programmes. However, the scope is limited to areas such as economic, political, social, religious, and educational and health. Firstly, we will analyse Gandhi’s vision of Swadeshi.

**GANDHI’S VIEWS ON SWADESHI**

According to Gandhi Swadeshi in its ultimate and spiritual sense stands for the final emancipation of the soul from her earthly bondage. Therefore, a votary of Swadeshi has to identify oneself with the entire creation in the ultimate quest to emancipate the soul from the physical body, as it stands in the way of realising oneness with all life. This identification is possible only by performing the primary duty, that is, the service of one’s immediate neighbour. In outward appearance, it may look as exclusion or disservice to others, i.e., the rest of humanity. Pure service can never result in disservice to the far away person. In Swadeshi there is no distinction between one’s own and other people. With the temptation of serving the whole world, if one fails to perform the duty towards the immediate neighbours, it is a clear violation of the very principle of Swadeshi. The very first step of serving the whole world starts with the immediate neighbour. Service to the nearest individual is service to the Universe. In Swadeshi there is no space for selfishness and hatred. It is the highest form of altruism and acme of universal service in the Gandhian scheme. In the light of the above understanding and after much thinking and reflection, Gandhi defined Swadeshi as the “spirit in us which restricts
us to the use and services of our immediate, to the exclusion of the more remote.” This definition is perhaps the best explanation of his concept.

**Economic Dimension of Swadeshi**

Let us first look at the implications of Swadeshi in the field of economics. Gandhi was convinced that the deep poverty prevailing among masses was mainly due to the ruinous departure from the path of Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life. Gandhi advocated that one who follows the spirit of Swadeshi should use only things that are produced by our immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient, and strengthen them in areas where they are found deficient. During the time of India’s struggle for independence Gandhi realised that the economic salvation of India consists in encouraging and reviving indigenous industries. Gandhi found khadi as the necessary and most important corollary of the principle of Swadeshi in its practical application to society. *Khadi* fulfils the kind of service envisaged in Swadeshi. For him, khadi is the Sun of the village solar system. The various industries are the planets which can support khadi. *Khadi* mentality means decentralisation of production and distribution of the necessities of life. Gandhi advocated the concept of Swadeshi in the spirit of universal love and service.

In the Swadeshi economic order there will be healthy exchange of products and not cut-throat competition through the play of market forces. Gandhi explains this ideal situation in the following words: “If we follow the Swadeshi doctrine, it would be your duty and mine to find out neighbours who can supply our wants and to teach them to supply them where they do not know how to proceed, assuming that there are neighbours who are in want of healthy occupation. Then every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and
self-contained unit, exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages where they are not locally producible.” In such an economic system there will be an organic relationship between production, distribution and consumption.

**Political Dimension of Swadeshi**

The application of Swadeshi in politics calls for the revival of the indigenous institutions and strengthening them to overcome some of its defects. Gandhi pleaded the need for internal governance (Swaraj) as early as 1909 in his noted booklet Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule. He wanted to empower the people through political self-governance. His vision of decentralized political system was Panchayati Raj by which the innumerable villages of India were governed. Gandhi further outlined his vision of village Swaraj by introducing the concept of oceanic circle in opposition to pyramidical structure of society, placing individual at the centre of the society. “In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

**Social Dimension of Swadeshi**

Applying the spirit of Swadeshi in the context of Indian social structure, Gandhi initially accepted the institution of Varna associated with it. He welcomed the four-fold division of the society purely based on duties performed by different sections of people. Gandhi considered all professions as equally important. He made an
earnest attempt to overcome the defects of the caste system by discarding certain obnoxious practices which he considered as historical accretion, which was not the integral part of original system. He vehemently opposed the prevailing caste system based on birth and the social status attached to it. That was the reason why he launched one of the most relentless battles against the curse of untouchability which was a part and parcel of the caste system in India. Gandhi looked at the scourge of untouchability as a blot on Hinduism. He was so much convinced that he did not even hesitate to take up cudgels on the behalf of untouchables against the upper caste Hindu orthodoxy. In the process so much animosity was created among orthodox upper caste and several attempts were made to eliminate him. Unmindful of the risks involved, he stuck to the position till the end of his life. He totally identified with the untouchables and their uplift became his primary concern. Similarly he was deeply concerned about the problems and plight of the vulnerable sections of the society viz., Dalits, women, tribals, and so on. He believed that true Swaraj can be attained only by uplifting these deprived sections of the society. Gandhi included the uplift of these sections in his 18 point Constructive Programme. It was primarily drawn taking into account the social realities of our country.

Gandhi’s Constructive Programme aimed at reconstruction of society through voluntary and participatory social action. In a sense the constructive work plays the role of civil society/NGOs. Gandhi looked upon Constructive Programme as a ‘truthful and nonviolent way of winning Poorna Swaraj’.

Swadeshi in Religion

To follow the spirit of Gandhi’s Swadeshi in the field of religion one has to restrict to the ancestral religion. It calls
for the use of one’s immediate religious surroundings. It is the duty of a person to serve one’s own religion by purging its defects, if necessary, in order to purify and keep it pure. There is no need to renounce one’s religion because of imperfections in it and embrace another. On the contrary one should try to enrich one’s own religion by drawing the best from other religions. However Gandhi was not against true conversion and he differentiated it from proselytization. According to Gandhi conversion in the sense of self purification, self realisation is the crying need of the hour. His attitude was not of patronising toleration but developing the spirit of fellowship. His veneration for other faiths was the same as that of his own faith. He believed in the fundamental equality of all religions, what he called Sarvadharma Samabhava. Gandhi’s Swadeshi approach to religion has great significance in the context of growing communal divide and religious fundamentalism in India and other parts of the globe. This approach is essential to promote harmony among the followers of various faiths and preserving the composite culture of a country like India.

Swadeshi in Education

One of the major areas in which Gandhi applied his Swadeshi ideal was the field of education. For him education was meant for all-round development of personality and not purely as a means for earning one’s livelihood. In Hind Swaraj he rejected the British educational system prevailing in India. His primary objection against British educational system was that it was primarily meant for ‘enslaving’ the people of India. It was his firm conviction that the prevailing system of education does not serve the requirements of the country in any form or shape. He believed that education has to be rooted in the culture and traditions of the country. Education through a medium of foreign language put undue stress upon the nerves of the children and they become
foreigners in their own country. They are completely cut off from the realities of life. He placed before the nation an alternative system of education called Nai Talim or Basic education. He defined education as follows: “By Education, I mean, an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore begin the child’s education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training.” In his scheme the craft was the pivot and centre of all educational activities. Through the medium of craft he correlated all other subjects to the central craft. It was a self-sufficient and self-supporting system of education meant for children above the age of seven which was meant to be free and compulsory. He placed before the nation alternative institutions like Gujarat Vidyapith, Kashi Vidyapith and others during the struggle for independence. Later he broadened his concept of basic education and looked upon education as a lifelong process starting from cradle to grave.

Swadeshi in Health Care

Gandhi’s prescription for health was an application of principle of Swadeshi i.e. to live according to the laws of nature. He strongly opposed the modern medical system in his seminal work Hind Swaraj. He went even to the extent of describing hospitals as “institutions for propagating sin.” He rejected the modern medical system primarily on the ground that it is purely curative and not preventive. He advocated a new system of medical care wherein one follows the laws of nature with regard to diet, physical exercise, hygiene and sanitation and a new life style based on self-restraint. He advocated the system of nature cure to prevent the diseases rather than finding a purely drug based cure for them. In this
he underlined the centrality of proper use of earth, water, air sunlight and ether. He primarily emphasised a holistic approach to health care where it will primarily be governed by disciplined way of life. It is also notable that health care was one of his passions since his South African days.

He experimented with different kinds of nature cure including the inexpensive and nutritious food which people could easily avail. Not only that, he was instrumental in establishing a nature cure centre at Urulikanchan near Pune and even started practicing nature cure. In fact during the last years of life a new dimension to nature cure practice was added in the form of Ram nam. It must be made clear that for him Ram nam was not like an ordinary mantra to be chanted. It was a part of his spiritual sadhana based on his firm belief that a man with total internal purity would not fall sick or even he would require no medicine other than Ram nam. Here Ram stands for one of the names of God and one can freely choose any other name of God which appeals to him. That was the reason he refused to take medicine in the end of his life including the Noakhali mission. Ram nam was nothing but a spiritual means for self-purification thereby eliminating all possibilities of illness by keeping the body pure.

An Assessment

It is obvious from the above analysis that Swadeshi is key for basic understanding of the edifice of Gandhi’s philosophy of life. He successfully demonstrated that the Swadeshi spirit could be integrated in every walk of our national life. What is more, he did not stop only at conceptual level of Swadeshi.

He suggested concrete institutional set up in most of the areas of his concern. As stated earlier for Gandhi life was holistic and indivisible and hence he presented an integrated
plan covering virtually all aspects of human life. And that is the most distinctive nature of his thought which could really become a guiding principle for human resurgence. In fact he went beyond it and underlines the oneness of entire creations including the sentient and non-sentient beings. It is real pity that independent India failed to grasp the revolutionary nature of his thought and discarded them in the very initial years of freedom.

TRUSTEESHIP

The theory of trusteeship is Gandhiji’s novel contribution in the sphere of political philosophy. The main thrust is on treating resources as a public trust with man being the trustee, so that the riches of nature and society are equitably used. The theory was intended to combine the advantages of both capitalism and communism, and to socialise property without nationalising it.

According to Gandhi, all material property was a social trust. The owner was not required to take more than what was needed for a moderately comfortable life. The other members of society who were associated with the property were jointly responsible with the owner for its management and were to provide welfare schemes for all. The owner and the rest of the people were to regard themselves as trustees of the property. In his editorial in Harijan (3rd June, 1939,) the concept of trusteeship was elaborately stated.: ‘Suppose I have come by a fair amount of wealth either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me, what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others, the rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community.
It is reported that the theory of trusteeship had excited the attention of a group of socialists who had a long discussion with Gandhi regarding its nature and implication. The result was the writing of a draft on trusteeship. This draft was amended by Gandhi to strengthen its egalitarian thrust. The main principles of trusteeship areas follows.

1) Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order or society into an egalitarian;
2) It does not recognise any right of private ownership of property except in so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
3) It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.
4) Understate regulated Trusteeship an individual will not be free to hold or use wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.

Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that would be allowed to any person in society. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.

There is a remarkable consistency and continuity in the political ideas of Gandhiji. He considered man as embodying the spiritual principle in him which is divine. He argued that the divine nature of man makes religion to engage itself positively with the world. He did not agree that religion should be separated from politics. Politics devoid of religion, according to him, is meaningless. He thought that politics offers great opportunities to serve others and such service is an essential attribute of religion. He considered that ends and means are integral to each other. He applied this principle to the pursuit of truth as well, which he considered as God.
himself. Truth and non-violence as means are inseparable.

