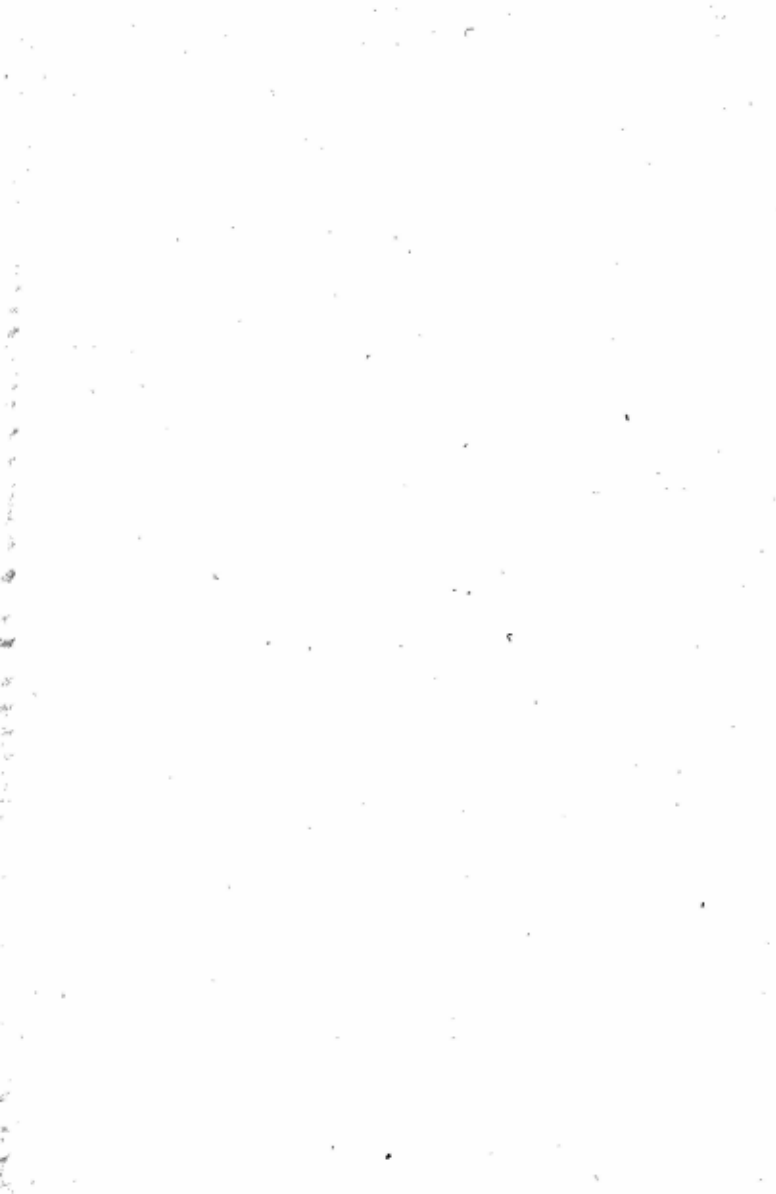


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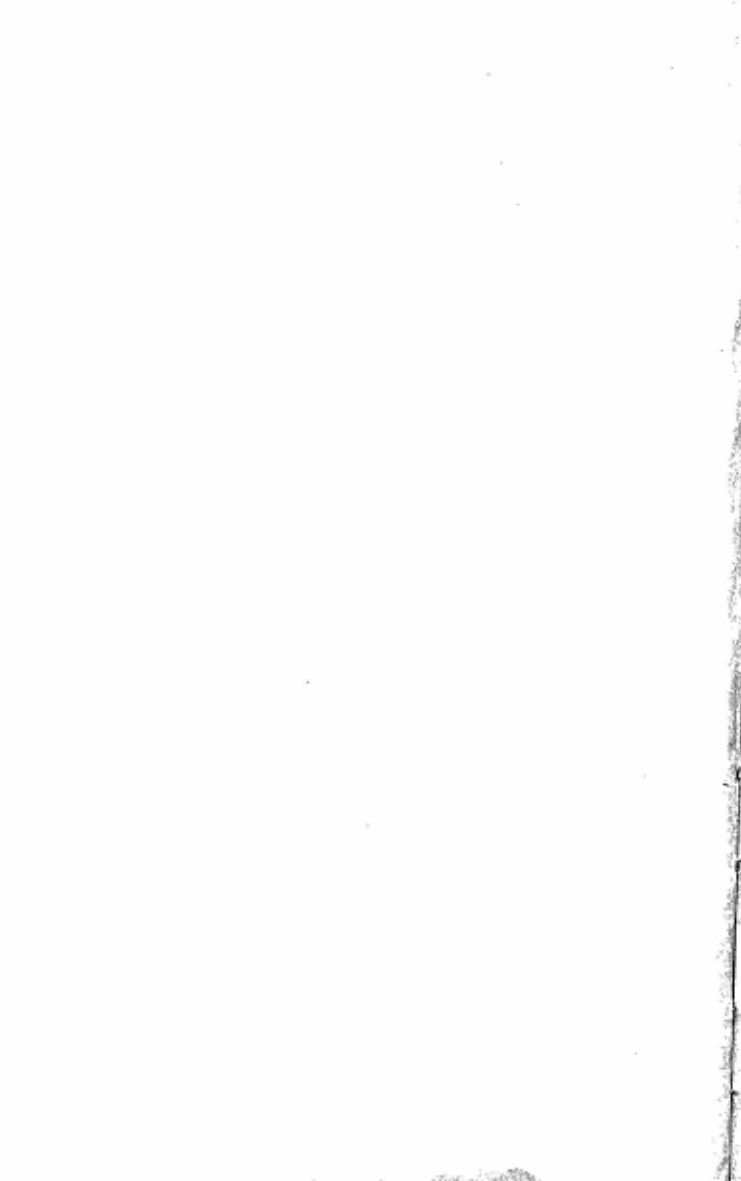
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Studies In Indian And Asian Civilizations
Editor : S C Malik





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DISSENT PROTEST AND REFORM

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Studies in Indian and Asian Civilizations

Indian Movements : Some Aspects of Dissent Protest and Reform



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Edited and Introduced
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S C Malik

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PREFACE

The present volume reflects one in the series on "Studies in Indian and Asian Civilizations" undertaken by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study under its group project programme of *A Sourcebook of Indian and Asian Civilizations*. During the Fourth Plan period four works were prepared, and published : (i) *Indian Civilization : The First Phase—Problems of a Sourcebook*, (ii) *Understanding Indian Civilization—A Framework of Enquiry*, (iii) *Brahmanic Ritual Traditions*, and (iv) *Transmission of the Mahabharata Tradition*. During the Fifth Plan period it was decided to undertake two specific themes for investigation, (1) Dissent, Protest and Reform Movements, and (2) Determinants of Social Status in India. For the former a preliminary step was to hold a Planning Conference, which was followed by a week-long Seminar, and then the assignment to various scholars commissioned studies for indepth investigation of specific themes. Of the fifteen topics chosen only eight were received, and these form the present volume.

It was not easy to find scholars who were free to take up this work or were at that moment interested in it. But it was due to the persuasive capacity of the former Director, Professor S C Dube, that it was possible to put together these essays, and find the scholars. Professor Dube was intimately associated with the planning and organization of the themes, seminars and so on, that were taken up for study during the Fifth plan period. Dr B N Saraswati, a colleague on the Scheme, has also contributed in a large measure to the work undertaken in this joint project. As Coordinator of the Scheme my thanks are due to them, and to all the scholars associated with the Scheme. Of course, the credit goes to the contributors of this volume who found time to write these essays, which we hope will initiate further work along these lines.

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My thanks are due to Mrs Vijayalakshmi Rao, and Shri Hiru Ram for typing several edited drafts. To Shri A K Sharma, of the Publication section, for expediting the production of the book through various stages and to Mr M C Gabriel for copy-editing the volume, I am also obliged.

S C Malik

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>		vii
<i>Introduction</i>		I
M G S NARAYANAN VELUTHAT KESAVAN	Bhakti Movement in South India	33
ARUN P BALI	The Virsaiva Movement	67
G B SARDAR	Saint-Poets of Maharashtra : Their Role in Social Transformation	101
SAVITRI CHANDRA	Protest and Dissent in Hindi Bhakti Poetry	139
SACHCHIDANANDA	The Bhagat Movement in Chota Nagpur	159
PUSHPA SURI	Arya Samaj Movement	191
Y M PATHAN	Lokhitwadi : Pioneer of Rationalism in Maharashtra	215
M S A RAO	Backward Classes Movement	232
NARENDRA MOHAN	Dissent and Protest in Modern Hindi Literature	258
<i>Contributors</i>		280
<i>Index</i>		281



INTRODUCTION

S C MALIK

THE INDIAN Institute of Advanced Study under its group research project of A SOURCEBOOK OF INDIAN AND ASIAN CIVILIZATIONS, initiated investigations into the theme of 'dissent, protest and reform movements' during the first half of the Fifth Plan period. A first step was to organize a two-day Planning Conference in September 1974—its report being published in 1975—with the objective of clearing up various issues and identifying topics which could be taken up under a programme of multi-disciplinary research. The programme included organizing a one-week national seminar, the commissioning of a series of studies and the Institute's scholars writing monographs. The seminar was held in September 1975—its proceedings published in 1977—and subsequently scholars were commissioned to write essays on selected topics. This volume is a result of their studies. We may briefly recapitulate some of the issues discussed both at the conference and in the seminar.

At the outset what caused a great controversy were semantic problems. In part these arose quite expectedly from the diversity of approaches expressed from the point of view of so many disciplines. Then, there was serious objection to the use of the words dissent, protest, reform, and non-conformism in the Indian context, basically because these originated in the context of European and Christian civilizations. Moreover, because the Indian situation is quite different, especially in the broad context of Hinduism, it was suggested that their validity was doubtful, i.e., the socio-cultural processes involved in India were very different. But many others thought that if definitions are made very clear, then, they may be used in the Indian context, keeping in mind, of course, their historical background, i.e., we could begin with certain operational definitions and test them carefully against certain well known paradigms. For instance, the character of a movement may be

seen in terms of its objectives or goals : dissent may be defined as a negative orientation—generally of individuals—towards cultural ends and/or institutional means, indicating that such a movement reflects emotional resentment against the established order though there is little effort towards a programmed social action; in protest while there is, as in dissent, a similar attitude and emotional awareness, the degree of social action by groups is greater; and, in reform alongwith a negative orientation to cultural ends and institutional means, a major component is the high degree of social action although recourse to concerted and continuing social interest is within the framework of established norms. This does not imply that there are sharp distinctions between these types of movements or that there is a unilinear progressive relationship between the three though such a possibility cannot be ruled out.

Differently expressed, in dissent individuals articulate their differences with the establishment over cultural ends; in protest these differences go beyond articulation to a high degree of social mobilization and action since group awareness of the new objectives against institutional means is strong; and in reform the degree of social mobilization and action through legitimized means of achievement is very clear. This raises the problem : what are the objectives and actions which can be defined as legitimate, and what are not. Clearly, most reform movements more or less operate within the framework of the established socio-cultural norms. This may not necessarily be true for dissent and protest, where the basic idea is generally not to conform and to formulate new norms that may not be considered legitimate (at that time at any rate), the negative attitude to the existing order is very apparent. However, a total rejection of existing norms, values, and institutions implies that the objectives are for deep structural changes. This in turn implies such far-reaching consequences that a movement of this kind may amount to what one calls a revolution. It was generally agreed that hardly any movement has ever aimed at, much less succeeded in, bringing about such a change in India.

The next issue to consider is highlighting in terms of a conceptual framework and the definitions mentioned, a paradigm by taking up concrete situations. Thus, one may ask: What is it that constitutes the Indian tradition? or, Are there

traditions against which a movement works? That is, is there one model that is applicable for our understanding of India, or are there many models and traditions although these may be bound by common underlying set of core values that typify Indian civilization? Some scholars, see Indian tradition mainly in terms of a unilinear model in which the tradition has continued unbroken since Vedic times. For them these so-called movements are minor deviations from the basic tradition. The multilinear model proponents stress that several sources and traditions have gone into the making of India; there is not one that may be seen as conforming to a dominant central idea, not to speak of a specific institutional structure.

Whatever else, it was clear to all that the idea of an unchanging tradition-directed Indian society in which hardly any significant changes over the last two thousand years have taken place was an inaccurate assessment. Research in recent years has brought out clearly that from time to time there have been significant redefinitions of social objectives with instrumental action, whereby choices have been made by groups and individuals out of the many available traditions; that innovations, inventions, and even borrowings have been the case in the history of Indian civilization. With this known the major problem is to identify the processes that underly these situations. In any case it is clear that various movements have made a significant contribution to India's traditions, and as such they merit our detailed attention. There was a general opinion that Indian culture and society have not been merely tradition-directed, although revivalism has been a significant aspect of these. But the absorbing of new ideas, values, and technology—both indigenous and borrowed—has also been a part of its tradition. Sometimes changes have taken place by slight modifications and at others relatively speaking at a considerably rapid rate.