Gandhiji was a saint and a moral revolutionary. He believed that violence interrupted the real revolution of the social structure. He sincerely believed that violence would spell the doom of mankind. He thought that a peaceful solution of our problems was not only possible but was the only way to have a real solution.

Gandhism is not a systematic, well worked out political philosophy in the western sense. It does not claim to apply purely logical procedure and scientific methodology as the positivists do. There is, however, a pronounced realism in Gandhism's economic ideas. He regarded the villages as the centre of Indian economic organisation. His economic radicalism is brought out in his championship of the concept of equality of wages for the lawyer, the doctor and the scavengers. His idea of Panchayat raj remained a distant dream till recently, but his arguments for people's participation in governance provoked and also consolidated movements for what is suggested as deepening of democracy in India.

Gandhism is not merely apolitical creed, it is a message. His philosophy wants to bring about a transformation in human life by the supremacy of self-suffering love. He stressed peace, modesty, gentleness and a sense of devout respect for the religious views of others. This comprehensive orientation of Gandhian teachings makes it the moral foundation of socialism and democracy. Gandhi has been hailed as the greatest Indian since Gautama Budha. He made Indian liberation movement into a mass movement. His teachings of non-violence is greatly relevant to the modern world infected with militarism, terrorism, and power politics.
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU (1889-1964)

Jawaharlal Nehru was one of the new nationalist leaders who remained critical both in the freedom struggle and its aftermath. Politically baptised by Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru was not blind follower of his leader, but redefined the nationalist ideology as and when he deemed it fit. In the aftermath of India’s independence he strove to guide India towards a socialist pattern of society following a path based on his interpretation of socialism. He was both a philosopher as well as a practical political leader. He acquired a deeper appreciation of Indian history and philosophy and enriched the basis for subsequent thought and action.

Jawaharlal Nehru began his political activities by his association with the Home Rule Leagues established by Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant. His main contribution in the late twenties was that he stood for the ideal of complete independence for India. With Gandhi’s blessings Nehru became the president of the Indian National Congress at Lahore and the historic independence resolution was passed on the midnight of December 13, 1929. He was the president of the Congress again in 1936, 1937 and 1946. In 1946, he formed the Interim government of India till his death on May 27, 1964. He was an author of reputation and his ‘Glimpses of World History’, ‘Autography’ and the ‘Discovery of India’ are notable contributions to the realm of learning in Indian history and Indian political thought.

VIEW ON SOCIALISM

Nehru's socialism always remained 'humanism in action' by which the creative energy of man seeks liberation from the forces of insecurity of tomorrow and are utilized for creative purposes. He tried throughout his life to associate the entire Indian people in the great enterprise of a socialist India. He laid the firm foundations but left the word
"Socialism to acquire further connotation and denotation with the passage of time...he ensured that there would be no going back on socialism."

Nehru's socialism was in fact enriched by three different streams of thought viz Fabianism, Gandhism and Marxism. From Marx he inherited inevitability of socialism and its scientific approach; from Gandhism purity of means and ethical aspect and from Fabianism he derived reformism, constitutionalism and gradualism. Nehru's socialism synthesises various trends of thought at the level of the ideal. There lay its appeal. In the words of P.C. Joshi "... Nehru neither propounded nor conformed to any single socialist theory or doctrine. His conception of socialism was synthetic to the point of being elected, it is best to characterise it...as a vision which is as much socialist as humanist."

**VIEWS ON SECULARISM**

Nehru had no attraction for any religion. According to him, behind every religion lay a method of approach which was wholly unscientific. But he recognises that religion provides some kind of satisfaction to the inner needs of human nature and give a set of moral and ethical values of life in general. Nehru was not a religious man, nor would he ever spend time, as a routine, for morning and evening worshipping. As Nehru had scientific temper, it was natural that he would be a secularist. Jawaharlal Nehru was an agnostic and not emotionally involved in religious disputations. Nehru’s approach to the role religion played in social life is described by him in the following manner. He wrote thus,: Religion as I saw it practised, and accepted even by thinking minds, whether it was Hinduism or Islam or Buddhism or Christianity, did not attract me. It seemed to be closely associated with superstitious practices and dogmatic beliefs and behind it lay a method of approach to life’s problems which was certainly not that of science. There was
an element of magic about it .....a reliance on the supernatural”.

Nehru’s understanding of secularism was a product of personal attitudes and historical circumstances. Secularism is basically the separation of religion from politics. Politics is associated with public activities. Religion is an individual or personal affair, giving every one the right to practise one’s own religion. Referring to the concept of secularism, Nehru says ‘Some people think that it means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct. What it means is that it is a state which honours all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities; that as a state, it does not allow itself to be attached to one faith or religion, which then becomes the state religion”.

Nehru did not take religion in a narrow sense; religion does not teach hatred and intolerance; all religions speak the truth; that is the essence of each religion. He believes that the religious basis of politics does not help social progress. At the same time, Nehru had respect for Gandhi’s view on the role of religion in politics. He was of the view that Gandhi had a moral view of politics .For Gandhi religion can teach that politicians to be moral and ethical; it has a role in society for teaching moral values and maintaining an ethical order. But at the same time he opposed the formation of political parties on communal or religious grounds. This will create hatred between different religions and hatred breeds violence and intolerance among people. Without social harmony, no social progress is possible.

Nehru was an out and out secularist. He disapproved both the Hindu communalism as well as the Muslim communalism. His loyalty to secularism has been a great relief to the minorities in India. He was a secularist in the sense that he transcended parochial consideration and looked
from a broad humanistic perspective. His secularism was founded in India’s extraordinary variety culture which was a product of unbroken history. According to Nehru, the Muslims were converts belonging to the original Indo-Aryan stock. In his Discovery of India he wrote that the ‘fact of subsequent conversion to other faiths did not deprive them of their heritage, just as the Greeks, after their conversion to Christianity did not lose their pride in the mighty achievements of their ancestors, or the Italians in the great days of the Roman republic and early empire. ‘Nehru’s understanding of secularism has been strengthened due to his liberal cultural upbringing.

The concept of secularism as perceived and defined by Nehru constitutes the bedrock of Indian nationalism, which was subsequently incorporated into the Indian constitution. Nehru’s understanding of secularism is primarily rooted in his emphasis on political and social equality. His exposition of secularism emphasises the following dimensions.

1) The State does not either encourage or discourage religion. It means freedom of religion and conscience, including freedom for those who have no religion.

2) It conveys the idea of social and political equality;

3) Nehru promoted secularism through social transformation and development. It means eradicating inequality and backwardness.

Despite his liberal approach towards religion, it is not easy to declare Nehru irreligious; he was, not opposed to religion. He frankly recognised that religion supplied a deeper craving of human beings’. His major concern was that the state should not intervene in religious matters. It is beyond dispute that Nehru was sincere in his advocacy of
secularism as a political and cultural value. Due to his secular approach he succeeded in solving intra party and inter-state politics.

VIEWS ON DEVELOPMENT

In his economic ideas, Nehru was a socialist of the Fabian brand. He chose a mid-way between capitalism and Marxism. His outstanding contribution in the international field has been his advocacy of a peaceful and secure world. Nehru’s modernity was a vision for rapid technological and relational (institutional as well as social) change undertaken through dynamic policy formulation and their application through state interventions and mass participation. It was intended to transform the feudal structures (basically zamindari system) and their related associations, both ideational and actual, and to replace them with a democratic structure, both societal and governmental as it would help in developing a truly free India. This democratic social structure in India as dreamt by Nehru was to move away from parochialism and traditional systems that prevailed in pre-colonial and colonial phase.

Interesting to note, Nehru much before independence called to abolish zamindari system as it caused more harm to economy as it involved exploitation and oppression of masses. In short, he wanted India to be a modern state without any external interventions too, as colonialism caused resource degradation. We find Nehru's policies as that of inspired from European enlightenment and Industrial revolution that went to break the coercive structures of feudalism.

Putting an end to poverty, ignorance, disease and inequality of opportunities were the key goals Nehru outlined on the eve of India’s independence. Nehru valued these objectives not merely for their instrumental value to
economic growth, but for their own sake. To understand Nehru's model of development we need to keep in mind his ideas behind economic planning. Years before India attained independence, Nehru realised the significance of planning for the modernization and development of national life and society.

Having faith in the Indian people, he sought to build a democratic polity, an economically modernised nation and a country whose role in the community of nations he perceived clearly. He was both a philosopher as well as a practical political leader. He did learn the western style of living and life, and to that extent he did imbibe in himself the western culture and western democratic thought with a clear tilt towards a near-communist thinking.

Nehru's biggest contribution to economic strategy was in committing the nation to a policy of planned economic development. This was by no means the easiest thing to do. Within the country, he had to contend with his Gandhian colleagues who saw in this imposition of over centralised control or to say muscle flexing by the union government, while they were emotionally committed to village self-sufficiency. Nehru has been often accused of harbouring in his Cabinet men with not only divergent but conflicting views and also those whose faith in socialism was at best lukewarm. And occasionally Nehru had to face severe criticism within the party itself.

Planning was equally an anathema to Western Democracies whose financial aid was a critical factor in the task of development. (Soviet Russia was yet to adopt economic aid as an instrument of foreign policy). Whatever one's opinion may be on the functioning of the Planning Commission, there is no doubt that its very constitution, with the Prime Minister as its Chairman, was an important
landmark in the economic policy and development of the country. It was his strenous accomplishment that led to the launching of the modern type of industrialization with its emphasis on heavy industries.

As mentioned earlier there was another section—well-meaning and sincere—in the country which felt that such a pattern of industrialization was wholly contrary to what Gandhiji would have wished. The emphasis on heavy industries was anticipated with a possibility that it would cause neglect of agriculture, end to Khadi and village industries and critiqued that Nehru was ignorant towards the problem of unemployment. It should be kept in mind that agriculture then and even today is the backbone of Indian economy, hence certain sections had serious concern over the future of agricultural sector. Before we move to explore Nehru's idea of development we need to analyse his views on scientific temper and socialism.

**Scientific Temper and Socialism**

To Nehru, Science constituted the very essence of life, without which, he would say, the modern world would have found it difficult to survive. Science, being the dominant factor in modern life, Nehru asserts, must guide the social system and economic structure. Emphasising the achievements of science which include mighty and fundamental changes in numerous fields, what is the most important of all changes is the development of the scientific outlook in man. Together with the scientific method, the new outlook of man alone could offer to mankind hope and expectation of a good life and an ending of the agony of the world, Nehru argued.

Addressing the Indian Science Congress in late thirties, Nehru stated: "Politics led me to economics and this led me inevitably to science, and the scientific approach to
all our problems and to life itself. It was science alone that could solve these problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and literacy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people."

Nehru was of the opinion that no ideology other than socialism could fit in the democratic pattern as that of India. He was convinced that no democracy could succeed without imbibing socialist pattern. The essence of socialism, Nehru used to say, lies in "the control by the state of the means of production", and the idea inspiring socialism was the prevention of the exploitation of the poor by the rich. The socialist way, to Nehru, was that of "the ending of poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection." He laughed off Gandhi’s claim to being a socialist and rejected the Marxian thesis of the dictatorship of proletariat. Under India's peculiar conditions, Nehru came to advocate the socialistic, if not socialism, pattern of society.

Nehru's concept of socialism was not the abolition of private property, but the replacement of the present profit system by the higher ideal of cooperative service. His socialism was not the state ownership of the means of production, but was their societal and cooperative ownership. Nehru brought socialism close to democracy. Nehru's socialism has the distinctive characteristic of progressive industrialisation through which alone the Indian economic problems (poverty, backwardness, "low rate of production) could be solved and through which alone the modern India could be built.

He strongly believed that in industrialisation, "the only solution for this lay in utilising modern science and technology for accelerating the progress of industrialisation on which depended also the prospects of agricultural
development". For industrialisation, Nehru ruled out the capitalistic model and pleaded the socialist model by limiting the same to nationalisation of certain key industries and cooperative approach in agriculture while allowing the private sector to participate in industry and agriculture. That was what one may say the essence of socialistic pattern of society. .. The model which was made to work through (1) economic planning; (ii) mixed economy, (iii) five years plans. Nehru knew that the socialistic pattern of society was "not socialism in its pure form but this form would," he was convinced, "lead the country in the direction of socialism."

Nehru's concept of socialism had a vision of future India and of modernising India. He wrote: "For we have to build India on a scientific foundation to develop her industries, to change that feudal character of her land system and bring her agriculture in time with modern methods to develop the social services which she lacks so utterly today." If India has to modernise itself, it must, Nehru said, "lessen her religiosity and turn to science. She must get rid of her exclusiveness in thought and social habit which has become like a prison to her, stunting her spirit and preventing growth."

**Planned Development**

Historically, the Congress party was persuaded by the arguments supporting planning for development. Contrary to Gandhi’s open opposition to planned development, the Congress party showed ample interest in socialistic means, including planning and heavy industrialisation as ‘essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove gross inequalities’ since 1929. Within two years, the 1931 Karachi Congress adopted a resolution insisting on state ownership of ‘key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport’.
Nehru, in his 1936 Faizpur presidential address, argued strongly in favour of heavy industrialisation and coordination of human resources through planning. Planning seems to have provided the Congress stalwarts with a platform to articulate different ideological positions. Drawing on their respective ideological leanings, Jawaharlal Nehru hailed industrialism while Gandhi opposed it, since he felt that instead of contributing to the general welfare, machine civilisation would not only expose Indians to a worse kind of exploitation but also lead to a general degradation of human life.

In accordance with Nehruvian model of development economy was being expanded into rural hinterland through land reforms, agricultural cooperatives, bank loans, subsidies, cottage industries, etc. Nehru had argued that ‘scientific as well as mechanized agriculture (has) to be promoted and attention given to providing better ploughs, seeds and manure … (also) to extending credit and market facilities …. Intensive cultivation to enable not only self-sufficiency but a surplus was crucial if India were to progress’.

In urban areas, it was primarily through the production process of state-owned capital, euphemistically called the public sector which reserved the right to start new industries ‘in coal, iron and steel, aircraft manufacturing, ship-building, telephone and telegraph, materials and minerals, and in munitions, atomic energy and railways’

The focus was on growth which essentially meant enhanced production (which itself was the result of improved techniques based on scientific advancement), industrialization, capital formation and expanded reproduction of bourgeois social formation that negated pre-capitalist relations. For all this, ‘the state (was to) control the
principal means of production and strategic points of the economy’.

The modernization drive hinged on planned development which intended to (i) pre-determine the objectives of different projects proposed for initiation, (ii) regulate the market, (iii) check the crisis of unbridled production leading to glut, (iv) generate resources to fund projects and (v) to industrialize all the regions to create a uniform capital-labour relations and market economy. It initiated scientific management to enhance its profit through constant introduction of new technology in every sphere and to improve productivity and the quality of products.

The idea was that scientific management would ensure non-conflicting capital-labour relations. Nehru reiterated this, time and again, in his speeches: ‘the approach had to be clearly defined and production formulated and controlled in the right direction and at the right pace … Merely to make a list of schemes and up the cost without formulating basic policies was not planning … The purpose of planning was controlled growth, balance in agriculture and industry, and between production, consumption and purchasing power, all maintained in equilibrium on an ever-rising spiral’.

**An Assessment**

The Nehruvian state, under the rubric of planned development and nation building, created new markets (which subterraneous undermined the semi-feudal relations), and through it speeded up the transformation of the isolated diversities of the village autarkies into a unifying commonality of a homogeneous society. The market, through the standardized attributes of the production process and the general features of the economy, generated similar social requirements and created a kind of interdependence among people across diverse regions, facilitating integration and universalism.
M. N. ROY (1886-1954)

Manvendra Nath Roy, whose original name was Narendra Nath Battacharya was born on 1886 and died on 1954, in his early years M.N Roy was influenced by the writings of Swami Vivekananda, Bakim Chandra, Daynanda Saraswthi, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghosh and V.D Savarker. In 1910 Roy was sentenced to imprisonment in connection with Howrah conspiracy case. Roy had the unique distinction of working with Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky. He began his political life as a militant nationalist and ended a radical humanist.

M.N Roy paved through at least three phases in his career. In the first phase, he was a national revolutionary, smuggling arms for the terrorists of Bengal. In the second phase, Roy was a Marxist engaged in active communist movement first in Mexico and then in Russia, China and India. In the final phase, Roy emerged as a radical humanist, completing his journey from Nationalism to communism and from communism to Radical Humanism.

In 1922, M.N Roy made a sociological study of contemporary India in his ‘India in Transition in which differed from the proposed solutions of the problems of India in transition. Towards the end of 1922, he has published India’s problem and His solutions. In this work he criticized the medievalism and conservatism of the Gandhian social theology. In addition to these books, he has written several
books and published several articles in reputed journals. By 1936 Roy has further intensified his campaign against Gandhism. He condemned Gandhism as a reactionary social philosophy teaching the impracticable concept of social harmony. In 1937, he founded his weekly Independent India which was later renamed Radical Humanist in 1949. He regarded the Gandhian concept of Non-violence as subtitle intellectual device for concealing the capitalist exploitation of the country.

The philosophical writings of Roy indicate a breakaway from his Marxian affiliations. As a person, Marx evokes great praise from Roy. He regards Marx as a merciless critic of social injustice. He considers Marx as a humanist and a lover of freedom. Hence, Roy wanted to restate the humanist, libertarian, moralist principals of Marxian after freeing it from the dogmas of economic determinism.

According to Roy, the materialism of Marxism is dogmatic and unscientific. Roy is critical of the empirical account of knowledge that Marxism provides thus neglecting the creative role of the human beings. Roy believes that the dialectical materialism of Marx is materialist only in nature. According to Roy, the Marxian interpretation if history is defective because it allows slender role to mental activity in the social process. History cannot be interpreted solely in the reference to materialistic objectivism. The intelligence of human being and their cumulative actions are very powerful social forces.

Roy also criticizes the Marxian theory of class struggle. According to Roy, Marx’s theory of class struggle has subordinated individual consciouness. He was also critical of Marx giving too much importance to the working class. Roy believes that polarization of capitalist society into
the exploiting and the working class never takes place. Again, Roy did not regard surplus value as a peculiar feature of capitalism. He believes that the creation of surplus value and accumulation of capital were also in a socialist society.

**RADICAL HUMANISM**

In the later years of his life (1947-1954) Roy became an exponent of New Humanism. Human it elements of thought can be traced to several schools and epochs of western philosophy. There were humanist tends in Protagoras, Erasman, Buchanau and Herder. Roy felt that the advance of science was a factor for the liberation of man’s creative energies. Science had enhanced the creatively of man and emancipated him from the dominated of superstitions and fears. Though Roy influenced by the scientific materialism of Hobbes, Ethics of Spinoza and secular politics of Locke, he reconciled all these to propound a rational idea of freedom with the concept of necessarily. The central purpose of Roy’s Radical Humanism is to coordinate the philosophy of nature with social philosophy and ethics in a monistic system. It is for this reason that Roy claims it a humanist as well as materialist, naturalist as well as rationalist, creativist as well as determinist.

Roy’s theory of New Humanism revolves around Man. Man is the product of physical universes. It is the man who creates society, state and other institutions and values for his own welfare. As a Radical Humanist, his philosophical approach in individualistic. The individual should not be subordinated either to a clan or to a nation. According to Roy, man has two basic traits one reason the other, the urge for freedom. The reason in man echoes the harmony of the universe. He states that every human behavior is rational, though it may appear as irrational. Man tries to find out the laws of nature in order to realize his freedom. This urge for
freedom leads him to a search for knowledge. While rationality provides dynamisms to a man, the urge for freedom gives him direction. The interaction of reason and freedom leads to the expression of cooperative spirit as manifested in social relationship.

According to Roy, humanity is passing through a period of crisis. The fundamental problem is to ensure individual freedom against the encroachment of the state. Roy is aware of the coercive power of the state. He defines state as the political organization of society. The functions of state are the welfare of people. According to him, the state must exist and discharge its limited functions along with other equally important and autonomous social organizations. Thus, Roy reduces the functions of the state to the minimum. He pleaded for decentralization where maximum possible autonomy should be granted to the local units.

Roy distinguishes his new humanism from the French and German schools of Humanism of the 19th century. New Humanism is based on the researches of physical science, sociology, philosophy and other branches of knowledge. Its philosophical foundation is provided by materialism and its methodology is mechanistic. It professes confidence in the creative power of man. Man derives his sovereignty from his creative achievement in the understanding and partial conquest of nature. New Humanism, according to Roy, claims to reassert the sovereignty of man by emphasizing that history is the record of man’s activities and state or society has no power to impose absolute power of man. New Humanism is based on a mechanistic cosmology and materialistic metaphysics.

Man derives rationality from nature through biological evolution. Thus Roy claims that humanism is a philosophy
based on a synthesis of the achievement of modern knowledge.

Roy was in favour of abolition of party system in India. He advocates humanist politics. This will lead to purification and rationalization of politics. According to Roy” party politics has given rise to power politics”. He laments about the evils of party politics that exist where innocent and ignorant people are exploited in the elections. Thus he favored the abolition of party system which will enable politics to operate without the incentive of power.

Roy’s New Humanism is cosmopolitan in its outlook. New Humanism is pledged to the idea of a common wealth and fraternity of freeman. He advocated a world federation. In his well-known work, Reason, Romanticism and Revolution, Roy wrote thus: New Humanism is cosmopolitan. A cosmopolitan common wealth of spiritually free men would not be limited by the boundaries of national states-capitalist, fascist, socialist, communist or any other kind which will gradually disappear under the impact of the twentieth century renaissance of Man’

Roy makes a distinction between cosmopolitanism and internationalism. He pleads for a spiritual community or a cosmopolitan humanism. Internationalism postulates the existence of separate nation states. Roy believes that true world government can be built only the decentralization of nation states.