If it becomes clear that there is no explicit central organization, authority, or singular dominating tradition, then it is also apparent that the harmonic view of Indian society—an idea given by early orientalists—is not true. Indian civilization has undergone disharmonic-disequilibrium states, due to conflicts and antagonisms within the system at various levels—ideological, socio-cultural and politico-economic. In other words, because there are several traditions and models of

society which have co-existed, it is difficult to identify in general terms the values or norms against which a movement may be struggling. Consequently, for the purpose of understanding a movement, the specification of time-space dimensions is crucial. It is in this context that one may learn how they have often provided corrections and modifications in the existing social reality, helped in the continuity of the civilization, and also enabled it to absorb various new norms, including those of modernity. Again, this does not mean that only the model of conflict and dissonance is applicable, the way consensus, harmony and equilibrium were once thought to apply. Therefore, both these processes of consensus and conflict are applicable at different times and during different situations; and all of them require indepth study.

Taking into account actual situations in history, one of the problems discussed was; how movements emerge, grow, reach their zenith and decline. Assessing the nature of their emergence is especially problematic; they may begin at the individual level, with someone with a charismatic personality who is actually aware of social imbalances and disharmonies, and one who takes over the leadership by channelizing various resentments that exist then in society. Again, when resentments gradually permeate both the group and the individual, in terms of various thoughts, ideas, and actions, all of them coalesce or converge at a given point of time. We learn from various examples that this happens when members become increasingly aware of the contradictions, especially of social inequalities which are based on the perception of relative deprivation, prevalent in society, i.e., the yawning gap between precept and practice. In this way mass discontent makes way for such socio-cultural and economic actions as allow for the rectification of prevalent injustices, and other denials. Very often there is not one cause but several factors, which may initiate or trigger off a movement. It is, however, clear that basically leadership is often provided by individuals who do not necessarily belong to the deprived masses but arise from a relatively higher—economic level and/or status—social group.

Once the emergence of the movement is understood, the next problem is of how social mobilization, its mechanics, etc., are formulated and strategies of actions taken recourse to.

Each movement, we learn, has in different ways—through various symbols, local or regional idioms and language—tried to mobilize opinion and evolve a strategy of action for achieving its ends. The success or acceptance of new goals depends both on the strategy evolved and upon the individuals who have led these movements.

Finally, in the course of time when a movement crosses its zenith, the subsequent developments in term of original goals requires a careful examination. For instance, we learn that in the course of time when there is the acceptance by large sections of society of new ideas and norms which are institutionalized, this codification—the organizational structure—leads to conflicts similar to those when the movement began. In other words, once the movement gets established, it loses its initial momentum and becomes a part of the established order against which other movements arise. But, very often, in India, movements soon become a part of the old order, or become another sect whose coexistence is quite acceptable. This is how here there are various traditions and sects.

The various essays in this volume have discussed specific movements within the framework discussed here and indicate many of the various definitions and processes briefly enumerated. It will be worth our while illustrating these points by summarising some of these studies.

The Bhakti Movements

M G S Narayanan and V Kesavan have written on the bhakti movements in South India, especially in the Tamil region, which began in the middle of A.D. sixth century and continued for three-and-a-half centuries. According to them, these represent a new wave of Aryan or Hindu influence which was basically a religious phenomenon albeit with a social content that reflects the elements of dissent, protest, and reform. In this way there was the consolidation and extension of classical Hindu society in early medieval India. The two main currents of the bhakti movement are Shaivism and Vaishnavism, and their saints are known as the *Nayanars* and *Alvars* respectively. What has so far been written about these movements has been largely

from the viewpoint of religious, literary, and philosophical appreciation, apart from investigating chronological problems about the literature. This paper, beginning with a framework of definitions and concepts, analyzes the apparent religious movement against its socio and political and economic background, also within the larger perspectives of Indian civilization.

The mechanism for the spread of the movement and mobilization in terms of temple building activities and sanskritization which are traceable historically from such different source materials as songs, later compositions and chronicles, epigraphic records, sculpture, painting and other works. The movement created cultural links by cutting across political boundaries, promoted a new Tamil consciousness and thereby, of course, contributed to Tamil heritage. By the ninth century it had covered the major kingdoms—the Chola, the Pandya and the Chera—and by the tenth century it had crossed its zenith to become a part of the established order and then began a natural decline in terms of its specific objectives. The phases emergence, growth, and decline of the movement for three-and-a-half centuries were closely interrelated to socio-political and economic trends, and as a whole especially to the evolution of the bhakti cult in northern India. It coincided in time in the south with the rise of a new feudal monarchy. Initially, it had to tackle the already established orders of Jainism and Buddhism. But the growth of Shaivism was so rapid that the kings became its patrons and even went to the extent of persecuting the followers of the heretical sects. Thus, Brahminism returned with a vengeance, along with its institutional base in the temples that were supported by agrarian settlements. These emerged as a dynamic force whereby not only because new agriculture areas were developed but also because a communication system between the south and the north was established.

In the initial phases at least, because of its ideology, kings, brahman priests, and the common people were brought together in a harmonious manner at religious gatherings, ceremonies and festivals, even though social inequalities continued because of the feudal system and the system of production and distribution is permitted. What we do learn is that in several stages different groups interacted with increasing frequency to accelerate the processes of 'Aryanization' or the

'socialization into Brahminical ideology.' The temple cult with the associated settlements and tenants played a significant role along with pilgrimage centres and other organizations of the movement that have had a major share in reforming the rigid hierarchical nature of Brahminism into an egalitarian popular Hindu religion with which we are familiar later. The stronghold of its followers was not in the guilds of traders, merchants, and artisans (which continued to be the stronghold of Jainism and Buddhism) but in the rural agrarian settlements. This is why the rivalry between the heretical sects and the bhakti movement reflects, at least implicitly, the conflict for socio-political dominance between the landowning classes and the trading classes.

Eventually the movement overtook Jainism and Buddhism not only because of royal patronage, but more because it adopted several media that evoked popular enthusiasm, such as song and dance, and also because it had an egalitarian and democratic approach that was different to the rigidity of the classical Brahminical discipline. Is this movement, therefore, to be considered revivalistic in nature? In any case, with the growth and establishment of the new order, the agrarian feudal order also came into existence and was supported by a graded system of hierarchy in caste; these kinds of relationships and patterns are clearly seen in bhakti literature, i.e., these hierarchic relationships exist at the 'spiritual' level. The feudal pyramid was thus firmly established in south India.

Apparently, all these developments may not indicate explicitly any element of dissent and protest. But the fact is that the bhakti movement did deviate a great deal from the orthodox philosophy of Brahminical Hinduism, and provided an impetus to a great deal of intellectual activity at both the secular and spiritual levels. There was a rejection of abstract metaphysics as well as indifference to caste regulations. This is seen in the fact that untouchables and outcastes have also been recognized as saints. Vedic ritualism was thus considerably changed, and diluted by the addition of several other folk, local, and regional elements. In this way its popularity increased and every aspect of life was subordinated to bhakti. Nonetheless, no qualitative change took place in the socio-economic order though it did open the path of salvation to

everyone. In this sense there was at least a liberation from the idea of caste rigidity because of the removal of the rigid code of rituals which created separate groups especially during times of devotion. This in itself was the promotion and spread of a new set of values, e.g., if a king could mix with the commoners, apologize to the priest and humble himself before the deity, the image created led to a change in attitudes. It made the individual and groups aware of certain equal rights that they could claim at least at the cultural and religious levels. The same freedom was given to women who had been denied such a status until then.

At any rate, as in the case of other movements, since this one did not aim to bring about fundamental changes, and, partly because of the processes inherent in the growth of dissent and protest movements and with many of the objectives with a social context having gradually been achieved, by the tenth century, the orthodox elements came to dominate the movement. And since the heretical sects had also gradually lost their strength due to the bhakti movement, the brahmins returned once again with strict ideas of ritual and temples became enormous landed property-owners and custodians of power and wealth and the maths headed by the brahman acharyas became champions of the varnashrama dharma and in the field of religion even the Tamil language was replaced by Sanskrit.

The Virasaiva Movement

Arun Bali writes on this movement of Karnatak, associated with the name of Basavesvara, which began to gain ascendancy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries was not only the state religion of Kannada rulers but also enjoyed royal patronage of the Vijayanagar kings. The protest was basically against brahman domination, i.e., the ethos linked with Brahminic Hinduism. Inequalities and exploitation which were in existence for quite sometime before were sanctified by various rituals and practices. It was at this time that Basavesvara provided a concrete shape and direction to the move-

ment—in terms of philosophy and religion a 'view' as well as a motivation for radical social action. It did not want merely to reform the established order but through competition and confrontation, (often militantly involving varying degrees of violence) it wanted to change the basic structure of time-honoured traditions. The objectives and achievements of this movement are comparatively way ahead of other movements. Perhaps, the total domination by one community through a rigid system of rituals and beliefs, the growing awareness of relative deprivation, the unequal distribution of social privileges and economic benefits were the causes of widespread resentment and bitterness.

The strategy evolved for achieving its goals included providing alternative rituals, taboos, and other cultural and religious symbols which would not only reflect the ideology of equality but also provide alternatives to brahman monopoly. The Virasaivas with their own beliefs, rituals, and rites, also provided a new content to their faith by establishing an institutional framework of canonical scriptures that covered the whole of society in terms of an egalitarian order. Beyond this framework it emphasized the dignity of labour underlining industry, selfless service and devotion to work. This was how it put into practice its basic precepts, of spiritual and ethical ideas. It thus appointed its own class of priests, artists, and craftsmen who would not depend on the Brahmans for their survival and would work irrespective of their status. Social mobilization was taken up with a missionary zeal, and people recruited in blocs through the institution of matha. The impact of it all has been that the Lingayats today form the single largest ethnic group in Karnatak.

As with many other movements, despite it being characterized by a high degree of social action and politicization of its value system for some centuries the routinization of institutional and organizational structure that was to provide a code of conduct to its members as the basis of the philosophy it stood for, rigidity and social hierarchy made their appearance. These are seen today, even in the wish that certain Virasaivas have claimed to be Virasaivite brahmans. The presence of these elements may also be regarded as a natural development of social processes in which movements are absorbed

into the social order. Nevertheless, its basic fight against brahman domination continues, and in other contexts this has helped the demand for equality in all spheres of life.

Consequently, a new orientation was given to the movement when other Non-brahman movements began in the 1920s in the old states of Madras, Mysore, and Bombay. It was able to provide the core structure for the Backward Classes movement, because the experience of protest was already in existence. This and the various other associations fighting against the Brahmans led to the creation of the All-India Virasaiva Maha Sabha in 1904 with branches in most of the Southern states. Social mobilization and social control, to bring about positive action and a collective caste consciousness for the benefit of the deprived classes, have been—and were in the past—used through concentrating on the system of education. If the maths encouraged mass education in the early years through Sanskrit pathashalas, in the twentieth century it has been conscious of the changing social realities. The movement has encouraged English education as well as changed emphasis from sacred to secular education including the encouragement given to science, engineering, and technology. This has been so because these are again as they once were dominated by the brahmans, and have been important in the modernization process. In turn the political control of power points, at least in Karnatak, had also to be made by the movement, which meant taking part in state level politics and elections.

The movement may be said to be a significant one for it formulated, developed, and put into action an entire new content and structure. This was in order to cripple the rigid traditions which had been imposed for centuries by the dominating Brahmans. Of course, the ideals could not be implemented in full, but their impact on the social structure of the Kannada speaking area has been immense. However, a once egalitarian movement which began in an effort to cause changes, was itself infected by those very characteristics which it had originally repudiated. Today, its impact on twentieth century Backward Classes movements may be noted. This has been discussed in detail by M S A Rao.

The Saint-Poets of Maharashtra

G B Sardar's paper discusses the role of the saint-poets in the transformation of Maharashtrian society and culture, approximately from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. Prior to this, society was already divided into what may be called two classes—the privileged few and the unprivileged many. The concern of the saint-poets is a humanistic one for socio-economic justice, so that the sub-human existence of the many which has resulted from the vested interests of the power groups could be relieved if not eliminated all together. Social control was once again exerted through the medium of religion and culture. This is how the saint-poets were able to start to reform the system by following the path of devotion or bhakti. Knowledge, religion or such other elements of change were not available to a majority because of taboos. Hence, the emphasis of the saint-poets was on a universalistic and egalitarian religion which would open its doors of salvation to all, in terms of the Bhagavat Dharma and the bhakti marg.

The mechanism for social reform was through religious and cultural symbols and acts, rather than through a direct confrontation and hostility with the power structure. Under the circumstances, these means were both expedient and appropriate as means of expressing dissent and protest. It is true that religion dominated all fields of learning and knowledge and as such played an important role. Moreover, by making available all knowledge, for everyone, through the medium of the local language which is closely connected with devotional movements, these saints also made a significant contribution to Maharashtrian culture.

Sardar specifically discusses in detail the role of the Warkari saints. He gives the political and economic background of the time which extends from the Yadava rule to the emergence of Shivaji, a period of about four centuries; and, the saints discussed range from Sant Dnyaneshwar to Sant Tukaram. As in other areas, at that time religion was used to maintain a hold on the masses in terms of material benefits and services, especially through institutionalized beliefs, practices, and other ceremonies. The protest of these people was thus against dogmatic religion which made the role of a majority of the people the service of a minority belonging to the upper groups

or *varnas*. The approach to social and religious change was given differently by the saints and the philosophies adopted were social oriented rather than based on any abstract metaphysics. This new orientation is reflected in the Marathi writings of those times. It is important to note the emphasis given to 'congregation' or *kirtan* for the preaching of the Bhagavat religion so that the restrictions of Brahman priests' exclusiveness could be overcome. Many of these developments took place against the background of Muslim rule, both as a positive and negative reaction—negatively in terms of continuing or reviving the old traditions, and positively because it was influenced by the philosophy of the Sufi-saints and, perhaps, the egalitarian values of Islam too.

At any rate, the four major saints belonging to the Warkari saints have in different ways affected the movement in terms of literary style, compositions and creativity. But all their contributions differ from those of the saints of other sects, particularly in terms of the social dimension given to their religious formulations. This is why they were very popular and seemed to satisfy the religious impulses of the people by modifying the old Vedic religion to suit their times. However, they did not believe in destroying the foundations of society, because they thought that ethically correct traditions could be reactivated within the contemporary framework. One of the main means was their use of spoken Marathi for the ordinary man and not the Marathi used by the Mahanubhavas which corresponded to classical Sanskrit poetry. If the Bhagats were still considered supreme it was because they did not believe that the shastris and pandits had a monopoly over this ancient knowledge; in order to remove social discrimination, they believed in the supremacy of self-knowledge and devotion. All these efforts helped a great deal to lessen the contradictions in society, but in the long run did not bring about effective structural changes.

Dissent and Protest in Hindi Bhakti Poetry

Savitri Chandra's paper is an attempt to underline the elements of protest and dissent in 'medieval' literature (from the fifteenth century onwards) as seen in Hindi bhakti poetry, with emphasis

on political and social content, along with its cultural and ideological elements. This is an aspect that has not been emphasized by earlier writers who see the bhakti movement mainly as a reaction of Hinduism against the Islamic challenge. But the movement has also been seen as a protest of the lower classes, especially artisans and craftsmen groups which as a consequence of Turkish rule had grown considerably with the growth of city life. For some centuries prior to the coming of the Turks, social divisions between the privileged rich and the unprivileged rich had been very sharp, with brahmans dominating on the basis of the *varnashrama dharma*. While the ideology of the Muslim rulers was based on equality, they tacitly accepted the *chaturvarna* system, and yet they were equally indifferent to these dissent movements.

Kabir's writings are the most prominent of them all. He laid stress on the fundamental equality of man as reflected in the earlier writings of the *Siddhas* and the *Nath Panthis* and which continues to be seen in the later sixteenth and seventeenth century writings of Guru Nanak, Dadu Dayal, and the other poets such as those of Bihar. Such social ideas especially those of Kabir, invited sharp reaction from both Hindu and Muslim orthodoxy because they were very radical for those times. Bhakti literature indicates the absence of abstract philosophical ideas; instead, ideas are propagated in a simple language which made a deep and direct appeal to the common man. Kabir often expresses these ideas by making fun of the brahman or ridiculing him and other authorities like him.

While Kabir and Rai Das believed in basic equality, especially in terms of access to religious literature, Surdas and Tulsidas later on upheld the position of the Brahman. In other words in bhakti literature there are two contradictory ideas, i.e., at the religious level there is no distinction of caste in the matter of one's devotion to God but in secular society social distinctions need not be abolished. Of course, all of them state that the intrinsic qualities of the varnas rather than birth-status should be stressed. These ideas did have their impact on society because the exclusive rights of the brahman were diluted, and after the sixteenth century the low caste saints were respected by all sections of society.

From the political and economic viewpoint, Bhakti poetry

emphasized that wealth and power which were dominant in a feudal setting were not things which a bhagat should feel proud of and be overjoyed about. However, these are only implicit ideas and nothing is explicitly stated about changing the social order. Even so poverty was not approved for its own sake, and begging was disapproved by Kabir who emphasized the virtues of working for oneself. If the poor man was superior it was because there was humility in him as against the arrogance one found in the rich. But to most of the poets it was evident that the trader-cum-moneylender was exploiting the poor, whom they warned against these people and other officials including the diwans and the kings who perpetuated injustice and sufferings over the masses. There are vivid descriptions of families during these times, and examples of hardships and harassments meted out to them. There is some general idea indicative in the qualities of a good ruler and his duties towards the section of society, but which according to Tulsidas is not possible in the age of Kali.

At the cultural level, the attack by the bhakti poets on religious practices and beliefs is quite explicit, and is applicable to all religions because these reflect an irrational attitude that obscured the reality of God as one. They also do not approve of asceticism of those other sects which advocate renunciation of the world. For the bhakti saints true devotion implies seeking God within oneself, in the routine of daily life, and their approach based on mysticism is fundamentally humanistic and individualistic. Hence, logically the rejection of a formal and organized religion based on authoritarianism was natural. However, such sacred books as the *Vedas* and the *Quran* were not entirely rejected though knowledge through experience was given preference. They stated quite clearly that various rituals and practices were evolved by the privileged in order to control the common man. This approach also perpetuated the animosity between the Hindus and the Muslims. The various saints differ in their attitude towards the scriptures and the role of the priests. Unlike Kabir, Tulsidas, and Surdas do not disapprove of the *Vedas*. Dadu who did not consider himself to be either a Hindu or a Muslim, as a dissenter he naturally invited hostility from both the sides. On the other hand, Kabir, Raidas, Nanak, Dadu during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries considered scriptural knowledge secondary to personal knowledge and devotion to God. The seventeenth and eighteenth century poets reflect the other trend.

Basically, what emerges is that through their preachings the saint-poets expressed disapproval of social distinctions by seeking to identify themselves with the suffering of the common man although they chose to express themselves in religious terms. The movement was thus ideologically against the prevailing socio-economic ideas and institutions which had sharpened the distinctions between the haves and have-nots. The bhakti saints, therefore, revitalized Indian tradition although later it fell a prey to factions and divisions like so many other movements.

The Bhagat Movements

Sachchidananda's paper is on the Bhagat Movements in Chota Nagpur, a tribal area which during the last several centuries has been affected by various processes. Some of the factors include the coming of Hindu and Muslim settlers with the invasion of their territory, and the increasing pace of industrialization and urbanization since Independence. The two predominant tribes of the area are Mundas and Oraons, whose history and structure of agrarian society is a necessary background for the present study. Thus, organizational changes from simple level village organization began to take place from the sixteenth century onwards when the region came into contact with the Mughal Empire. Hindu priests, businessmen and other adventurers came to the area and the idea that a ruler who could collect taxes and extract revenue—something that was new for tribal society—came into existence; a process that was further strengthened with the coming of the British. Gradually, the tribals were reduced to tenants and by the end of the nineteenth century, they owned only 96.99 sq miles out of 7062 sq miles of land which had sustained and united them to a kind of spiritual bond in the name of their ancestors.

This upset the traditional relationship and the dispossession of land has been the cause of periodic resistance and hostile movements, that have often become violent because of the

extremely oppressive attitude by officials, middlemen and others. No law or police ever supported them. For example, the tribals not only had to pay all kinds of taxes and revenue including some for festive occasions but also provide free labour and other services. Of the many revolts in the nineteenth century the violent Kol rebellions of 1821 and 1831 are significant because they triggered off various administrative and land reforms though none of them could satisfy the tribals. One such law was the passing of the Chota Nagpur Tenure Act in 1869. With its failure began the Sardari agitation, to be followed by the Birsa-Munda one in 1895 and again in 1900. The movements at this point had transformed their socio-economic objectives to a political one, for there was now a demand for local self-administration. These series of agitations brought about an endless repression and this was when their leader *Birsa* was arrested, and died. It was not until 1908 that attempts were made to mollify the Munda tribals and to restore their rights to land.

The Birsa-Munda background affected the other early twentieth century movements in Chota Nagpur area, especially those of the Bhagats which reflect a great religious ferment. Birsa had become the Bhagwan of Chota Nagpur and following Tana Bhagats, who are Mundas, movements by other groups also assumed religious overtones. For instance, one leader wanted the entire tribe to believe in one God, which would neither be Hindu nor Christian. This was Jatra Bhagat who in 1914 had a vision and a revelation like Birsa. Of course, the predominant religious dimensions cover up the demands for socio-economic reforms. In any case, the Bhagat Movement spread far and wide into different parts of the Ranchi district. Other spiritual revelations took place among the Oraons also. By 1915, all these movements came to be known as the Tana Bhagat movements and spread to some areas of Madhya Pradesh. Against many of these military force was used; the ferment was motivated by the faith that a Messiah would come.

Among the Oraons the term Bhagat is applied to that section of the tribe which subscribes to the cult of bhakti. One view considers this as an attempt, through sanskritization, to raise the status of its members within a broad Hindu framework, such as by the inculcation of Hindu beliefs and practices. There

are different kinds of Bhagats, depending on what beliefs and practices as well as what deities and priests are followed and worshipped, what is common is their idea of ceremonial purity and impurity. In this context the Tana Bhagats movement has been divided into two phases; one, which wanted to remove existing tribal beliefs especially in ghosts and spirits, and the second which sought by devising programmes to set up rules and regulations in conformity with the new doctrines and beliefs. Various mechanisms, strategies of action, were adopted by the people. In time, due to the opposition from the authorities, there was the formation of different sections of Tana Bhagats. In all of them, several elements with both Hindu and Christian idioms have been absorbed. These are seen in various occasions, festivals and in their life styles and life-cycle processes.

From 1919 onwards the religious overtones slackened. Since the redress of agrarian grievances was not allowed, political, and economic overtones became powerful, and secular methods of protest were adopted. Once again, strong oppressive measures were taken against these agitations. But by now the Non-Cooperation Movement which Gandhiji had started in 1921 also provided additional impetus. The Bhagats joined the Congress and the Gandhian movement. In other words, Non-Cooperation and the Tana Bhagat movement reinforced each other. In this way, the latter became an all-India movement, and even became a part of the Quit-India Movement of 1942. Thus, between 1920 and 1942 the movement was transformed from a socio-religious movement into a political one. The subsequent events are of the post-Independence period during which time the demand for the restoration of land and other rights has continued and some improvement has taken place although not to the extent the tribals had expected.

From the broad over all view many scholars would consider these movements to be nativistic or revitalization ones that have tried consciously to create a society in harmony with their culture. This is the case wherever we see that the old culture resurrected under the challenges of new factors causes division and disorganization, for example, when two societies come into contact, one of which is by far the dominant partner with both economic advantage and the power of prestige. This is why, in order to overcome their inferiority to Hindu culture,

tribals have tried either to borrow an ideology, or to return to the original puritanical society. Thus Sachchidananda considers the Tana Bhagat movements to be reformatory because these have attempted to synthesize both the native and alien traditions including Christianity. Here the role of technology and economics has been important, even if it has come in the garb of Christian religion. At any rate, the Bhagat movements have been more than passing restive movements; they have been long-term mechanisms used for the transformation of tribal society. Some researchers even regard these tribal movements as having been mediators between the great and little traditions.

The Arya Samaj Movement

Pushpa Suri writes on the Arya Samaj Movement which began in the nineteenth century mainly amongst the middle classes, who wanted to improve their status through professional occupations. It was in response to the changing conditions in India especially industrialization. Prior to this time these classes were primarily mercantile groups, clerks and writers who had worked under the Mughal and Sikh administration, and the well-to-do peasant classes. The partly revivalistic and partly reformatory ideology of the Arya Samaj suited these people ideally. Swami Dayanand, the founder of the movement, wanted to reform Hinduism by removing from it many undesirable customs, social injustices perpetuated by the semi-educated priestly class, the rigid caste system and consequently untouchability, the inferior status of women, child marriage, the taboo against widow-remarriage, etc. Similar reformatory moves were being made by the Christian missions. Swami Dayanand wanted to counteract the Christian movement, for he felt, Hindu society should be able to reform itself. He did not think there was any need for its adherents to change their religion. While the Samaj wanted to reform Hinduism by going back to the ancient scriptures and other texts, other similar movements such as the Brahmo Samaj reflected a more direct impact of Westernization.

The history of the Arya Samaj's origin and growth, and of

its founder is well-known. Also well-known are the years of wandering and search, encouragement and learning from Swami Virjanand of Mathura and determination to propagate the Vedas and the Shastras in their original purity. One of the important landmarks in his life is the Kashi debate that made him famous. Soon after in Bengal he realized the importance of Hindi as the language of the people and not Sanskrit if he was to spread his ideas. Thus, it was that in 1875 he published his famous Hindi commentary on the Vedas entitled *Satyartha Prakash*.