M.N Roy has been one of the most important political thinkers of the modern Indian political thought. His work ‘Reason, Romanticism and Revolution’ is a significant contribution to the history of western thought. He began his academic pursuit as a Marxist, but gradually restated all the propositions of Marx. He gave a moral restatement of Marxism.
RAM MANOHAR LOHIA (1910-1967)

The growth of socialist thought as a philosophy of social and economic reconstruction is mostly the product of the western impact on India. One of the leading figures of the freedom struggle in India, Lala Lajpat Rai was considered by some critics as the first writer on Socialism and Bolshevism in India. The Marxist leader, M. N Roy was critical of Lala Lajpat Rai’s writings and considered him as ‘a bourgeois politician with sympathy for socialism’. The socialist movement became popular in India only after the First World War and the Russian revolution. The unprecedented economic crisis of the 1920’s coupled with the capitalist and imperialist policies of the British government created spiraling inflation and increasing employment among the masses. The failure of the two civil disobedience movements of 1930 and 1932 and the compromising attitude of the Congress at the two round Table conferences made a number of young leaders disillusioned. Accordingly, the frustrated leaders within the Indian National Congress formed socialist organization in different parts of India. During the thirties, Jawaharlal Nehru was considered as a great champion of the socialist philosophy.

By 1934, many socialist groups were formed in different parts of the country. The birth of the Congress Socialist Party in May 1934 was a landmark in the history of the socialist movement in India. The Congress Socialist Party provided an all India platform to all the socialist groups in India. Ashok Mehta’s ‘Democratic Socialism, and studies in Asian Socialism’, Acharya Narendra Dev’s ‘Socialism and National Revolution’ Jayaprakash Narayan’s Towards Struggle, and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia’s The Mystery of Sir Stafford Crippsetc., played a significant role in spreading the messages of socialism in India.
Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia may be regarded as the most unconventional and original theoretician among socialist thinkers in India. His speeches were severely critical and were packed with statistics. He played an important role during the freedom movement of the country. Like many other Indian thinkers, the thought process of Lohia was shaped by an activist life lived by him. Being a prominent leader of the socialist movement in both pre- and post-independence times, his theoretical explorations in various issues confronting India were enriched by the empirical input drawn from various movements he led or participated in.

Born in a village in Faizabad district of Uttar Pradesh on 23rd March, 1910, Lohia was one of the few nationalist leaders in the country having his roots in rural India which probably conditioned his thinking process. Lohia’s early initiation in the national movement was marked by two remarkable features. One, his meeting with Gandhi along with his father and listening to his views on like Stayagraha, non-violence and struggle for the independence of the country so much influenced the tender mind of Lohia that he became a Gandhian and remained so throughout his life. Two, imbued with the love for his mother land, he became a freedom fighter at an early age when he organised a small mourning shut –down of the death of Tilak in 1920. His participation in the national movement unabated till the liberation of India.

**VIEWS ON SOCIALISM.**

In 1952, as president of Congress Socialist Party, Lohia pleaded for a greater incorporation of Gandhian ideas in socialist thought. He advocated the significance of a decentralised economy based upon the resuscitation of cottage industries. He asked the Indian socialists to understand the importance of small machines which could
utilise maximum labour power with even small capital investment. Developing his argument in favour of Gandhian economy, Lohia explained that the world today was in the grip of two systems and the third one was in the making. He argued that ‘Capitalism and Communism are almost fully elaborated systems, and the whole world is in their grip, and the result is poverty and war and fear. The third idea is also making itself felt on the world stage. It is still inadequate, and it has not been fully elaborated, but it is open” Lohia called this idea the true socialist idea. This socialist idea, to him, is based on Gandhian ideas of decentralised economy and village government.

He, therefore, urged the importance of small scale cottage industries as visualised by Gandhiji for meeting the socio-economic needs of rural people. However, this type of thought orientation was not liked by many of his colleagues. In June 1953, Ashok Mehta propounded his thesis of the political compulsions of the backward economy in which he tried to maintain that the ideology of the Congress was coming near to that of the socialists, and hence he urged for an ideological alliance between the Congress and the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). Lohia, as counterbalance to it, presented his equidistant theory and asserted that the socialists were still as much equidistant from the Congress as they were from the Communists. However, he saw no harm in making an electoral adjustment with the Congress under special circumstances.

Lohia not only contributed to the development of socialist movement in the country but he also reflected on certain question of political importance and thereby tried to build up his own socialist theory. Contemplating the process of history, he tells in his famous work, ‘Wheel of History’ that history appears to move in an inexorable cyclical order and that it moves without emotion. He dismisses Hegelian
and Marxist interpretations of history for their answers do not provide us with a definite clue to the working of history. Lohia believes that human history is characterised by a tussle between crystallized casters and loosely cohesive classes.

NEW SOCIALISM

Lohia’s scathing attack on the western ideological constructs appears to be aimed at preparing the ground for establishing socialism as the most appropriate theoretical format for steering India on the path of an equitable and all-round socio-economic development. While he accepted socialism as the viable ideology for India and tried to conceptualise it in the light of the Gandhian inputs, he came out with the idea of New socialism in 1959 with the plea that it offers a comprehensive system of socio-economic and political life for the people of India.

Lohia in his theory of new socialism visualises a four pillar state. In this four pillar state, an attempt is made to synthesise the opposed concepts of centralisation and decentralisation. In this system, the village, the province and the central government all retain importance and are integrated in a system of functional federalism. The cohesive bond is provided by the performance of function.

His theory of new socialism had six basic elements. They are equalitarian standards in the areas of income and expenditure, growing economic interdependence, word parliament system based on adult franchise, democratic freedoms inclusive of right to private life, Gandhian technique of individual and collective civil disobedience, and dignity and rights of common man.

Lohia’s socialist state has the following features.

1) One-fourth of all governmental and plan expenditures shall be through village, district
and city panchayats;

2) Police shall remain subordinate to village, city and district panchayats or any of their agencies;

3) the post of collector shall be abolished and all his functions will be distributed among various bodies in the district;

4) Agriculture industry and other property, which is nationalised will, as far as possible, be and administered by village, city and district panchayats;

5) Economic decentralisation, corresponding to political and administrative decentralisation, will have to be brought about through maximum utilisation of small machines;

Lohia was an exponent of decentralised socialism. The socialist state, according to him, must aim at the decentralisation of both economic and political powers. The world liberal as well as proletarian, has hitherto known only the two pillar state. But democracy, according to Lohia, can warm the blood of the common man only when constitutional theory starts practising the state of four limbs, the village, the district the province, and the centre. Organically covered by the flesh and blood of equalities already indicated, this constitutional skeleton of the four-pillar state can bring to democracy joyous fulfilment. He also felt the necessity of creating a fifth pillar in the form of a world government. This is necessary for bringing about peace in the world.

Lohia was convinced that the traditional and organised socialism was a dead doctrine and a dying organisation. In its place, he urged for a new kind of socialism. While discussing his new socialism, he states that equality, democracy, non-violence, decentralisation and socialism
are the five supreme principles, not alone of India’s politics but also of all world action. ‘New socialism’ must aim at the attainment of these principles.

In his ‘New socialism’ Lohia states that today seven revolutions are taking place everywhere in the world. These revolutions are:

1) for equality between man and woman
2) against political, economic and spiritual inequality based on skin, colour etc;
3) Against inequality of backward and high group or castes based long tradition, and forgiving special opportunities to the backward;
4) against foreign enslavement and for freedom and world democratic rule,
5) For equality and planned production and against the existence and attachment for private capital.
6) against unjust encroachment on private life and for democratic method;
7) against weapons and for Satyagraha.

Thus, Lohia advocated socialism in the form of a new civilisation which could be referred to as socialist humanism’ He gave a new direction and dimension to the socialist movement in India. He wanted the power of the state to be controlled, guided and framed by people’s power and believed in the theology of democratic socialism and non-violent methodology as instruments of socio-economic transformation. He urged all the socialist parties of the world to think in terms of an effective world union through world government.
JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN (1902-1979)

Jayaprakash Narayan’s life happens to be a life of endless quest for getting suitable ways and means to resolve the socio-economic and political conditions of the toiling masses of the country. Born on 11 October 1902 in a village in Chapra district in Bihar, he appeared to be an unconventional boy even from his early childhood. While in his studies he usually opted for the uncommon subjects defying the prevailing social norms of his time. His studies almost got ruptured in 1921 when under the influential exhortation of Maulana Azad, he made up his mind to quit studies and join the national movement under Gandhi. Sensing JP’s growing inclination towards the national movement, his parents motivated him to go abroad for his higher studies in USA. As a student in USA he come in contact with east European left-wing intellectuals and became converted to Marxism. He was also influenced by the writings of M.N. Roy.

On his return to India in 1929, JP joined the national movement with the intention of practising socialism in India. His imprisonment in the wake of the civil disobedience movement at Nasik jail brought him close to the other like-minded nationalists which later on culminated in the formation of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in April 1934. However, his passion for Marxism was so strong that in 1936, J.P. published a booklet ‘Why Socialism arguing that today more than ever before is possible to say that there is only one type, one theory of socialism – Marxism. The Marxist phase of JP’s life seemingly continued during the decade of the 1930’s after which he drifted to the philosophy of democratic socialism and finally turning out to be sarvodaya in the post-independence times.
TOTAL REVOLUTION

Total Revolution (Sampurana Kranti) was the last intellectual intervention of Jayaprakash Narayanan in his unending quest to seek and establish such a socio economic and political order in the country which would turn India into a democratic, federal participatory, equitable and prosperous nation in the world. The concept of total revolution was for the first time evolved by Vionoba Bhava during the 1960’s to articulate his desire to the need of a comprehensive movement in the country which would transform all the aspects of life in order to mould a new man .......to change human life and create a new world. The idea was picked up by JP to call upon the people in 1975 to work for total revolution in order to stem the rot creeping into all aspects of public life and create a whole new world encompassing the basic elements of socio-economic and political order that he had been advocating in the name of Sarvodaya.

The context of JP calling for the total revolution was provided by the growing authoritarianism in the functioning of the government machinery headed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In fact, his call for sampurna kranti became the rallying cry for the movement against Indira Gandhi’s government J.P’s concept of total revolution is a holistic one. JP is indebted to Gandhi for developing the doctrine of total revolution. He wrote thus’, “Gandhiji’s non-violence was not just a plea for law and order, or a cover for the status quo, but a revolutionary philosophy. It is, indeed, a philosophy of total revolution, because it embraces personal and social ethics and values of life as much as economic, political and social institutions and processes.

JP has pointed out that the French revolution started with the mission of realising liberty, equality and fraternity. But it ended in Bonapartism and the humiliations at
waterloo. The Russian revolution started with the mission of redeeming the rights of the proletariat and the other suppressed sections of society. But power has not percolated to the Russian people and the cry of the withering away of the state is now relegated only to the field of antiquarian intellectual dialectics. Hence if the basic aim is to transfer decision-making policy execution and judicial arbitration to the people there has to be change in the technique of revolution. JP, hence, advocates, ‘persuasion and conversion – social revolution through human revolution would necessarily postulate a comprehensive programme of radical social construction for total development and welfare.

Jayaprakash Narayan’s doctrine of total revolution is a combination of seven revolutions-social economic, political, cultural, ideological or intellectual, educational and spiritual. He was not every rigid regarding the number of these revolutions. He said the seven revolutions could be grouped as per demands of the social structure in a political system. He said, ‘for instance, the cultural may include educational and ideological revolutions. And if culture is used in an anthropological sense, it can embrace all other revolutions. He said, ‘for instance the cultural may include educational and ideological sense, it can embrace all other revolutions. He said economic revolution may be split up into industrial, agricultural, technological revolutions etc. Similarly intellectual revolutions may be split up into two-scientific and philosophical.

The concept of total revolution became popular in 1974 in the wake of mass movements in Gujarat and Bihar. He was deeply disturbed by the political process of degeneration in the Indian politics. He was deeply moved by the mutilation of democratic process, political corruption and full of moral standards more public life. In a letter to a friend in August 1976, JP defined the character of the total Revolution.
He wrote. “Total revolution is a permanent revolution. It will always go on keep on hanging both our personal and social lives. This revolution knows no respite, no halt, and certainly not complete halt.

JP’s Total revolution involved the developments of peasants, workers, harijans, tribes and all weaker sections of society. He was always interested in empowering and strengthening India’s democratic system. He was deeply disturbed by the growth of corruption in the Indian political system. He wrote that ‘corruption is eating into the vitals of our political life. It is disturbing development, undermining the administration and making of mockery of all laws and regulations. It is eroding people’s faith and exhausting their proverbial patience.’

The concept of total revolution aimed at reversing the tide of the political and economic system of the country ostensibly due to the concentration of political and economic powers in few hands and restoring the sanctity of institutions and procedures in those sheers of life by decentralising such powers in the hands of the masses. In the sphere of political system, JP noted the inherent fallacies of the prevailing parliamentary system of government as its basic features such as electoral system, party-based political processes and increasing concentration of powers in the hands of the Prime Minister etc, are bound to convert the system into a corrupt, tyrannical and farcical one. Hence, in his conceptualisation of total revolution, JP was firm on reforming the electoral system in such a way that the people can vote in an incorruptible manner and accordance with their free conscience. Moreover in such a system, there would be no place for political parties and the potential concentration of powers in few hands would be effectively curbed.
Like political power, JP was also convinced of the perverse effects of the concentration of economic power in the hands of few in the society. He, therefore, called for total recasting of the economic system of the country as well. JP visualised an economic order for the country where there would be progressive socialisation of the means of resources by way of establishing co-operative societies and voluntary associations to manage the resources with a view to ensure prosperity for all.

JP’s call for executing the idea of total Revolution in 1975 was accompanied by some sort of blue print for the volunteers to carry out the implementation of the scheme of holistic transformation of Indian society. He exhorted the people to rise against the authoritarian and inimical policies and programmes of the government. In its operationalisation, however, the idea of total revolution occasionally evoked misplaced perceptions in the minds of its practitioners.

Jayaprakash was a great humanitarian and his doctrine of Total revolution is not only a system of social and economic reconstruction of the Indian society but it is also a philosophy of moral and spiritual rebirth of the Indian people. Indeed he was the greatest mass leader in Indian history after Gandhiji. He was one of the greatest defenders of democracy in the 20th century. As an intellectual, he will continue to have an abiding place in the domain of the social sciences.
DR. B. R. AMBDEKAR (1891-1956)

Babasahed Ambedkar is one of the foremost thinkers of modern India. He is unique thinker of the world who himself suffered much humiliation, poverty and social stigma, yet he rose to great educational and philosophical heights. He was a revolutionary social reformer who demonstrated great faith in democracy and the moral basis of a society. He was one of the principal critics of India’s national movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. His advent into the socio-political scenario of India led to his emergence as the messiah of the depressed classes, which he decided to fight to its logical end. His major role was to bring about a transformation in the consciousness of the downtrodden, and attacked the very basis of sociological institutions.

Among the galaxy of thinkers in modern India, DR. B.R. Ambedkar stands on a pedestal quite different from others for a variety of reasons. First, his personality exemplifies the unique saga of an untouchable being able to fight the massive social diabilities by sheer formidable courage never- say-attitude to life to become an eminent constitutionalist, distinguished parliamentarian, scholar and jurist, and above all, the leader of the Depressed Classes. Second, he reinvented the entire notion of anti-untouchability and social reform movement not only in Maharashtra but the whole of India by evolving a flexible, well-reasoned and multi-pronged strategy to argue with and fight against all those who mattered but resisted the struggle of the
untouchables to secure a dignified and respectful place in the Indian society. Third, recognizing him as an innovator of sorts, Ambedkar may be credited with reconceptualising whole notion of emancipating of untouchables in India by broadening the horizons of the concept of emancipation of untouchables to include within its ambit certain other critical aspects of empowerment which remained largely out of its ambit till date.

Ambedkar was born in the untouchable Mahar caste in Maharashtra on 14th April, 1891. His father and grand father served in the army and were of well-to-do family. But the stigma of their being members of Mahar community continued to influence their position into the caste-ridden society of Maharashtra. It is believed that Mahars were the original inhabitants of Maharashtra. The term Maharashtra was coined on the basis of Mahar Rashtra. However, Mahars were treated as untouchables by the caste Hindus. Hence, he suffered all kinds of social humiliations in childhood as well as his subsequent life on account of the stigma of untouchability. In the classroom he was not allowed to sit along with the rest of the students. In spite of all these hurdles, he successfully completed his matriculation certificate at Elphinstone High school in Bombay. He then enrolled, thanks to a scholarship, at the prestigious Elphinstone College, from which he graduated in 1912 with a BA Degree. Then he won another scholarship to pursue post graduate studies in the United States. He secured an MA from Columbia University in New York and then left in 1916 for London where he was admitted to Grays Inn to study law. He was influenced by the liberal and radical thought currents in America and Europe, more particularly with the thought he emerged following the French revolution. His MA dissertation on Administration and Finance of the East India Company and his PhD thesis on the Evolution of the
Provincial Finance in British India at Columbia University were brilliant contributions to the analysis of colonial economy and politics and to anti-colonial economic thought.

He then tried to settle down as a lawyer in Bombay but as an untouchable found it hard to attract clients. Deeply hurt, he decided to devote his life to campaign against the evils of caste system and in July 1924 set up an association for the welfare of the Ostracized which he held till 1928.

The 1930s marked Ambedkar’s transition to party politics. He demanded from the British a separate electorate for the untouchables. The British government partly concurred with his arguments in the arbitration which it announced on August 14, 1932. Gandhi, who feared that the measure would threaten Hindu unity, immediately went on a fast in jail at Poona. This move forced Ambedkar to relinquish his demand for separate electorates and to sign the Poona pact on September 24, 1932. In 1936 Ambedkar created his first Political party, the Independent Labour Party which contested 17 seats in the elections of 1937 in the Bombay province and won 15 of them. The Second World War and the demand of the Muslim League for Pakistan introduced new and complex issues in the national movement. 1942, he established a new organization known as the Scheduled Castes Federation replacing the Independent Labour party.

Ambedkar was elected to the constituent Assembly from Bengal and in the Assembly, made a plea for a united India with the Congress and the Muslim League working together. He was appointed as the chairman of the Drafting committee of the Indian constitution and became the law Minister in the Nehru cabinet in August 1947. In both these capacities he conceptualized, formulated and defended a free and equalitarian frame work for public life in India with
extensive safeguard for the minorities and marginalized sections. He resigned from the Nehru cabinet in 1951 and strove to work out an alternative to the lack of social and economic democracy in India and the inability of the constitutional democracy to effectively function in its absence. Such a search eventually led him to conversion to Buddhism and the proposal for the establishment of the Republican Party of India. He died on 6 December, 1956.

CASTE SYSTEM

The social thought of Ambedkar basically revolves around the idea of understanding the dynamics of caste system in India and waging a tireless crusade against the curse of untouchability. In his work ‘Who were the Shudras?’ Ambedkar precisely analysed the Rig Veda and found a typical explanation of the origin of the caste system in the Purusha Shukta. The text explains the origin of the caste system from the sacrificial dismemberment of the divine man, the Virat Purusha whose various limbs gave birth to various castes in the following order: ‘His mouth became the Brahman/the Warrior [Kshatriya] was the product of his arms/His thighs were the Artisan [Vaishaya]/From his feet were born the servant [Shudras]’. Ambedkar denounced such an overt justification of graded inequality by the Purusha Shukta on the plea that ‘no society has an official gradation laid down, fixed and permanent, with an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt’.

Along with offering an innovative critique of the Hindu religious scriptures that allowed for a justified standing for caste system in the society, Ambedkar set on to explain the idea of untouchables in his monograph ‘The Untouchables: Who were they and why they became Untouchables?’ published in 1948. In this context, he
evolved the idea of ‘Broken Men’ to demarcate those who after being defeated in the tribal wars were broken into bits and wandered around in various parts of the land. Such broken men in India, over the years, became the follower of Buddhism given the emphasis of this religion on the equality and dignity of every person in society. However, when, under the pressure of Brahmans, the majority of people returned to the fold of Hinduism, the broken men remained the follower of Buddhism, thereby coming into direct retaliatory ploys of the Brahmans.

Annihilation of Caste is one of the foremost monographs published by Ambedkar aimed at explaining the exploitative nature of caste and calling for its annihilation in order to secure a social order based on equal status and dignity for all. As explained earlier, this brilliant peace of thought-provoking write-up was penned as a lecture to be delivered as the Presidential speech at the annual conference of the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal of Lahore in 1936 by Ambedkar. But an early printing of this speech went to the unsympathetic eyes of the organisers who could not simply withstand the scathing attack the speech made on the caste system leading to the cancellation of the programme and the speech remained undelivered. Subsequently, it was published in the form of a book in the same year to become ‘undoubtedly the best known of all’ the books and monographs authored by Ambedkar.

The basic argument of Ambedkar in the Annihilation of Caste is that caste system is the debilitating institution of the Indian society which instead of doing any good has wrought irreparable loss to the untouchables and, therefore, needs to be eradicated without any repentance. He begins by exposing the inherent nature of the caste system which has been found to be grounded in false notions of division of labour in conjunction with the gradation of labourers as well.
Indefensible on the basis of overtly ridiculous notions like biological purity, caste remains an irrelevant factor in so far as the economic efficiency is concerned. Rather imbued with inherent anti-social spirit, the system of caste has not only gone to exclude the aboriginal tribes from within its fold but also created wedges amongst various sub-caste groups as well. Consequently, the Hindu religion risks the chance of losing its missionary zeal and any sort of efforts at organising the people in the name of it is bound to fail. Thus, to Ambedkar, the caste system has been found to be a blot on the Hindu religion and instead of acting as the fulcrum to hold it in the highest of spirit and impeccable ethics, its cumulative effect on the Hindu society is that of a genie out to destroy its own creator.