Swami Dayanand was quick to realize that an efficient organization and institution are necessary in order to mobilize public opinion. The consequence was the establishment of the Arya Samaj in 1875, which gave especial emphasis to congregational prayers, social service and reforms. The philosophical and ideological mainstay of the movement was the *Satyartha Prakash*, many of the ideas in which were revolutionary for that time. It presented a democratic and egalitarian outlook, requiring the removal of a dogmatic *varna* theory, social disparities and advocating the importance of status by merit. While all this was a help to the lower and depressed classes, it also made inroads into brahman monopoly. Naturally, therefore, the orthodoxy opposed these activities very strongly. Because of the general atmosphere of nationalism and reform movements, these ideas were taken up by the upper classes other than the Brahmans. But the Arya Samaj remained confined mainly to the educated middle classes, not excluding a small number of brahmans or to those who already had a status in the social system. There was also a counteraction from a section of the orthodoxy who called themselves the *Sanatanis*. They also belonged to the upper and middle social groups, like the Arya Samaj. Therefore, in time their antagonisms were reduced, and resulted in a greater harmony between two groups. The later personalities who gave a lead to the Arya Samaj movement include, Mahatma Hansraj, Swami Shraddhanand, and Lala Lajpat Rai. Under the leadership of these teachers the Punjab became the centre of the movement.

The major objectives of reconstructing society through a reorganization of the social system was not, of course, realized

by the movement, since no alternatives to the fundamental philosophical basis of Hinduism especially the theory of *karma* could be provided. Nevertheless, the stress was on changing social status through education (*gurukuls* and so on) by giving importance to *guna*, *karma* and *swabhav*. Because of this many among the orthodoxy excommunicated the Arya Samajists. Nevertheless, despite opposition the zeal of various members of the Arya Samaj continued unabated; they collected money, and organized different institutions to mobilize public opinion.

Of the many reformist ideas, one was that of *shuddhi*, i.e., a method whereby Hindus converted to Christians could re-enter the Hindu order. Ceremonies to purify persons for this purpose were simplified, often following the lines of Christian missionaries who were converting Hindus to Christianity. While in the beginning this was not opposed by the Muslims, the *shuddhi* movement took a turn when a reconversion of Muslims to Hinduism was also taken up. In time, this programme was confined largely to reconverting some of the recently Islamized communities which had, in fact, retained several of the customs and practices of Hinduism. Naturally the Muslim missionaries tried to stop this kind of reconversion. Many of the then Congress and orthodox Hindu leaders thought that the *shuddhi* movement constituted a major danger to unity and amicability between the Hindus and the Muslims. In fact, it led to serious antagonism between the two communities. As a counterattack the orthodox Muslims and maulvis vehemently attacked the *shuddhi* movement, since it was considered to be a direct threat to Islam.

One of the major goals of Swami Dayanand was the propagation of knowledge through education especially Vedic knowledge, science, and rationalism. This is why, after his death, Anglo-Vedic institutions which had been established during his time became the main centres for the propagation of these ideas. Their building-up was carried out with great enthusiasm in the teeth of great odds and opposition. This was possible partly because of the level of political mobilization for the movement of nationalism had reached a fairly high level. Swami Shraddhanand took up the cause of the education of girls as well as the plight of widows, while

opposing child marriage. This endeavour, in the *Satyartha Prakash* caused a great deal of opposition. But the British government was impressed, and legislation to raise marriageable age was brought about. Several institutions for the resettlement of widows were also started, though in the princely states the Act was circumvented.

In many ways the Arya Samaj movement in advocating these reforms was following the Christian missionaries. It was the only organization apart from the Christians which was to establish orphanages and famine relief organizations. This was specially because the Arya Samajists felt that orphans in Christian institutions were being converted. It is to the credit of the Arya Samaj that they managed to tackle so many problems, without any government funds or help from Maharajas and Jagirdars.

In the twentieth century the movement, after a hundred-year history, has slackened probably because other agencies at the political and social level were taking up the fight. The movement also has not been revitalized through new programmes even though it has been holding meetings to propagate the ideas of the Arya Samaj. The old ideals in many ways seem to have become out of date. The movement as an organizational body continues to exist, but its future programmes seems uncertain in terms of a movement of dissent, protest and reform.

Lokahitawadi : The Rationalist Movement

Y M Pathan's paper sketches the approach of a pioneer of nationalism, a social reformer, in early nineteenth century Maharashtra, Gopal Hari Deshmukh, popularly known as Lokahitawadi. The period was soon after the surrender of the Marathas to the English under the leadership of Peshwa Baji Rao II. The work of Lokahitawadi is mainly known from his numerous writings on such various subjects as religion, sociology, history, political science, economics, etc. His most popular book is *Hundred Letters* in Marathi which also forms the main source for this paper.

One major objective of Lokahitawadi was to reform

Hinduism and free it especially of its various dogmatic beliefs and rituals. He advocated the reading of various English books and often referred to the English as Enlightened Rulers. His emphasis was on a religion of humanism and the development and practice of ethical and moral values. He did not believe in the superiority of Sanskrit to English, especially if one wanted to acquire knowledge of the sciences in order to keep pace with developments elsewhere in the world. He therefore criticized Sanskrit pandits for being behind times and vehemently registered his protests against those Sanskrit *grantha*s that were holding back the Indian people. Of course, he did not imply that all Sanskrit works should be condemned.

Lokahitawadi was a great supporter of equality and the liberation of women who, because of religion, were being persecuted in various ways for centuries. He quoted the early scriptures to show how the position of women was degraded, as for example in the *Manusmriti* and how the later priests had imposed from motives of self-interest, rituals and customs that reduced women to an inferior position. He also opposed child marriage, advocated remarriage of widows, and opposed the practice of sati. These and other ideas of his of social reform were taken up actively later on in the century.

Lokahitawadi himself a brahman, as a rationalist, vigorously attacked the fourfold division (*chaturvarna*) of society, and especially the monopolistic role of the brahmins who perpetuated rigid and dogmatic inequalities which he believed, were responsible for the downfall of the Marathas.

Lokahitawadi also wrote on and analyzed economic conditions and poverty, after Dadabhai Naoroji's *Poverty in India*. He was a strong exponent of both industrial and agricultural development so that India may become a part of the developed nations. For this purpose it was necessary to encourage knowledge of economic sciences rather than becoming engrossed in religious rites and rituals. Indians were exploited by Muslim and English invaders who, according to him, had discouraged local development and economic self-sufficiency. Of the several remedies suggested by him for getting rid of economic slavery, one was the need to develop village industry which had been replaced by flourishing foreign trade. Evi-

dently, his economic outlook was interrelated to political events, especially nationalism. This emphasis on the primacy of local goods over foreign was made long before the *Swadeshi* movement.

At the political level while on the one hand he welcomed British rule since the Peshwas could not save the Maratha Empire, he was also grieved to see that Indians had lost their freedom. Analyzing in many of his letters this loss of freedom he tries to find the reasons for it. These according to him were a lack of knowledge, ignorance, the rigid and wasteful social system that followed the mandates of the Shastras, and hence, fatalism, etc., truly believing that the British were here to educate the Indians and make them progressive, that "God had sent these *gurus* (the English) from a distant land to set them right." Consequently, it was natural for him to have critics, like Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar who charged him with creating an inferiority complex amongst the Indians by welcoming English rule. Despite this criticism, he firmly believed that it was only because of British rule that education could be spread and with it ideas of democracy (he even advocated the demand for a parliamentary type of democracy which he felt the British would accept in due course), various process of knowledge and economic development. All this would make people politically conscious and in time lead to realization of freedom for India. Basically he was a nationalist who did not wish to sacrifice the liberty of the nation. He was quite confident that in due course freedom would come, even if it was two hundred years later.

Some of these ideas seem ahead of his time. This may be attributed to his realistic, rational, and liberal approach.

Backward Classes Movements

M S A Rao takes up the protest movements in the old states of Madras, Mysore and Bombay during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, referring to the Backward Classes in terms of their emergence, ideology, organization and leadership. He gives the figures of the distribution of all economically and socially backward groups, castes and tribes, both of which are scheduled

in the Constitution and other groups whose safety depends upon the policies of the State governments. The emergence of these movements is generally associated with the welfare and conversion programme of Christian missionaries amongst backward social groups, who also received official support from the British, as well as the princely States. When the economic as well as social status of these low class converts improved considerably, it provided a sharp contrast to the state of the unconverted. This was especially so in Kerala among whom an acute social awareness of relative deprivation was created. Similar was the case in North India, because of the impact of Brahmo and Arya Samaj. Awareness was also acute because these egalitarian ideas were taking shape within the wider political climate of the national movement, (the role of Mahatma Gandhi in this is wellknown) and the introduction of democratic ideals. The British had also introduced various reform policies which gave the deprived sections a sense of political identity along with introducing the idea of secularization in employment opportunities, and so on. All this challenged the established authority of the orthodox upper groups.

The Backward Classes Movement was basically a conflict between the brahman and the non-brahman groups. The background is the glaring contrast in socio-economic conditions, against which the movement's mechanism and operational strategies adopted differed in different states. For example, in the old Bombay State it was Jyotiba Phule who was to organize the *Satya Shodhak Samaj*, and in Tamil Nadu it was the Justice Party which fought in various ways the dominance of the brahmans who were identified with the Aryans and the non-brahmans with the Dravidian. This was not the case in Mysore where the lower classes took active part in the movement against the background of Virasaivism. In Kerala, the attack was basically, and initially, against especially non-Malayalee Tamilian brahmans. The North Indian situation in contrast is quite different because there the division and conflict between brahman and non-brahman is not so sharp.

Very often, there has been conflict of the non-brahman and Brahman groups which was focussed within the upper groups. But M S A Rao deals with such movements among the lower classes which include both touchables and untouch-

ables, who attacked the upper groups in general such as the Yadav movement, the Vanhikul Kshatriya movement, the Nadar movement, and the Self-respect Movement that led to the formation of the DMK. Thus, many of these movements were aiming to gain higher ritual status through proper myths of origin as well as by wanting a share in the economic and educational benefits which were a monopoly of the upper castes. There were also those upper non-brahman castes who sought a fresh identity by being indigenous in terms of the reference group which considered itself freer.

In contrast to these movements, M S A Rao also deals with those protest movements among the Scheduled Castes which are of two categories: (i) that stress withdrawal and self-organization in order to establish parallel sources of legitimacy and, (ii) those others which opted out of Brahminical Hinduism by adopting alternative egalitarian ideologies which give self-respect and status. The example of the first is the Sri Narayan Dharm Paripalan (SNDP Movement) and the second is the Mahar Movement led by Ambedkar. He also illustrates such anti-caste movements as have not used religious beliefs in the formation of ideologies of protest like the Dalit Panthers which were organized in 1972 mainly as a result of the frustration of urban youth, with stress on a leftist ideology.

The attempt of M S A Rao is to highlight, in terms of processes and patterns, the three levels of conflict between the Backward Classes Movements which seemed to have a hierarchical relationship. In terms of social consequences there is once again a hierarchy of structural relationship, namely, reformatory, transformatory and revolutionary. If reformation refers to changes in religious ideas and cultural symbols, and transformation to the changes in the balance of power, then most of the Backward Classes Movements have been transformatory in nature. Transformatory changes, as a consequence of the non-brahman vs. brahman conflict have upset the traditional monopolistic dominance of certain groups. Similarly the movements among the lower non-brahman castes has altered the superordination and subordination relationship between upper non-Brahman and the lower non-brahman castes. The former especially happened in Bombay, Madras,

and Mysore, while the latter took place in Madras like the *DK* and *DMK* movements, and in North India among the *Yadavs*. There are, thus, several processes of transformation of social movements which involve various factors that result in the emergence of new ideologies, and due to political mobilization, local and regional aspirations often assume all-India objectives. But like many other movements over a period of time the processes involved are not always for continuous change, because once major objectives are near achievement, the routinization and establishment of institutional orders causes a loss in momentum and within them the formation of the elite. This causes conflict between the elite and the masses, a conflict that in due course results in the emergence of new protest ideologies.

Dissent and Protest in Modern Hindi Literature

Narendra Mohan's theme is on 'Dissent and Protest in Modern Hindi Literature'. Basically descriptive, he outlines the role of dissent and protest ideas. In the specific Indian context, he begins by dealing historically with the tradition of literary protest in poetry, fiction, and drama. Poetry has undergone changes because of different historical situations, i.e., due to changing social and cultural and politico-economic situations. Examples are given of Kabir and Guru Nanak during medieval times who despite their religious goals of self-realization attacked several social evils and took up a non-conformist stance. But other poets like Tulsidas tried to synthesize, i.e., they did not try to create a new order but wanted to create harmony between different groups. This is a kind of conformism which has nevertheless elements of protest against the existing situation, even if its nature is unlike Kabir's or Guru Nanak's. On the whole protest in medieval poetry was a minor aspect, not a fundamental aspect. In the later or the modern context, dissent and protest is represented very differently from how we see it during the medieval period. Ideas later arise against a background socio-political and economic aspects, and science and technology. Modern Hindi literature has been influenced at least to start with, by European literature

and specifically by the writings of Marx, Freud, Sartre, and Camus. Prior to Independence protest in modern Hindi literature may be identified with the national movement, and other social reform movements. This is reflected in fiction and drama as well as in the poetry of Bharatendu, Dwivedi and the poets of the *Chayavad* group.