Ambedkar tries to unmask the hidden pernicious motivations behind the idea of Chaturvarnya, as the foundation of the caste system. He argues that as a system of social organisation, Chaturvarnya appears to be impracticable and harmful, and has turned out to be a miserable failure. Even from the practical point of view, Chaturvarnya seems to be surrounded by a number of difficulties like explaining and establishing the basic difference between caste and the principle underlying varna; ignoring the uniqueness of every individual and by strait-jacketing all the individuals into just four classes would be like killing the ingenuity of each individual; negating of the idea of a penal system to deal with all the people equally; and finally ignoring the position of the women in such a system.

Ambedkar, therefore, asserts that even if Chaturvarnya becomes a practicable system, it is bound to be the most vicious one. Having exposed the inherent fallacies of the caste system and its conceptual construct Chaturvarnya, Ambedkar exhorts people to go for transforming the Hindu social order. He maintains that
various methods have been suggested in this regard but most of them appear inadequate in themselves. For instance, the idea of changing the social order by abolishing sub-castes would not suffice as it would not necessarily lead to the abolition of caste. Similarly, inter-caste dining would serve only limited purpose as it would not succeed in killing the spirit and consciousness of caste. The abolition of caste, thus, argues Ambedkar, can be achieved only by intermarriage.

The basic issue lying at the core of the Gandhi–Ambedkar debate appears to be the fundamental differences between the perspective of the two leaders regarding the probable solution to the problems of untouchability and the other vices of caste system. At the outset, most of the people including Gandhi and Ambedkar presumably understood the problem of untouchability as lying in the domain of social reform for which sustainable efforts needed to be made. However, while Gandhi continued to view the problem of untouchability as a social issue, Ambedkar gradually got convinced that winning political rights as more important in his anti-untouchability movement. It will be further discussed in the section dealing with social justice.

We can say that Ambedkar through his efforts reinvented the entire notion of anti-untouchability and social reform movement not only in Maharashtra but probably the whole of urban India by evolving a flexible, well-reasoned and multi-pronged strategy to argue with and fight against all those who mattered but resisted the struggle of the untouchables to secure a dignified and respectful place in the Indian society.
SOCIAL JUSTICE

Ambedkar was convinced that without social emancipation of the depressed classes, political emancipation had no meaning. He went to the extent of saying that no economic or political reform would be successful unless the monster of social injustice was destroyed. He believed that their liberation could be achieved through political means. He claimed that nationalism cannot be attained unless national feelings were awakened and strengthened. He held social reform quite essential for achieving this noble end, and as such, he declared that without social reform true feeling of nationalism cannot be evolved. His mission was to make the Indian polity free from social exploitation because he strongly believed that political justice cannot be achieved without social justice. This article is an endeavour to analyse Ambedkar’s vision ideas on social justice.

The concept of social justice is dynamic and changes according to the needs of the society. It evolves itself into progressively new patterns and expands its frontiers and assumes new dimensions. Social justice has significance in the context of Indian society which is divided into castes and communities and they create water tight compartments on the basis inequalities which pose serious threat to Indian democracy. In modern times, the term social justice is associated with the idea of social good. Social justice is the availability of equal opportunities for the development of the individual without any discrimination on the basis of race, colour, caste, sex etc.

For Ambedkar, social justice meant giving equal opportunity to each and every person in every sphere of life to develop one’s total personality. A free social order consisted of the recognition that the individual was an end in
himself/herself and that the terms of association between individuals in a society must be founded on liberty, equality and fraternity. He derived the significance of the value of equality based on the notion that the individual was inviolable. The concept of justice emphasised the right of the individual to be treated as an equal and to be respected as a member of society; irrespective of his/her caste, class, gender and other discriminations.

The attempt herein is to discuss Ambedkar’s philosophy of liberalism within the broader paradigm of liberty, equality and justice. He emphasised political rights which would lead to economic and social rights. For him, rights were not merely standards but were ends as well as means, in that they provided the theoretical perspective and the necessary empowerment that was required for achieving social justice. By struggling against the state, Ambedkar used one set of rights to realise the other rights. For Western societies, state interference in realising rights is minimal. However, as the Indian society is in egalitarian, the state plays a vital role in ensuring rights. This transformative perspective is considered to be a major contribution of Ambedkar to the discourse on Indian liberalism.

The rights movement initiated by Ambedkar to inspire the depressed classes to fight for their rights gradually gained momentum and successfully brought about improvements in their economic and social conditions, political representation, educational and cultural achievements. The Mahad Satyagraha for the right of drinking water and the Nasik Satyagraha for right to temple entry were outstanding struggles of the untouchables to win equal social rights. Striving endlessly and sacrificing the pleasures of the present for a glorious future was a magnificent ideal for Ambedkar. That’s why Ambedkar disliked that his hungry men should envelop themselves in the culture of Bhakti, the cult of
devotion, the opium of helplessness. He asked the common man not to resign himself to his fate and accept his position as a divine dispensation. The ignorant people believed that their fate was pre-ordained and irretrievable. Ambedkar wanted to root out this disease from their minds.

Ambedkar called for the unity of the scheduled castes and other backward communities under one platform to project their united strength and to hold the balance of power in the new democratic set up. He declared, ‘Political power is the key to all social progress and the Scheduled Castes can achieve their salvation if they captured this power by organising themselves into a third party and holding the balance of power between the rival political parties’.

As a liberal thinker, Ambedkar was a hard-core believer in the value of constitutional democracy having irrevocable elements of social and economic democracies, in addition to political democracy. Indeed, the notion of social democracy situated in the framework of the constitutional democracy, appeared dearer to him than political democracy, presumably because of the fact that it was the thing he fought for throughout his life. Ambedkar emphasised the social component of democracy, as a system of government, he explicitly expressed himself in the favour of British parliamentary model of democracy. Taking it as the system providing ample scope for reconciliation of the individual good and the social good, he was keen on imbibing the basic liberal values which underpin the functioning of parliamentary democracy.

To Ambedkar, the operationalisation of the idea of social justice could be carried on by putting in place a set of constitutional provisions in the nature of both protective and promotional measures. His long standing demand for an autonomous political representation of the disadvantaged
groups in the political institutions of decision-making in the country was to be the major move towards securing social justice.

For this, he attempted to provide for an elaborate scheme of definitive political safeguards for depressed classes in the Constitution of India (Rodrigues 2004: 369–81). He was sure that such provisions would enable the depressed classes to conceptualise their common problems and issues in the larger perspective of their all-round development and seek appropriate solutions for them in a formidable manner.

Along with distinct and autonomous political representation of the depressed classes in the institutions of Indian polity, Ambedkar also argued for reservation for the depressed sections of society in public employment, provided their eligibility for a particular job is complete. In advocating the reservation in public employment, Ambedkar presumably envisioned that such a move would serve two utmost purposes of bringing changes in the conditions of the disadvantaged groups of people. First, with the mind-set increase in their share in public services, a wider majority of people belonging to the depressed classes would gain social recognition and some degree of upliftment in social relations given the overwhelming status, prestige and power that the public services carry in the feudal of the majority section of Indians. Second, such an assured employment would probably also contribute to the economic upliftment of the depressed groups as regular and fairly sufficient source of income in a family might add to the amelioration in the hitherto miserable economic conditions of the family.

Assessment

A survey of the thought and actions of Ambedkar reflects the solitary purpose of his life: the emancipation
of untouchables in Indian society. Taking inspiration and lessons from his own life, Ambedkar remained an untiring crusader for the cause of untouchables during a life spanning over six decades. Hence he can be designated as the social prophet of the untouchables’. Dr. Jatav has rightly described Ambedkar as a ‘social humanist’. After careful study of the history of human relations among Hindus in Indian society, he sincerely felt that it required serious and concerted efforts for reforms. There is no doubt that he was a patriot and would not be opposed to national integration.

SREENARAYANA GURU (1856-1928)

Sree Narayan Guru was a great saint and social reformer who stood for the cardinal principle of ‘One caste, One Religion and one god for Man’. The message and teachings of Sree Narayana Guru are more relevant today than before. He was an embodiment of all virtues, values and rare qualities selfdom found in human race. He was a mystic, a philosopher, a visionary and a poet blended into one within a period of less than half a century, who had metamorphosed the depressed and oppressed communities in Kerala from dust into men who could stand on their own legs as self-respecting human beings’

The state of Kerala once called by Swami Vivekananda as a ‘Lunatic asylum’ due to horrible caste distinction is now being called as ‘the god’s own country’. This transformation, within a short span of time has taken place with divine force at the hands of Sree Narayana Guru. Guru was a rare saint who used his spiritual attainment of the creation of a new man and new social order. Theosophical society of India described the Guru as Patanjali in Yoga, Sankara in wisdom, Manuinart governance, Budha in renunciation and Christin love and humanity. To think Gurudev merely as a reformer, as the great scholar and
genius or the founder of numerous institutions would be narrowing our own outlook and blurring our vision of the great truth. Guru was an extra-ordinary ascetic visionary and karma yogi who moved from place to place and his very presence transformed Kerala society free from the evils of caste system. Several leaders and scholars like Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Vinoba Bhave etc., visited Sree Narayana Guru at his ashram at Sivagiri Mutt, Varkala. They all paid glowing tributes to the Guru. Rabindranath Tagore paid the following tribute to Sree Narayana Guru”. I have been touring different parts of the world. During these travels I have had the good fortune to come into contact with several saints and maharishis (Great Saints). But I have frankly to admit that I have never come across one who is spiritually greater than Swami Sree Naryayana Guru of Kerala, a person who is on par with him in spiritual attainments. I am sure I shall never forget that radiant face, illuminated by self-effulgent light for divine glory and those yogic eyes fixing their gaze on a remote point on the distant horizon’

At the end of the 19th century, Kerala society presented a dismal picture of social and religious life, with individual being subjected to the tyranny of innumerable debased customs and manners. A silent revolution was set in motion by Sree Narayana Guru which had wider impact on the modern society in Kerala. This revolution, though started as a movement to remove the unnecessary customs and traditional evil practices prevalent among the Ezhavas, one of the avarna communities, which was numerically bigger than all the caste Hindus put together in Kerala, had produced results which evidently changed the face of the social, political, economic and religious life of Kerala as a whole.
Sree Narayana Guru was born in 1856 in Chempazanthi, about 12 kilometres north of Trivandrum, the capital of then princely state of Travancore. His father was Madan ashan, a teacher and physician and his mother’s name was Kutty. Guru’s maternal uncles were vaidyas and Sanskrit scholars. Nanu was initiated into reading writing and arithmetic at the customary age of 5. Education in those days consisted mainly in learning the simpler works in Sanskrit, sometimes in Bramhi characters. The student Narayanan was quick to learn, never forgetting what he had learnt.

Sree Narayana Guru wanted to reform the traditional caste ridden Kerala Society. For the realisation of this objective, he has thoroughly studied the prevailing social laws carefully. As a social reformer, Narayana Guru based the foundation of all progress in the reformation of religious practices, social customs, and the daily habits of the people. He advised his followers not to say anything that would hurt the feeling of others. The result was that the broad minded leaders of the higher castes respected him and cooperated the movements for the uplift of the depressed classes.

GURU AS A SOCIAL REFORMER AND HIS VIEWS ON UNIVERSALISM

In the traditional Kerala society, the avarnas or untouchables, were denied entry in to temples. They were not permitted to install and consecrate idols in the temples and perform poojas. Under the able guidance and leadership of Sree Narayana Guru, the avarnas gained a fresh surge of vigour and they vehemently criticised and opposed the supremacy of the Savarnas. Guru worked out a planned strategy and got a temple constructed and ventured to install and consecrate an idol. On 10 February1888, Guru consecrated an idol of Siva (Sivalingam) at Aruvippuram (Near Neyyanthinkara) which marked the beginning of silent
social revolution in Kerala. As Murkaot Kunhappain his autobiography, ‘Sree Narayana Guru’ has rightly pointed out, “At dead of night swami had a dip in the river. He came up after some time with a Sivalingam in his hands and walked into the make-shift temple and stood there with his eyes closed in deep meditation, his hands holding the Sivalingam to his chest, tears flowing down his cheeks, completely lost to the world. For full three hours, he stood still in thatasana (Posture) while the entire crowd rent the midnight air with continuous cries of ‘Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namah Sivaya”, for full three hours. The whole lot of them appeared to have only one mind, one thought one prayer among them “Om Namah Sivaya-Obeisance to Siva”. At three in the morning Swami placed the Sivalingam on the pedestal, consecrated it, and performed abhisheka (Holybathingofidol)’.

A new era dawned in Kerala at that predawn hour on 10th February 1888. When a temple was built there later on, Sree Narayana Guru got the message of his life engraved in granite there.

‘Hereismodelabode
Wheremenlivelikebrothers:
Bereftoftheprejudiceofcaste
Ortherancourofreligiousdifferences’

Guru wanted Kerala to be that model, the whole world to be its manifestation. ‘One caste, one religion, one god for man’ is his message which has become famous all over the world and toward which mankind is striving halting and unsatisfactory though the progress seems to be:

Consecration of an idol of Siva by Sree Narayana Guru administered an electric shock to the crowd assembled there, Social reformation all round was the result of this shock treatment. It produced very strong and effective movement
of reform among all the castes, such as Namboodiris, Nairs, Pulayas and Ezhavas, besides affecting other castes too. The leaders of these reform movements have themselves recorded how they were inspired by the movements initiated by Sree Narayana Guru. In addition to the consecration of a Siva idol in Aruvippuram, Sree Narayana Guru went one establishing and consecrating several temples and idols indifferent parts of Kerala besides Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Sri Lanka. He wanted the temples to be the centres for purity and development. In the opinion of Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, the entire edifice of Brahmanism and the caste structure suffered a collapse when, by installing Siva in a temple built by him. Narayana Guru worked a miracle of spiritual transmutation and social reformation.

Guru strongly opposed some of the evil practices, superstitious beliefs, and ritual ceremonies etc., followed by backward class members. He observed that the Avarnas were worshipping their ancestors, tribal heroes, tragic persons whose life-stories had the sublime qualities of Greek tragedies. They also worshipped hills and rocks, stones and brooks, snakes and other fearsome creatures. These were corrupt practices that had to be stopped. Accordingly, in more than a hundred places, he unseated the gods whose names had associations with the killing of birds and consumption of liquor, replacing them by idols of Siva, Subramania and Ganesa and instituted poojas of the type performed in temples dedicated to them. Such poojas are technically known as Uthama pooja (the highest form of idol worship). The Ezhavas and some of the higher castes used to conduct a mock marriage prior to the regular marriage which took place only after a girl came to age. A small ornament called Tali was tied around the neck of the child by the person who conducted the ceremony. Guru declared that this ‘TaliKettu’ function was meaningless and ordered its
abolition.

Sree Narayana Guru believed that all the ills that bedeviled the society, social, economic, intellectual and political, emanated from the one root cause – caste. By eradicating that evil, the social liberation and consequent emancipation were possible to achieve. Through a process of self-purification, the lower caste men would be ready for receiving the benefits of modernization. The method he used was a process of sanskritisation – raising the untouchables to the status of Brahmins’. Accordingly he advised and compelled his followers to do away with their crude, uncivilized customs and usages, to adopt worship of Aryan gods in the place of tribal deities like Chathan, Pidari, Chudala Maden and the like, to educate their children, to take to industry and other productive means so as to earn material wealth, and to organize themselves in order to get strong as a social and political force. Thus Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP Yogam) was formed in 1903 which acted as a powerful pressure group in the erstwhile princely state of Travancore and later in Kerala State. Following the lead of Guru, Ezhavas and other lower caste men started agitating for the right to school – entry for their children which was denied to them in Travancore and Cochin till 1910. Within two decades the number of school going children of Ezhava community exceeded the number of children of all other caste of Hindu community.

Through self-purification and education, Guru tried to inculcate the ideal in the minds of his followers. More than any other modern social and religious reformer, he realized the importance of artha in the scheme of life. According to Guru, material advancement is necessarily the pre condition for the attainment of spiritual progress.

Sree Narayana Guru provided guidelines on religion to
School of Distance Education

the people at large - people who had to live an active rather than a competitive life. He wanted them to understand that religion was not a mere formula or a set of rites and ceremonies, but a way of life. Narayana Guru accepts Advaita as the metaphysical basis for man’s practical concern in the world and devoted his whole life to showing the world that Advaita can be translated into action. The metaphysics of Advaitais based on soul force which should form the ultimate impulse of our normal principles in life. Advaita philosophy becomes meaningless unless it teaches men to treat their fellowman as equals. In Kerala the greatest impediment to such conduct was the evil practice of caste system. Naturally, therefore, the Guru’s message of universal love was expressed in the idiom of the people of Kerala, when he said “One caste for man”. The teachings of the Guru are meant for the people all over the world. This truth is stated more vividly when he proclaimed the essential unity of all religions: “whichever the religion, it suffices, if it makes a better man”. Thus Guru’s message became the cardinal principle of modern secularism.

Guru was seeking ways to better man’s relations with his fellows and endeavoring to raise him to a truly higher status as Man by the realization of the oneness of all castes, creed and the gods. His universality cannot be mistaken for sectarian well-being of the Ezhavas or Hindu alone; he had made it clear in the inscription on the wall of his Ashram:

‘One in kind, one in faith one in God is man, Of one same womb, one same form, Difference none there is at all’

Gandhiji believed in Varna of man and held fast to the rule of caste as the basis of social order. Even though Gandhiji wanted untouchability to go, he was for retaining caste, “as the matchless caste organisation’ he said, “was an instance of vast social service organisation……. caste
regulated service in the event of disease, death and poverty’. According to Gandhiji, the Hindu concept of Varnashrama was a sustaining force. It means duties engendered by the caste in which one is born. Narayana Guru denied both Varna and caste and said that there is no basis for the existence of these in the scheme of life. When these two leaders met at Sivagiri, in Travancore, an argument took place between them on the validity of caste. Pointing out to the mango tree, Gandhiji said, as their leaves are of different kinds, so are members of the human race. Guru made it clear that these different kinds of leaves yield the same taste. In his later life Gandhiji had adopted this theory of Narayana Guru, as is evident from one of his speeches at Calcutta where he gave the same metaphor to prove the unity of all castes.

However for Narayana Guru, negation of caste had a greater meaning in the scheme of life, not only a material but also a spiritual meaning. Guru wrote that ‘We are all one and the same. Whatever maybe the differences in men’s creeds, dress, language, etc., because they belong to all to the same kind of creation – there is no harm at all in their dining together, or having marital relations with one another. All distinctions between man and man are man-made not inherent in or related to creation. Selfish of one demands him to make some inferior than himself; it is not the social necessity that created jati, but individual greed and apathy that produced it. Caste is thus the very opposite of brotherhood. A relentless crusade against caste and its corollaries, untouchability and unapproachability was the most important aspect of the modernisation process initiated by Sree Narayana Guru. As a philosophy it is pure advaita Vedanta but as a practical ideal it crosses the limits of metaphysics and directly enters the comprehension of ordinary intelligent man.
Guru appreciated and stressed the importance of education and organisation for the emancipation of untouchables. He wrote that ‘Gain freedom through education and gain strength through organization’. He made it clear that universal education is indispensable and girl’s education should be encouraged and should never be neglected. Adult literacy and establishment of libraries in every locality should be encouraged. As early as 1921 he stated that “Liquor is poison. It should not be produced, sold or consumed’ anticipating the promulgation of prohibition by several years.

**An Assessment**

Thus it is clear from the above observations and principles that Narayana Guru is one of the most important social reformers in modern India. He made immense contributions to change the traditional caste-ridden Kerala society into a God’s own country by initiating silent social revolution. Romain Rolland in his book the ‘Life of Ramakrishna’ refers to the personality of “the Great Guru (Sree Narayana) whose beneficent spiritual activity was exercised for more than forty years in the state of Travancore over some faithful souls. He preached a Jnana of action, a great intellectual religion, having a lively sense of the people and their social needs. It has greatly contributed, to the uplifting of the oppressed classes in Southern India and its activities have in a measure been allied to those of Gandhi”. By stressing the unifying power of religion, Sree Narayana Guru led his followers to the consummation of a silent revolution – constructive, permanent and far reaching results. There is no gain saying the fact that the socio-religious movement inaugurated by Sree Narayana Guru was the runner of the political awakening in Kerala. The stress he put on education and industry, should be viewed as the foundation of modern society in Kerala. It should be
remembered that Guru advocated purely constitutional methods to gain the end of social justice and economic well-being. Wherever there are down-trodden, under privileged groups in the world, message of Sree Narayana Guru, ‘Educate that you may be free, organise that you may be strong; industrialise that your financial status may improve’ has relevance at all times. He is one of the secular and universal social thinker that the world has ever produced.

**E. V. RAMASWAMY (1879-1973)**

E.V. Ramaswami Naicker known as Periyar was a prominent social reformer of India in the twentieth century. He was born of Balija Naidu parents on 28 September, 1879 at Erode then part of Coimbatore District which was under the administration of Madras Presidency (present day Tamil Nadu). He came from a prosperous business family in that district. But he did not have any formal education. His childhood days showed rebellious character which continued with his social and political activities. He defied all caste rules and regulations in his childhood and for that he was often taken to task by his parents.