The first phase of modern Hindi poetry is characterized by Bharatendu and it is a transitional one, i.e., it is something in between the medieval and modern. If not very strongly, social reforms are a theme in this poetry, such as condemning sati, *pardha*, early marriage, untouchability and so on. The second phase is characterized by the works Dwivedi. Now social reforms are creatively set in a cultural perspective although the medium is of mythical characters; poetry in this period, is both epic in inspiration and deals with contemporary problems with an expression that continues to be in classical terms and forms. *Chayavad* or romantic poetry gives symbolic expression to the spirit of the national struggle as we see for example in the poetry of Suryakaant Tripathi 'Nirala' who protested not only against accepted social norms but also revolted against the classical forms, the meter and the rhythm patterns of poetry. The poets who followed are of *Prayogvad* and *Pragativad* (experimental poetry and progressive poetry). While the *Prayogvad* poets express individual protest against the human situation (existential viewpoint), the poets of the *Pragativad* are primarily concerned with the social condition (Marxian approach). Then came a new movement around 1951 called *Nai Kavita*, which reflected a period of deep disenchantment and disillusionment. To start with it was new in its content and technique and its protest is more in terms of values rather than social aspects. But the emphasis on "authenticity of experience" was the main stage of the poets of *Nai Kavita* although it soon became an outlet for unchecked emotions. Soon, these movements more or less faded or drifted into a simple kind of humanitarianism. At this stage Hindi poetry assumed a surrealistic and absurd tone, to be later followed by poets of the *Akavita* group who were against all morality, sexual code; and generally have a nihilistic approach though without any social context. Their challenges, therefore, did not amount to any deep protest.

In 1967 there was a movement of what has been termed 'committed' poets who tried to look for their identity in the social and political context. In 1973 a new trend in Hindi poetry called *Vichar Kavita* emerged. It was concerned both with social and political content, and the structural unity of poetry—believing that it is thought "which tends to experience and give it a specific character," i.e., it is an expression of experience and thought which is interrelated in the poetic structure.

The beginnings of protest in the modern Hindi short story emerges with Prem Chand and is somewhat later than in poetry. Prem Chand took the socio-economic and political conditions of his time into account. The freedom struggle was its main emphasis, both as individual protest (which was psychological in nature) and also on social aspects that are concerned with socio-political problems. Again, the influence of Freud and Marx appear to be the background of these progressive writers. But out of all these, it is only Muktibodh, who reveals a correct and mature understanding of social problems. These were the writers of the 'forties and the' fifties.

In the sixth and seventh decades of this century come into existence short stories which are placed under the heading of *Nai Kahaniyan*, wherein the individual is in suspense, under the circumstances, in relationship to his values, i.e., the individual is not able to distinguish completely the real world from the dream world. These stories are thus trying to break away from any well-defined set patterns of the past although they are unable to demolish the past completely. Soon, this transitional phase becomes conventional, giving a stereotyped expression of experiences.

The short stories of the 'seventies' have tried to break away from this trend and begin to deal with the problem of family relations, sexual relations, especially as seen in the protest of the younger generation who mainly belong to the middle class. For this reason many critics seem to consider their protest as pseudo-protest. Nevertheless, the existential problems of alienation and identity crises involved are reflected in various aspects of rebellious anti-establishment norms and idioms, and against institutions also. However, not all of these works are perfect in the creative expression.

Protest in the Hindi novel also begins with Prem Chand. The tradition is later kept up by 'Agyeya'. But the two again differ in terms of social and individual protest. The novel of Ranu is a landmark and deals with the struggle of landless Santhals against the landlords; and the novel of Kishan Baldev Vaid 'embodies not only modern sensibility but also deals with structural devices'. The other novelists who followed express the same kind of ideas as have been mentioned earlier in the case of poetry and short stories.

The element of protest in Hindi drama is not as multidimensional as it is in Hindi poetry and fiction. The reason perhaps is in the dramatic form itself, because stage and stage craft have to keep up with revolt and reality, if it is to be radically different. Jaysankar Prasad is a landmark in play writing, has his dramas rooted in historical themes of Indian culture. The later dramatists are influenced by Western playwrights such as Ibsen and Bernard Shaw. Many of them continue to utilize the mythical form of expression. There are also poetic plays which give expression to the crisis of values whereby modern man has tried to free himself from traditional and conventional values. But in most of these the spirit of protest is not explicit, unlike perhaps Mohan Rakesh's play which do provide the dramatic word and situation. There are also anti-establishment plays now whose approach is a mixture of the absurd and existentialism.

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It is clear from the brief summaries of the movements given above that in understanding Indian civilization explanatory models cannot depend on notions of harmonious and equilibrium states, or those which give the impression that traditions in India have been unchanging ones, i.e., a civilization in which a normative/prescriptive value system has been unquestionably accepted. Thus, conflict, tension, and like processes of inherent contradictions are present, are and necessary for effecting continuity and change in India, especially because this civilization is a complex and heterogeneous one that comprises several subcultures and subsocieties. It is in the context of disharmonies and discontinuities that protest, dissent and reform movements have played a critical role, and

from time to time questioned the fundamental basis of the socio-cultural structures, especially when there was great resentment amongst the general masses due to the gross disparities between the few and the many. These movements have provided correctives in various ways to the imbalances, although later on they themselves were transformed into orthodox traditions.

It is thus evident that Indian civilization has the ability to generate orthogenic movements which have facilitated adjustments to changing social realities. But the fact that the impact of ideas from outside, as well as of technology and economics, has been equally important is being readily accepted. Many of the movements, especially those included in this volume, we learn were dominated by religious concern notwithstanding the socio-economic reasons and even political overtones. Movements have generally emerged because of an awareness of injustices and the inadequacies of the system, and with the formulation of clear objectives appealed and spread through various mobilization and sustenance mechanisms. Over a long period of time, there has been in the pattern, the objectives, goal transfers. While the impact on society is quite clear, the success or failure of a movement is a difficult matter to assess, in the absence of a central tradition whereby we may be able to measure the paradigm and the deviation from it.

The papers in this volume indicate a wide variety of activity from which we may identify both macro and micro level movements. These range from empirical data obtained from literary, classical and oral traditions to artistic and intellectual spheres. Socio-religious protests have also arisen both because of fundamental intellectual or philosophic disagreements, and the socio-economic disparities. The role of technology and of economics which is an important factor has not been brought out in these studies, and requires further indepth historical investigation.

What is quite apparent is that the thesis of a great tradition and a little tradition requires a reassessment. In India there are interacting traditions and even at certain moments several interpretations of the great tradition have been formulated, and we know now that there are several little traditions which have existed at various levels. Both these are character-

istics of Indian civilization which is continuous and intermingling at many levels, and by means of multi-channel transmissions. Thus are meanings and interpretations transferred at different periods of time. Whenever traditions which have been incorporated in the written sacred texts, do become rigid they have thereby lost touch with people. And this is reflected in the exploitative nature of the socio-economic system also—in terms of material goods and services even though this may be in the garb of rituals and practices—there have been reinterpretations and spread, often by the incorporation of folk and other idioms, which gives the majority of people meaning and validity of their faith, belief and existence.

Apparently then other models that do not provide mere dichotomies have to be evolved. The same is true of considering the social structure in terms of hierarchy of *varnas* and *jatis* because in terms of political and economic power the hierarchy has been in a state of flux and even the functioning of the priests has not always been performed by the brahmins but by lower castes. It is also notable that there has been no blind acceptance of tradition whenever there has been a big gap between the precepts or ideals enunciated and their existence at the functional or operational level. Even if drastic changes have not taken place we learn that the legitimacy of doctrines or at least their being subjected to varied interpretations and reinterpretations have been the case; and, that individual dissenters or heretics have challenged the basic tenets of society and philosophy. Many of these personalities have arisen because of the belief that in the eyes of God everyone should be equal, and at least, have the same access to Him, on a basis of equality. This was especially so when resentments were ignored by the established order and there is widespread discontent that triggers off movements which have made considerable impact on the growth of this civilization.

The one paper on tribal movements is indicative of the crucial role that the so-called tribals who have been considered to be away from the mainstream have very often played not only in contributing to the various traditions of Hindu society but also in bridging gaps between different areas or political kingdoms. They have done this by trying to revitalize their own societies as reform movements nativistic or revitalization

movements. This again was an attempt to reinterpret tribal tradition in the context of contemporary challenges. There have been similar movements in Christian and Islamic groups but such studies are not represented in this volume.

We may finally say that in the growth of any civilization whenever normative traditions and values fail to provide the necessary meaning and stimulus to the members of society or a civilization—for whatever reasons—cause strains and tensions. Consequently goals as well as institutions require a change at both the definitional and functional level in order that a society or civilization may function adequately in its survival. If this does not take place then societies and civilizations may come to an end. It is in this context that dissent, protest and reform movements have played an important role in reshaping and revitalizing Indian tradition. It is hoped that further studies by other institutions and universities will be undertaken for an objective assessment of Indian civilization.

Bhakti Movement in South India

M G S NARAYANAN AND VELUTHAT KESAVAN

Introduction

Definitions

THE TAMIL bhakti movement represents primarily a religious phenomenon with a valuable social content—a new wave of Aryan or Hindu influence among the Tamil people.¹ During its life-span of three and a half centuries, beginning from the middle of sixth century A.D.,² Shaiva and Vaishnava saints and their followers practised and propagated the cult of bhakti in the countryside, and went to pilgrim centres singing and dancing. They received royal patronage, clashed with Jains and Buddhists in open debate and defeated them, presumably healed the sick, and performed other miracles. Their hymns addressed to several deities constitute the cream of Tamil literature. Although the elements of dissent, protest, and reform are clear in the movement, these aspects are subordinated to the overall pattern of a greater movement—the consolidation and extension of classical Hindu society in early medieval India.

The bhakti movement in South India, in fact, had a two-fold character, i.e., its two main currents of Shaivism and Vaishnavism which flowing in parallel ways also mingled occasionally; the Vaishnava saints being known as *Alvars* and the Shaiva saints, *Nayanars*. It is doubtful whether the movement started as a conscious one. It is likely that several bhaktas appeared simultaneously in different centres, and the movement developed its conscious identity by the ninth century. By this time, Sundarmurti Nayanar, the last of the Nayanars, and Nammalvar, one of the last Alvars, indicated in their works a comprehensive understanding of the literature in the respective fields.³ For the first time an awareness of the group identity

of saints and temples has been explicitly mentioned and treated in their compositions. This was carried forward by Nathamuni (10th c.) who edited the Tamil Vaishnava canon and Nambi Andar Nambi (11th c.) who was the earliest compiler of the Shaiva hagiology.

How the terms *nayanar* and *alvar*, employed by their contemporaries, came to refer to the leaders of the Shaiva and Vaishnava movements respectively remains a puzzle. The word *nayanar* may be Tamilized form of Sanskrit *nayaka*, meaning 'a leader', probably suggestive of the Shaiva belief that the sixty-three leaders were incarnations of the *bhutas* of Shiva. The term *alvar* has been derived from the root *al* which could imply the act of plunging or immersing oneself and, as such, it has been suggested that the Alvars were persons who delved deeply into devotion. The change from *l* to *l̥* is linguistically admissible, and the term *āl* means 'to rule' or 'to preserve'. In that case the Vaishnava saints may be said to have enjoyed in bhakti literature the chief attribute of Vishnu, whose function is preservation and this is quite different from creation or destruction. A third possibility, which we would support, is that *alvar* is the literal translation of the Sanskrit word *bhakta*. Since *bhakta* is derived from the root *bhaṭ*, meaning 'to divide', 'to apportion', *bhakta* literally means one who enjoys a share.⁴ Thus, since the term *bhakta* was originally employed to denote a servant or retainer who shared the wealth of his master, in the course of time the same word must have been used for a devotee in view of his *dasyabhava* or attitude of service. Perhaps the Tamil word may have this meaning since the root *al* also means 'to possess', 'to enjoy', etc.

Historiography

Until recently, most of what has been written about this twin movement, concerns itself with chronology, the identity of individual saints, and with some literary and philosophical appreciations. Early scholars treated it chiefly as a literary movement or, at best, an ideological phenomenon with religion as the source of inspiration. The very label, 'Bhakti Move-

ment', conferred by modern writers was based on this literary-philosophical conception, because they had no clear notion about either its chronological sequence or the social significance. Historical studies, initiated by scholars like S Krishna-swami Aiyangar, R G Bhandarkar, T A Gopinatha Rao and K A Nilakanta Sastri in the twenties, were able to approximately fix the chronological framework, and with it came the inevitable scholarly disputes about the identity and date of individual saints. Mainly because of the uncertainty of its historical outline, and partly due to the lack of emphasis on social history, the correlation between religio-literary aspects and the socio-political background of the movement was not highlighted. Moreover, it was viewed as a pure Tamil movement and, consequently, never in the larger context of Indian civilization. Even today, due to a lack of theoretical perspectives in South Indian historiography, historical works have not yet been able to assess the Tamil bhakti movement from an all India viewpoint. Hence, the present study attempts to analyze the movement not only within the larger framework of the development of society and culture in India, but also in its socio-economic context with special reference to the elements of dissent, protest and reform.

Source Materials

Historical evidence for an analytical study are chiefly found in the literary works of the Nayanars and Alvars themselves, which are in the form of devotional songs addressed to deities mostly with reference to particular temples. These works which reflect the elegance of classical Tamil verse became the model for much of Tamil poetry in subsequent periods. The source materials may be classified as follows :

1. Songs of the Nayanars and Alvars.
2. Later compositions by their followers in the form of chronicles and hagiologies.
3. A few references in contemporary and near-contemporary epigraphs to devotional works and the temples connected with them.⁵

4. A few sculptured panels, painting and images representing the incidents in the lives of these personalities.⁶

Movement in space and time

A study of the bhakti movement suggests that it had its origins on the east coast, in and around such famous temples as *Tiruppati* and *Kanchi*.⁷ *Tiruppati*, the seat of *Tirumal* or *Vishnu*, otherwise known as *Venkatam*, is mentioned as the northernmost point of *Tamilakam* in early Tamil Sangam literature.⁸ In the Sangam period there was a chief called *Pulli* at *Venkatam*, probably a remote ancestor of the *Pallavas*, who seem to have used a Sanskritized tribal name as their dynastic title.⁹ The relationship between *Venkatam* and the process of Aryanization of *Tamilakam* is significant. The northernmost point of *Tamilakam* was also the point of contact between the Aryan and Tamil ways of life. Since *Venkatam*, the earliest northernmost centre of *Vaishnava bhakti* cult, appears to be closely associated with the *Pallavas*, we feel that the bhakti movement was a byproduct of the Aryanizing or Sanskritizing influence. The same point is underlined by the relative precedence and importance of *Kanchi*, the later capital of the *Pallava* kingdom. It is well known that the *Pallavas* were one of the early Dravidian dynasties which were thoroughly Aryanized. For instance, by the close of A.D. third century to the middle of the sixth century, *Pallava* rulers of the *Prakrit* and *Sanskrit* charters acted as the protagonists of Aryanization in the 'Far South'. They adopted the same role as the *Satavahanas* of the *Deccan*. The new *Pallava* line of *Simhavishnu*, established in the second half of the sixth century continued the patronage of brahmins and Brahminical culture on a much larger scale than before.¹⁰

Following the first phase of the movement in the late sixth and the early seventh century under the patronage of the *Pallavas*, we find other temples like *Tillai* or *Chidambaram* further south and *Tirunallur*, *Tiruvarur* and *Srirangam* to the south-west in the interior acquiring prominence. These were located in the traditional *Chola* territory.¹¹ The *raison d'être* of this rapid and smooth extension is brought out by the fact

that the Cholas were feudatories of the Pallavas.¹² Subsequently, the movement spread further south from the Pallava-Chola territories to that of the Pandyas during the eight century where temples in Madurai, Tirunelveli, Kumbakonam, etc. became active centres.¹³ It is only during the final phase in the ninth century that the movement took roots in Malainadu or Kerala on the West Coast and temples like *Tiruvanjaikkalam*, *Tirunavay*, *Tirukkattakarai*, *Tirumulikkalam*, etc., became the chief centres of devotion.¹⁴

The spread of the movement created active cultural links among the various people, by cutting across the political boundaries of different kingdoms. It promoted a new Tamil consciousness which has significantly contributed to the Tamil heritage. In castewise distribution, we find some Alvars like Tondaradippodi, Madhurakavi, Nammalvar, and Periyalvar hailing from the brahman community while Kulashekhara was a kshatriya and the other Alvars belonged to *kallar* (Tirumangal), and even *pana* (Tiruppana) communities of the shudra caste. A similar composition of different castes may also be found among the Nayanars.

By the end of the ninth century, the bhakti movement had traversed the full range of Tamilakam and conquered the three major kingdoms—Chola, Pandya and Chera. By this time, the lists of the Nayanars and Alvars were completed and the first edited volumes of the Shaiva and Vaishnava canons were prepared for use in temples.¹⁵ By the tenth century the movement had already come into fruition, realising its early social objectives. But as it became a part of the established religion and culture, it began losing its original character of dissent, protest, and reform.

Parallel and Related Developments

There being a close interrelationship between religious activity and socio-political and economic trends, the bhakti movement cannot be understood in isolation. At that time in South India there were several significant, parallel and interrelated developments taking place. These may be enumerated here :

1. The growth and consolidation of new brahman-backed feudal monarchies first under the Pallavas, and then under the Pandyas, Cheras and Cholas of the post Sangam period.
2. The flowering on the landscape of the early temple movement, especially the rock-cut and structural temples of Shaiva and Vaishnava deities. The temple complex included vast landed property, that was administered by brahman trustees who lived in settlements organized around the temples, where most of the tenants were non-brahmans.
3. The emergence of prosperous guilds of traders and artisans in several district headquarters and in the semi-autonomous brahman settlements.
4. The eruption of acrimonious Brahman-Buddhist-Jain disputes which came to a close with the establishment of brahman supremacy and the triumph of Hindu religion; this relegated the non-Vedic creeds into the background.
5. The establishment of an all-embracing caste system which attracted all the original clans and tribes of South India. These were then placed in a feudal hierarchical order in which the brahman was the point of reference for fixing ritual and social status.

The above developments indicate that in South India these three and a half centuries constituted a formative period of society. But an understanding of the processes involved in this formation in which the movement played a crucial role requires the interlinking of diverse phenomena and factors. But not all the data is easily available, especially that of the guilds. However, indirect clues for one field are often revealed from another to provide us with an overall pattern of mutual relationships. To illustrate, leading personalities of this period played diverse roles in more than one sphere of action; King Mahendravarman I (580-630 A.D.) of Kanchi, the founder of Pallava greatness, was the patron-disciple of Appar, one of the early saint-preachers of Shaivism.¹⁶ By birth a Jain, he became a severe critic of Jain-Buddhist monasticism in the period of his post-conversion proselytizing zeal as reflected in the Shaiva literature. He was also the author of a Sanskrit burlesque called *Mattavilasa*.¹⁷ In addition, he

was a distinguished pioneer in building temples, with large endowments.¹⁸ Although not to the same extent, a multiplicity of roles may also be observed in the case of the Pandyan king Varaguna I (765-815 A.D.) of Madurai¹⁹ and the Chera king Kulashekhar (844-883 A.D.) of Makotai.²⁰ Both of them laid the foundations of their great dynasties, and promoted the bhakti movement in their respective kingdoms. They also built and endowed a large number of brahminical temples. That the Chera king Kulashekhar took direct interest in fostering the trade guilds, called *Anjuvannam* and *Manigramam*, is endorsed by inscriptional evidence.²¹

Evolution of bhakti in the North

Historically, we may suggest that the ideas and institutions which flourished in the more advanced civilizations of the Gangetic Valley, as represented in the Gupta Empire, were gradually spreading to the South. It is interesting to note that the emergence of a feudalized monarchy with graded systems of *samantas* or feudatories, chartered brahman settlements and trade corporations, temples of Shiva and Vishnu, the hierarchical order of caste and a spate of devotional literature centred on personified gods, was characterized not only during the Gupta period of the North, but also during the Chalukya period in the Deccan and the Pallava-Pandya-Chera-Chola period in the 'Far South'. Therefore, it is surprising that a bhakti movement was not clearly identified in the Hindu revival of the North under the patronage of the Guptas, variously called 'Hindu Renaissance' or efflorescence, 'Classical Period' of Hindu art and literature, etc. Nevertheless, scanning through the Sanskrit literature of that period, with the redacted *Puranas* dedicated to particular deities like Vishnu, Shiva, etc., and the standardized text of the Mahabharata with the *Bhagavad Gita* as its epitome, one gets the impression that bhakti as a distinctive movement had indeed manifested itself there. It must have probably originated in the post-Mauryan period, as exemplified by the famous Heliiodorus pillar inscription of Vidisha, recently identified as part of a temple complex.²² The great cult-centres which developed at such pilgrimage places like Mathura and

Varanasi must have given birth to the institution of the temple, an institution that was destined to be the carrier and the rallying point of the cult of devotion. The *bhagavata* movement with its *agamaic* form of worship appears to have reached a climax in the Gupta period, with emperors claiming titles like *parameshvara*, *bhattaraka*, *paramabhogavata*, etc., is suggestive of their attachment to the cult of devotion.²³

In the North, brahman intellectual monopolists had already accepted the path of philosophical awareness or *inanamarga* almost exclusively for themselves. This they did while chalking out two alternative paths; one of unquestioning *dharma*-based activity or *karmamarga*, and the other of blind faith and surrender or *bhaktimarga*. The path of karma according to one's *dharma* was generally ordained for all of the castes. The path of *bhakti* representing a sublimation of the spirit of slavery or *dasyabhava* was, paradoxically enough, especially meant for the exceptional souls in all groups who sought liberation from social restrictions. It was congenial to the psychology of the lowlier groups in a caste-oriented social structure. This vulgarized picture of the three paths, justified by providing a philosophical outlook to the caste order with safety valves, has been most succinctly enshrined in the compromise formula contained in the *Bhagavad Gita*.²⁴ If theoretically the three paths were equal, the path of *bhakti* was considered crude, simple and comparatively easy to follow. It was thought to be well suited to the thousands of uneducated and undeveloped people who were condemned to take up menial work but also required an aspiration for some form of escape.

The *puranic* ideology of *bhakti* appears to have percolated to the South through the temple-centred brahman settlements where the study of sacred and quasi-sacred literature was taken up as a religious duty by large numbers of priests. This process of study was institutionalized in the post of the *Mahabharata Bhatta* created in the temples for the purpose of expounding the *Mahabharata* and popularizing it among the common people.²⁵ The development in the South of a Sanskrit theatre fostered the caste of *Cakkalyars*. They specialized in transmitting the message of *puranic* literature through a particular form of dance-drama.²⁶ Again, the *puranic* myths and legends were portrayed in sculpture and painting, all of the

fine arts were employed to make the system of Hindu beliefs palatable to the common people. The way in which Brahminism was transformed into Hinduism through temple-centred bhakti in the North seems to have been repeated in the South.

Translation to the Tamil Idiom

Myths and Miracles

These processes imply that there was the mutation of Aryan-brahman ideology in the course of its translation into the Tamil idiom, and thereby its popularization among the Tamil people. It took roots in the Tamil soil by creating its own mythology and legends. For instance, there are several legends about Tirunavukkarasu (literally, Master of the Tongue) better known as Appar (a term of respect signifying literally 'father'). To start with, he was a Jain Vellala from Tirunumur village. A miraculous cure through the intervention of his sister who was a devotee of Shiva converted him to Shaivism. The Jains complained to their patron, King Mahendravarma Pallava who then persecuted him severely. The punishments included throwing him in to a kiln, administering poison, placing him in the path of a murderous elephant and pushing him into the rough sea with a heavy stone tied on to his neck. He escaped miraculously, whereupon the king surrendered, embraced Shaivism, pulled down the Jain monastery and built a Shiva temple in its place. Appar is also credited with curing the sick many times and bringing back to life a boy who died of snake bite. Another story about him says that he sang open the closed doors of the temple of *Tirumaratkaadu* (*Vedaranya*) with the magic of his devotion. This may be symbolic of the opening of the Vedic lore by means of the key of bhakti and throwing it open to the common people. This is significant because Appar openly proclaimed that caste and class were nothing to him and that he was prepared to worship even an outcaste and a leper because God dwells in them.

Sambandhar, a brahman from Kaundinya Gotra from Shiyali, is represented as a divine child whose disputation with the Jains converted the Pandya king to Shaivism. He described Lord

Shiva as being both Aryan and Tamil; and is said to have drunk the milk of Parvati at the age of three, received a pair of divine cymbals and all the royal paraphernalia, later, *en route* to *Tiruvatturai*. Then, a divine canopy descended from the heavens to protect him from the sun. He is said to have wrought the largest number of miracles.

In the case of Sundarar, who claimed to be a friend of Shiva, the latter himself is said to have mediated his marriage proposal twice. Shiva played the role of a messenger of love at Tiruvarur, his birthplace. When Kalikkama Nayanar, another devotee, protested against Sundarar for having dared to employ Shiva in this manner, there was another intervention by Shiva. In the end Sundarar is believed to have disappeared from the temple of Shiva at Tiruvanchikkalam in a mysterious manner. The Shaivas interpret this event as his ascent to Kailasha on the back of a white elephant sent by Shiva. On hearing this report, his friend and master Ceraman Perumal Nayanar is also stated to have proceeded to Kailasha on the back of a horse.

Similar stories are woven around the names of the Mudal Alvars or Early Alvars—Poygai, Pudam and Pay who are stated to have come out of flowers in a tank; a creeper and a well respectively. There is also the legend of all the three of them casually getting together in the dark corridor of a house and being joined by Vishnu himself as the fourth in the company.²⁷ Again, Tiruppana Alvar, the member of a low caste of wandering minstrels playing on the *yal* went about singing the praise of Vishnu. His devotion was conveyed to the temple priest in a dream by Vishnu himself who ordered the priest to carry the Alvar to the temple on his shoulders.²⁸ Or, Andal, the only woman among the Alvars, chose Krishna Ranganatha himself as her bridegroom. Since her love was so intense Ranganatha called her into the shrine where she disappeared.²⁹

Literary Style

Thus, it is through such myths and legends, charged with emotion and drama, that the personalities and places in Tamilakam were sanctified. The cosmic forms of Vishnu and

Shiva became humanized and localized, playing the roles of a companion, child, bridegroom, and a mother, etc. In this way they endeared themselves to hundreds of devotees around the chief centres of worship. There were new stories of short term avatars of Vishnu and Shiva who help their devotees in times of crisis. These deities were endowed with a local habitation and a name in temples. Each important temple was associated with the lives of the saints in some way or other; both temples and saints gained popularity and respectability by this mutual relationship. Stories of local miracles and tales connecting mythical heroes with historical sites were fused into the accounts of temples, thus giving rise to a new genre of literature, the *sthalapurana*.