Nevertheless his home was a meeting place for pundits and religious scholars. Their discussions and discourses provided an opportunity to EVR to come to know about some rudiments of (philosophical significance) Hinduism. But soon he changed his role of a passive listener to that of an active participant. He started asking questions about inconsistencies and improbabilities in the puranic stories and ridiculed the basic concepts of Hindu religion and philosophy. More questions were asked by him about the relevance of the institution of caste in society, belief in the theory of karma and the soundness of idol worship. None of the pundits, were able to give him convincing answers.
In 1904 when he was twenty five years old, he went to Benares. This was a turning point in his life. Benares, he found, was no holier than any other city. The Brahmins there ate meat and drank toddy and immoral trafficking in women was a thriving business. Disgusted with all this, he came back to join his father's business at Erode. During the period between 1925 and 1935, Periyar started a number of Journals; Kudi Arasu in 1925; Dravidan in 1927, Revolt in English in 1928; Puratchi in 1933; Pahuththarivu, as a weekly and daily in 1934 and Pahuththarivu as a monthly in 1935, to carry his message to the people. In 1937 he took over Viduthalai, a daily started by the Justice Party.

EVR Naicker represented the new emerging forces in Tamil Society. He was a follower of Gandhian methods of struggle against the colonial power. But on the question of communal representation and varanashrama dharma, he differed from the Congress and Gandhiji and even left the Congress. While the objectives of his struggle and direction of his journey remained Substantially unchanged, a few milestones and turning points deserve mention: the decision to resign public-office and join the Congress Party in 1919; the issues leading to his leaving the Congress in 1925; the founding of the Self-Respect Movement in the same year; his participation in, and leadership of the Justice Party; the anti-Hindi agitation in 1938; the establishment of Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) in 1944; his second marriage with Maniammai in 1949; the split of the D.K. consequent on his marriage and the formation of the D.M.K. in 1949; and the D.M.K. capturing power in Tamil Nadu in the 1967 elections are some of the developments that have had far-reaching consequences.

Periyar remained a fighter all through his life and fought his battles on many fronts. Though his formal education was modest, the opportunities he had, to listen to
learned discourses with which his parents were associated, his own reading in later years and his travels abroad and within the country gave him breadth of knowledge and depth of insight. Periyar had the benefit of visiting foreign countries both in the East and in the West. During 1929-30, he toured in Singapore and Malaya; in 1931 he spent eleven months in Europe visiting among other countries Germany, the U.S.S.R., France and England. In 1954, he went to Burma to attend the 2500th anniversary celebration of the Buddha.

**VIEWS ON RATIONALISM**

Rationalism to him was freedom. He was very enthusiastic about science and technology which he felt made people’s life easier. He talked of what fundamentally could be construed as self-empowerment. For this matter he was very particular about the prevailing notions and terminology. He never intended to treat a social malaise symptomatically but worked for rooting out the problem and all other systems supporting that evil. Despite his insistence on rationality and humanism, Periyar presented all the values he championed in his own life. He, in fact, personified rationality, atheism and the cause of justice.

In one of his speeches, Periyar defines the doctrine of the Self-Respect (Rationalist) Movement. To him it was to seek the real causes, which have made the human beings degraded and to find out the factors, which have made the lives of people disgraceful. Being a staunch opponent of Congress policies during colonial era, he called the Congress party as one of the factors which is responsible for the above mentioned degradation. When we read his speeches and thoughts we find his criticism of Congress and M.K.Gandhi working against their interests. Thus, getting rid of them became one of his objectives of his movement. Second factor that played a critical role in the ruination is the Brahmanical
system. Thirdly, Periyar did not shy away in calling religion as an evil to the society.

In his speeches he reminded his audience about the policies of the Congress party. As a determined political critic he remarked that Congress was wedded to the policy of safeguarding Gandhi, religion, caste and the status of Brahmins. The Brahmins sought Gandhi’s help for their selfish interest. Because Gandhi talked of reactionary ideas, they made him “Mahatma”. This was principally the reason why he was adamant that society needs revolutionary policies.

In his opinion Rationalism propaganda should be geared up through Rationalist Forums and Associations. There are a number of Rationalist Associations in Europe. In Germany, Spain, Greece, it has become a sign of civilisation to have Rationalist Associations, Research Centres, Truth seekers Association, Thinkers Association, Atheists Association and so on. At every place there are many lakhs of people as members of these organisations. He himself had been to all these places. We can say that he had influences from Europe.

Periyar in his lifetime raised voice on birth control. In a striking speech at Tiruchy, Periyar emphatically warned the people that one who does not care to limit his family would one day repent. He said: “Of all the living beings, man alone is endowed with rationalism. It is rationalism that makes him think about the good and bad. It gives him knowledge of the better ways of life. Man alone could think and act with freedom. He alone could keep away from worries and lead a happy life….He has lost his freedom. He has become a mere slave. He is immoral. He is rid of the virtues. With his treasure of rationalism he could live peacefully. He need not stoop to immorality and
degradation…..” His arguments clearly demonstrate that population control is a necessity for society’s development.

Periyar was a great admirer of Buddha as to him latter gave the first place to rationalism. Buddha according to him refused to find wisdom in the writing of the ancient saints or divine scholars as he wanted the people to search for truth themselves. Refusing comment on the existence or otherwise of a thing called god, Buddha proceeded to dethrone atma or soul, since atma had been used as the spark of the paramatma or god, thereby bringing in the idea of god in a different way.

VIEWS ON SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT

Periyar’s departure from the Congress and the formation of the Self-respect Movement by him, marked a decisive and momentous step in his life. His was from then on, a career of revolt, reform, and iconoclasm and incessant struggle. Till the end, he was a crusader, uncompromising and unrelenting. His platform was one of social justice; equality of opportunities; humanism and dignity of man. It was a life that was never dull, never routine, never one of rest and leisure; but was one of intense activity, with a succession of struggles each resembling a storm or an earthquake causing reverberations and receiving responses throughout the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu.

The Self-Respect Movement was actually against five evil forces. In short the Self-Respect Movement shoulders the responsibility to crusade against god, religion, Congress, Gandhi and Brahmins. These five forces, which propagated pernicious ideas and made people victims and as slaves. He declared that ‘unless we destroy these five forces, we cannot make our people better their deteriorating conditions in social life. We are for redeeming the self-respect of the people’.
Initially, as pointed by Periyar, Self-Respect Movement was not a political organisation or to put it simply, he was of the opinion that his movement had no political ambitions to seize power because he wanted it to be a purely social reform movement. But when these forces stand in the way of our progress, we will have no other go than to oppose them.

Periyar started the Self-Respect Movement with the objective of guiding people to redeem their deserved place in society. Periyar stated, ‘The aim of a genuine Self-Respect Movement is to change whatever appears to be adverse to man’s feelings of self-respect. That which enslaves you to customs of the world, to orthodoxy, to the rigours of religion, contrary to your rationality and awareness of truths of experience, is what I shall describe as antagonistic to self-respect. This all-important awareness of self-respect based on feelings of dignity and indignity, may be deemed man’s birth right, as the word ‘man’ is itself a word based on dignity. Therefore, he who is called ‘man’ embodies dignity in himself, and only through his right to this dignity, reveals his human qualities. That is why self-esteem is his birthright. Man must cast aside his feelings of inferiority, the feeling that he is less important than other beings, and attain self-confidence and self-respect, it will automatically set right politics, nationalism and also theology.’

The Self-Respect Movement was aimed at eradication of caste based discrimination. The objectives of the movement were the establishment of a casteless society based on complete equality of the masses, eradication of all social evils and freeing society from the shackles of superstition and blind faith in God and religion, promotion of educational and employment opportunities for women, popularization of self-respect marriages conducted without any Brahmin priest and propagation of rationalism.
Conceptually self-respect was the basis for ensuring equality in society. He wished every non-Brahmin to realise that they had their own self-respect to maintain in all their dealings with their fellow-beings. If a man realised that he was equal to all other men and that he had the right of equality with all other men, then he became a self-respecting person. He also wished women to have this self-respect.

He introduced the concept of ‘Self-respect Marriage’, which stressed the equality of sexes, looked at family life as one of partnership and discarded all rituals that implied subordination of women to men. In the Self Respect Movement, women played a prominent role. In the resolutions adopted in the conferences organised by him, those concerning the rights and privileges of women were given pride of place. He advocated, with feeling and forcefulness, widow remarriage. When his own niece became a widow in her youth, Periyar set an example by arranging for her remarriage, defying all his orthodox relatives.

At the Self Respect Conferences in 1929 and 1930, women's right to divorce and to have property was emphasized. It is but appropriate that the title of Periyar, though in occasional use earlier, was officially conferred on him only at a women’s conference held in Madras, in November 1938. His interest in politics per se was really secondary. His main concern was social reform. Politics is the game of those who, among other things, aspire for power, Periyar was unwaveringly against fighting elections and capturing power. Since he resigned his Chairmanship of the Erode Municipality in 1919, till his death in 1973, he had stoutly refused to seek or accept power. In 1940, and in 1942, he was twice asked to take up the Chief Ministership of the Madras Presidency. He declined, saying that acceptance of office would be an impediment to his struggle for reform.
Another aspect of Periyar’s thought was his belief in Communism. He exhorted people to be unafraid of revolution and ready themselves for the next change. He said that revolutionary changes in the affairs of men had been a continuous process since time immemorial. He merged the Self-Respect Movement with Communism and founded the Self Respect Communist Party. The action plan of the Party included the nationalization of all industries, railway, banks, waterways, all agricultural lands, forests, botanical wealth, community farming, writing off all debts of peasants, limiting the working hours to eight hours, enhancing the wages and improving working conditions, and providing amenities like access to libraries.

He later disbanded the party in favour of the Self-Respect Movement but his ideas remained influenced by Communism. He iterated that God, religion and law support the prevalence of the distinction between the rich and the poor, the existence of caste hierarchy and the cruelty of supremacy and servility. Periyar vowed to destroy the government, justice, morality and customs that permitted them. Periyar explained the Dravidar Kazhagam was an institution of the workers. Every Dravidian to him was a worker because they worked for the others and had been through the ages, servants as per the scriptures of Manu.

His movement indeed led to the end of Brahmin hegemony in Tamil politics and social life. His mission helped in spreading the message of egalitarianism and scientific temper. Elimination of caste-based social segregation and discriminations, improvement in the condition of women, right of temple entry and management to non-Brahmins, prevention of supremacy of Hindi over Tamil and obtaining Tamil as official language thereby enhancing its status and contributing to its growth, reservations for backward castes in government jobs, which
entailed the first amendment in the Indian Constitution, and the emergence of a new leadership in Tamil Nadu from backward castes are solid instances of his revolutionary legacy which are too visible to be ignored.

**Assessment**

Periyar raised issues which are equally relevant today. The problem of dignity is one such vital issue. The point to ponder, which Periyar raised so forcefully, is that the oppression is often self-inflicted. It is the result of ignorance, fear, greed and inaction. One is in fact down because of one’s own vices. Domination and oppression is the product of the belief system rather than of actual social relations. Slavery which is the highest state of domination and oppression is more metaphysical than physical. His great contribution lies in fighting against oppression and for the sovereignty of individual human beings.