The saints, both Nayanars and Alvars, popularized their creeds not only with the help of miracles, myths and legends but also with that of innovations in literary style. They used new forms of poetry like *antadi* (a poem in which the last word-syllable recurs as the first in the next), *irattaimanimalai* (a poem using two different metres alternatively), *mummanikkovai* (a schematic poem of ten groups of three stanzas, each in a different metre), *ula* (a song of victory), *pollandu* (a song in the form of a ritual to remove the evil eye), *tarattu* (lullaby), etc. They were also responsible for reviving old metres and forms employed in the Sangam literature. Combined with simple and forceful diction, romantic imagery and the music of words, this new literature captured the imagination of the people on a large scale. Incidentally, so much has been written about this literary aspect of the movement that the social content and institutional background has been generally lost sight of.

Bhakti and the New Monarchy

It is significant that the growth of the bhakti movement took place at a time of the rise of the new feudal monarchy in South India. In the stories about the early Nayanars we find that the royal patronage given to Jainism is now being converted to Hinduism, especially in the Pallava and Pandya kingdoms. What this suggests is that at the level of the ordinary people the Hindu movement had to contend with the already establish-

ed Jainism. But with the growing strength of Shaivism kings turned away from these heretical creeds. This illustrates the processess whereby popular creeds won over the rulers—a repetition of the history of the Roman empire and the Mauryan empire though on a much smaller scale.

Royal patronage seems to have intensified the tempo of the bhakti movement. Mahendravarman is alleged to have destroyed a Jain monastery and built a Hindu temple in its place. These seem to have followed a temple building spree which spread from the Pallava-Chola territory to the Pandya and finally the Chera territories. These are the areas where the bhakti movement also spread. Hundreds of inscriptions from the seventh to the tenth century bear testimony to this brisk activity of temple construction.³⁰ Which naturally could not have been possible without the active support of kings. In turn, those kings and chieftains who supported Brahminical groups became more powerful than those who opposed them.

Consequently, Brahminism with its institutional base in the temple centred agrarian settlements, had emerged as the most dynamic progressive force. For example, forests were cleared, fertile river valleys developed, and a communication system with the courts and marts that linked South India with other parts of India. Brahman leaders had succeeded in organizing the indigenous people as tenants and temple servants, grading them into castes and subcastes with infinite variations of economic and ritual status. They were in a position to mobilize the manpower of the vast tenant class to royal military service. The kings and the brahmans patronized each other.

In time, being a member of the movement of bhakti, gave a passport for entry into the enchanted world. This was true for kings, merchants or ordinary people; on all of whom it could confer a special brahman status through proximity to gods and "gods of the earth". It served as a popular sacrament of initiation. The status of a person arose in proportion to his readiness to submit to the brahman oligarchy. What became the hallmark of greatness in an age of growing Brahminical power, was the surrender of pride in the self and the voluntary acceptance of the position of "the servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord", as Kulashekhara Alvar and Tondara-dippodi had proclaimed. In this way, if kings derived greater

socio-political power, brahmins themselves acquired not only better protection but popularity through this alliance. To give the benefit of doubt, even though this materialist calculation might not have been a conscious one on both the sides, the mechanism of social power worked in promoting simultaneously the power of Hindu kings and the prosperity of brahmin settlements.

The ideology of bhakti served as the cementing force bringing together kings, brahmin priests and the common people in a harmonious manner. The intoxication of bhakti could enable the high to forget their pride and the low their misery. This provided an illusion of equality while retaining the stubborn walls of inequality in the feudal system of production and distribution. In short, the bhakti movement contained all the ingredients of the popular form of Hinduism; the ancient classical Brahminical creed of the Vedas and the shastras acculturated with the non-brahmin and non-Aryan population of South India.

Some kings and chieftains like Mahendravarman and other unidentified Pallavas and Cholas, like Kalarcingam, Cengatchola and Anapaya, and even a chieftain of Venadu called Venattadigal are among the patrons of the movement besides the two Chera kings of Kerala. However, the earliest saints did not come from the ranks of royalty. This may be explained by the fact that when the bhakti movement had become popular, the kings also patronized it both for making use of it and for the sake of enhancing their own prestige and power. Mahendravarman's destruction of a Jain monastery and Nedumaran's alleged implement of several thousand Jains under the influence of the movement indicates clearly that some of the early Nayanars had at least influenced the rulers in order to use state power for the promotion of their creed even through the use of violence. With the changing order of society this may have helped the rulers to consolidate the power of monarchy as an institution.

Projection of the temple cult

If the bhakti movement is viewed beyond the abstract spiritual

ideas of the culture heroes as has been done until recently, and examined at the functional level, we are bound to take a close look at the relation between the saints and the temples. Significantly, because most saints came from the precincts of, or got affiliated to, great Brahminical temples like those at Venkatam, Kanchi, Srirangam, Chidamabaram, Kumbakonam, etc.,³¹ it is implied that elements of temple propaganda and Brahminical missionary enthusiasm were inseparable components of the movement. Bhakti not only started from the temple, but it connected one temple with another through pilgrimages; and in turn this led to the proliferation of temples. Further analysis indicates that these temples owning large estates as *devasvams* and *brahmasvams* property with brahmins as their trustees, inspired the movement. In other words, Aryan brahmin pockets in the midst of the Tamil population were already well established under royal patronage with the temple as the nucleus for the dissemination of culture, which appeared long before the arrival of the Alvars and Nayanars on the social scene.

It is plausible to assume that the movement originated on the fringes of brahmin settlements as an unpremediated by-product of the temple; it was partly the fulfilment of their mission and partly an antithesis in the form of non-brahmin reaction. In this way there was an interaction between the brahmins and the non-brahmins, the latter were generally hereditary temple servants, tenants, guards or soldiers and lay worshippers; all constituting the Aryanised section of society. This represents the second stage in the process of Aryanisation, i.e., the socialization of Brahminical ideology.

As noted earlier, the literature of the bhakti movement is mostly centred on the temples and many details are available. For example, the chief advocates of the Vaishnava movement were the devotees of the main Vishnu temples such as Venkatam, Kanchi, Srirangam, Tiruvittuvakkod, Tirumulikkalam, etc. Similarly, the chief Shaiva devotees were specially attached to Chidamabaram, Tiruvarur, Tiruvanaikkalam, etc. Moreover, devotees often undertook a tour of all the important centres of pilgrimage in South India, by dancing and singing with large groups of followers across fields and forests. This programme is what must have created a big stir in the countryside. The *Periyapuranam* gives accounts of how joint pilgrimages were

undertaken by Appar and Sambandhar in the early phase and Ceraman Perumal Nayanar and Sundara in the later phase.³² Kulashekhara Alvar and Nammalvar also undertook such grand pilgrimages in their time.

Besides the processions and pilgrimages, the institution of temple festivals may be cited as a by-product of the bhakti movement, as it linked the temple cult with the movement. For instance, the asterism of Sravana in the month of *Sravana* was considered to be the birthday of Vamana, an avatara of Vishnu. This day came to be celebrated in Tiruppati, Tirukkattakarai and Tiruvallaval, three of the *divyadesams* of the Alvars. A late Sangam work called *Maduraikkanchi* sings praises about this *Sravana* or *Onam* festival. Among the Alvars, Periyalvar has composed two exquisite hymns on this festival. Perhaps it was during the reign of Kulashekhara Alvar in Kerala (9th century) that the Onam festival was introduced. Inscriptions of the tenth century from *Tiruvalla* and *Tirukkattakarai* demonstrate the popularity of the festival.³³ In the course of time this Vaishnava sectarian festival was transformed through royal and Brahminical patronage into the national festival of Kerala. This is an important instance where the interests of the temple cult and the bhakti movement coincided in the establishment of a popular festival, and it is reflected in literature. Similar festivals, observed in particular temples or in a general way, had a major share in reforming the sectarian creed of Brahminism and developing it into the popular Hindu religion.

A specific consequence of the movement was the encouragement it gave to devadasis or handmaids of gods, *tevadiccis* in Tamil. As bhakti spread through the media of songs, dance, and beauty, *devadasis* played a significant role in the popular appeal of the temple. Thus, Sundaramurti Nayanar was involved with a devadasi.³⁴ Cheraman Perumal Nayanar notes the reception given to Shiva by devadasis of all ages while he went out in procession around the streets in Kailasa,³⁵ and Andal was herself a devadasi who lived and died in the Srirangam temple.³⁶ There is a tradition that Kulashekhara Alvar's daughter, Nila, was presented to Srirangam temple as a devadasi. She is called Cerakula Nacciya, and a shrine dedicated to her is found in this temple.

The numerous Nayanars and Alvars, together with their

secular and spiritual patrons in the courts and temples, constituted only the elites of the bhakti movement. There were a large number of devotees who formed the retinue of each distinguished devotee. All of these people, no longer involved in any form of productive labour, had to be fed, clothed, and so on. Therefore, when they moved from temple to temple in a cross-country religious campaign they received food and support all along their route. This would not have been possible but for the sympathy and serviceability of a large class of temple servants and tenants not only in the major centres but even in a network of temples in the countryside. It is these people swelling the ranks of bhaktas (because they considered themselves blessed by the opportunity for casual contact and service and still remained anonymous) who provided strong popular base for the movement. This is an important factor that has to be noted because it explains the force and validity of the cult of bhakti and its social relevance.

Bhakti and the Guilds

In spite of the fact that guilds of traders like *Valanjiyar*, *Nandesikal*, *Anjvannam*, and *Manigramam* flourished in Tamilakam during this period, merchants and artisans are conspicuous by their absence in playing any prominent role in the movement. Occasionally we come across an oil merchant like Kaliya Nayanar of *Tiruvorriyur* who served the Lord with oil lamps,³⁷ a fisherman like Adipatta Nayanar of Nagapattinam who consecrated all his catch to the Lord and starved himself,³⁸ a few general merchants like Iyarpakai of Pumpukar,³⁹ Amaranidhi of Tirunallur,⁴⁰ and Karaikkal Ammaiyyar, the daughter of the Dhanadatta of Karaikkal.⁴¹ But these persons have not been considered among the most important of the bhaktas. Perhaps one reason for this is that during the period the bhakti movement took roots among the rural agrarian settlements while the influence of heretical sects like Jainism and Buddhism continued to be strong in the centres of trade. Prior to the ninth century, this kind of polarization is also apparent from such Jain literary works as *Chilappadikaram*, *Manimekalai*, *Jiyaka cintamani*, etc. The conflict between the heretical sects and the

neo-Hindu cult of bhakti is clearly discernible in the literature. It is not improbable that, at least partly, this reflects the implicit rivalry between the trading classes and the land owning classes for socio-political dominance. Explicitly, there was no confrontation of religious creeds in these terms, but one cannot ignore the agrarian-feudal bias of the bhakti movement as well as the trading class bias of Jainism and Buddhism.

Rivalry with Jainism and Buddhism

In the hands of converted monarchs the movement fulfilled the historical function of promoting Hindu revivalism with the aim of checking the spread of Jainism and Buddhism. In order to command public support, this neo-Hindu movement had to out do the Jain-Buddhist rivals both in terms of mass appeal and by providing such incentives which were stronger than any rational codes of conduct. Against this background, it is easier to understand how and why the movement adopted the media of song and dance to invoke popular enthusiasm. It even assumed a relatively egalitarian and democratic approach, unfamiliar to the rigidity of classical brahman discipline. Thus, it may be seen that the Jain-Buddhist challenge which had extended to South India, produced this new form of Hindu response.⁴²

The success of the bhakti movement signified the victory of Hinduism against the non-Vedic creeds of Jainism and Buddhism. The story of Tirunavukkarasu or Appar who was a Jain converted to Shaivism and who was instrumental in the conversion of Mahendravarman has been narrated earlier. About Tirujnanasambandar, it has been stated that on the invitation of the queen Mangaiyarkkarasi, he proceeded to Madurai the Pandyan capital, in order to undertake the historic mission of saving the city from the clutches of Jainism. He had to undergo a series of trials and he performed a number of miracles. With the assistance of the minister, Kulaicirai Nayanar, he eventually succeeded in winning over the king Nedumaran to the Shaiva fold. The occasion of the king's conversion was celebrated by the impalement of 8000 Jains, and the story goes that a temple festival at Madurai commemorates

this event to this day. Leaving a possible margin for exaggeration, we do have to take into account the grim reality of Jain-Shaiva conflict which engendered such intolerance on both sides. All the four characters involved, namely, the saint, the queen, the minister, and the king are eulogised as devotees and included in the list of the sixty three Nayanars. Tirujnan-sambandhar dedicates a hymn to the minister in which the whole story is recited. All this evidence suggests that importance was attached to this conflict with Jainism, as seen in the bhakti literature.

Parallel stories of such conflicts are found in the case of Vaishnava saints also. Tirumangai, one of the most celebrated of the Alvars is said to have stolen a golden image of Buddha from a monastery in Nagapattinam; to pay for renovating the temple at Srirangam. His hymns, full of good poetry, are equally full of venom against Jainism and Buddhism. Periyalvar, a brahman saint, is stated to have won a religious dispute in the court of Srimara Srivallabha. The intolerance of Tondaradippodi Alvar, another brahman saint from Tanjore, towards Jainism and Buddhism was nearly as strong as that of Tirumangai. However, by the middle of the ninth century, when the movement achieved maturity and stabilized its position, this element of rivalry with Jainism and Buddhism had disappeared from the scene. Evidently, the non-Vedic sects had lost the battle in South India, as they had already lost it elsewhere. The hymns of the Nayanars and Alvars of the later period are clear streams of devotion unsullied by the muddy waters of controversy.

By now the saints were no longer anxious to win over new section of people. The earlier spirit of generosity and cosmopolitanism which invited or tolerated bhaktas from the lowest ranks like Tiruppana Alvar (Pana), Nantanar (Paraiya), Viranminda Nayanar (Vellala), Tirumangai Alvar (Kallar), etc. gives way to a new sense of discipline. The whole movement appears to have closed its ranks and consolidated its position after its victory over the non-Vedic sects. There is a new emphasis on the attitude of subservience to brahmins and temples in the hymns of Kulashekhara Alvar and Nammalvar among the Vaishnavas and Ceraman Perumal Nayanar and Sundaramurti Nayanar among the Shaivas. To quote one

instance, Sundaramurti opens his *Tiruttondattogai* claiming himself to be the "slave of the slaves of the brahmins of Tillai."⁴³ Instances may be multiplied by quoting extracts from the devotees of the later period. Thus the first phase of castelessness, which has sometimes been interpreted by scholars even as a protest against the caste system, is followed by a second phase of conformity to caste rules.

Thus, it may be inferred that the tendency towards reform inherent in the neglect of caste rules had been at least partly necessitated by the strength of heretical sects like Jainism and Buddhism which refused to recognise these barriers. In this period of its conflict with the heretical creeds, Brahminical Hinduism apparently borrowed the tenets of its adversaries. But it was a very shortlived phenomenon, a moment of aberration or lapse from which Hindu society recovered as soon as the point of danger had passed.

Reflection and legitimization of the feudal order

This victory of Hinduism in South India, spearheaded by the bhakti movement registered, firmly established, the agrarian feudal order supported by a graded system of hierarchy in caste. In many ways the new jargon of bhakti literature is suggestive of the new feudal class relationships and the corresponding ideology. For instance, if the deity in the temple, which is the central concept, is equated with the king, then a parallel world of authority is also reconstructed on the spiritual plane. Similar words, like *ko* and *perumal* are employed to denote the deity and the king; the term *koyil* is used to denote both the temple and the palace, and the ritual of worship is conceived on the same pattern as the ritual of service to the king. Ceraman Perumal Nayanar's *Adiyula* or *Tirukkayilayanana Ula* brings out in vivid form the daily routine of worship in the temple followed by the deity's procession through the streets around the temple.⁴⁴ The same procedure may be traced in the epigraphic records of the age, like the Tiruvalla Copper Plates;⁴⁵ the god is awakened with music and dance (*rajopacara*), bathed (*snapana* or *niravapalli*), dressed and fed and taken in procession (*pavani* or *paravara*).



pradaksina). While every day is a festive day in the temple, there are special feasts and celebrations to mark the birth asterism of the deity, or other auspicious occasions. Then, the image of the deity has a *mukuta* like the king, payment to the temple is mentioned as *irai* (tax) and *tirai* (Tribute), and like a palace the temple is also constructed with *mandapas* (halls) and *prasadas* (mansions) surrounded by *parkaras* (fortress walls) and guarded by *dvarapalas* (gate keepers). The chief deity of the temple is accompanied by his consort and his relatives and served by a whole army of musicians, dancing girls, story tellers, actors, garland makers and priests-in-attendance.

It is this elaborate parallelism between the deity and the king that was to authenticate and legitimize the new monarchy in the different regions of the peninsula. However, although the terms employed pertain to royalty, yet the connotation is not exactly royal but feudal. This happens because the same terminology was used for king and lord in feudal society in spite of the difference in status. The plurality and co-existence of different deities, each deity occupying the position of the lord for his devotee, was as much recognized in the bhakti movement as the plurality and co-existence of the lords; each lord singularly commanding loyalty from his immediate vassal.

Society in South India may thus be represented by the typical feudal pyramid, i.e. the king at the apex, great landlords, big tenants, magnates, priests, merchants princes, etc. forming the middle portion, and the small tenants, serfs and slaves constituting the base. The governing principle in this order was the feudal contract, explicit or implicit in the relationship of castes, and the cementing force was supplied by the spirit of loyalty in service. The complete surrender of individual initiative formed the credo, which had to be followed by the majority of the people. There is a surprising resemblance between the lord-serf relationship at the core of feudal society and the deity-devotee relationship idealised and celebrated in bhakti literature. As noted earlier, interestingly, Sanskrit words like bhakta, bhakti, bhagavan, etc. have originally been derived from the root *bhaj* — 'to share', 'to apportion', etc. Gradually, the term *bhakta* came to denote the servant

who shared the wealth of his master in return for his personal service.⁴⁶ While this was the case in the North, the terms used in the South are also directly borrowed from the terminology of the feudal social structure. The devotee habitually addresses the deity as *udaiyar*, *tambiran*, etc.—all meaning 'lord' or 'master' and describes his own position as that of *adiyan*, meaning 'slave'. Thus, a king of permanent, unquestioning unconditional obedience towards the master forms the badge of the devotee. A large number of songs composed by the Nayanars and Alvars praise this bondage as the highest desirable objective in life, in contrast to wealth, and even deliverance.⁴⁷

It is in this manner that the bhakti literature created an aura of sentimental romance around the feudal institutions of the age. Both slavery and serfdom in India were sublimated by this equation with the divine order, not only through the intellectual appeal of karma and punarjanma theories but also through the emotional appeal of the bhakti doctrine. Suffering was sweetened by its voluntary acceptance exalting it to the level of sacrifice. The intoxication of bhakti gave the lowliest of the low a chance of escape or at least a chance of pride in the exalted fellow-members of the community. This conferred on the entire community of the *paraiyas* the dignity of Nantanar, and the entire community of *panas* the dignity of Tiruppana Alvar. It was an indirect form of acceptance into the fold of Hinduism for the lower castes and tribes though, strictly speaking, only the brahmins had the ritualistic right to be religious in the full sense. Sentiment replacing ritual, this extension of membership had a double effect; one, of closing the ranks of Hinduism against the non-Vedic creeds of Jainism and Buddhism and two, to some extent, bringing outsiders within the sphere of an Aryanized society. Nevertheless, the brahman remained the brahman, and the pana or paraiya remained the pana or paraiya. The communities never mingled, though exceptional individuals from both the sides crossed the boundary with immunity, as in the well-known stories of Tiruppana Alvar Nantanar, etc. In short, an inclusive outer circle was drawn around the Hindu community, in which every member had a common right to participate in the cult of devotion or bhakti,

Dissent, protest and reform

The bhakti movement, though a product of the temple and a causative factor behind its proliferation, had deviated a good deal from the orthodox philosophy of Brahminical Hinduism. This was an age of vigorous intellectual activity at both secular and spiritual levels. For example, Mahendravarman of Kanchi, in the beginning of the seventh century, who was a patron of the movement incisively delves in his *Mattavilasa prahasana* into the decay of the established religions, both Buddhist and Hindu; and, makes fun of the extreme forms of asceticism. The court of Kanchi also patronised Dandin, the many-sided genius, and, probably in the beginning of the ninth century, the great Shankaracharya who propounded the highly intellectual philosophy of Advaita and, more important for our theme, also synthesised the different intellectual and emotional strands of Hinduism including the cult of devotion. Against this background, the rejection of abstract metaphysics by the bhaktas denotes a spirit of strong dissent. Their general indifference to caste regulations carried a mild form of protest against the established social order. But there was no direct attempt at social reform, though the recognition of saints among outcastes amounted to a relaxation of caste rules. Here is a faint approximation to the principle of the potential divinity of man.

In terms of historical evolution the very concept of the shrine, whether it is considered to be progression or regression, it was a deviation from the concept of the abstract and amorphous powers—natural or supernatural—worshipped in Vedic rituals. Vedic ritualism itself came to be replaced by agamaic ritualism by the beginning of third century A.D. in the North and by the beginning of the sixth century in to the South. In fact, there was a ludicrous and syncretic combination of Vedic and agamaic elements.⁴⁸ Thus, while Vedic-agamaic ritualism was applicable and relevant for only the brahmins who followed it inside the temple, non-brahman Hindus participated through bhakti much as spectators vicariously participate in games.

It may be pointed out at this stage that the agamaic form of worship in temple had its own separate existence apart

from the bhakti movement. A certain element of devotion or bhakti was involved in its routine, too. However, in the movement this element of bhakti grew out of all proportions. It exceeded all limits of rules and regulations, ritualistic or social, and proved its eccentricity by subjugating every aspect of life to this one principle; an intoxication of over development which claimed its own right of existence. Of course, no qualitative change took place, though they made the temple immensely popular through the promotion of songs, dance and story. This led to the creation of several temple servants rendering artistic service. Consequently, even after the decline of the movement though there were isolated cases of individual bhaktas yet in most cases they did not rise beyond the status of local celebrities. Theirs remained essentially an individual pilgrim's progress towards salvation devoid of any social implications, as was the case earlier. Therefore, it was the peculiar social background which transformed bhakti from an esoteric creed into a dynamic social force.

The starting point of the bhakti cult was the system of offering material objects like land, cattle, utensils and lamps.⁴⁰ In the place of the material objects, one could offer one's own self in the spirit of service in the same way in which commendation took place. This meant that devotion was offered in return for the assumed guarantee of protection, i.e., just as the small landlord or the free peasant wanted protection from the fluctuation of fortune and encroachments of powerful neighbours, the ordinary devotee wanted protection from death, poverty and disease. A step higher, in the full intoxication of bhakti, the ideal devotee was not concerned with wealth and poverty or power and insecurity; and this is the attitude which nurtured the pure flame of devotion. When the movement was at the peak of its development, the most sublime and sophisticated expression of sentiments represented a spirit of equality. This was clearly against the caste system, and the spirit of renunciation was also counter to the gregarious instinct of the brahman-kshatriya power elite.

It is a truism to state that between precept and practice there is often a gap, while the former is confined to literature, nevertheless, the very formulation of these concepts contains a streak of dissent, protest and reform. Even if it did not

change society altogether, this deviation from the tenets of orthodox philosophy, accompanied by a sense of liberation from the rigid code of ritual, certainly contributed towards the refinement of society. The shining ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity—liberty from ritual, equality of caste and fraternity in devotion—were placed before the people. Of course, untouchability for the paraiya and the miserable state of poverty of lower classes continued. But all this was made more acceptable, and even more dignified, in the light of the ideal of renunciation. Besides, there was at least some exposure and criticism of the evils of greed, licentiousness and sensuality. Thus, there was some deviation from the unbridled course of vanity and worldliness due to the spontaneous evolution of a code of moral conduct among the community of devotees who propagated a new set of values in life. It was almost a revolutionary idea that Nantanar, the paraiya, could be admitted to a temple even after a series of ordeals and that Tiruppana Alvar was counted as a favourite devotee of Vishnu, and worthy of being carried on the shoulders of the chief priest of the temple. A king's readiness to forget his pride and mix with commoners, apologies to the lord and priest for offences committed, and be a humble slave at the feet of the deity was in itself a spectacle that chastened the minds of the people. The freedom which the devotees enjoyed from all rituals, and even rules of society, was a step forward in establishing the individual's inherent right to rebel, provided rebellion was legitimised by devotion. These devotees mixed freely and fearlessly with kings and brahmans, assuming equality and even superiority at times. In this way they set up a parallel spiritual-social authority, different from royal courts, and brahman councils, which derived its power from the conscience of the people. The badge of bhakti, in the form of the sacred ashes or the sandal paste of the forehead and chest, gave a certain immunity from punishment in this period, serving the same purpose as the sacred thread through the ages.

The same deviation from social norms may be noted in the case of the status of women. Notwithstanding the injunctions of Manu and other lawgivers, the eligibility of woman for the highest honour of direct communication with god was admitted

in the case of Mangaiyarkkarasi, Andal, Karaikkal Ammayar, etc. This departure from orthodoxy occurred at a time when brahman domination was responsible for suppressing women by keeping them at home and away from education, except in the case of devadasis or courtesans of the temple. The recognition of the equal status of women with men before god implied that her spiritual inferiority and inherent wickedness were momentarily set aside. In fact, the devadasi system which raised a number of educated and dedicated women to high status through renunciation was a by-product of the movement. It had a progressive content to begin with, though in later times the devadasis degenerated into common prostitutes. The readiness to dispense with rituals, priests and the restrictions of sex and caste brings out the importance attached to the individual self with its infinite capacity for development. This is what highlights those of bhakti elements which dissented from the orthodox creed, protested against the *varnashrama* code—including restrictions of sex—and reformed the social order. It is partly out of a misunderstanding of its exclusive Tamil context and partly out of a desire to discover modern ideas in early Indian society, that some scholars have exaggerated these elements to the extent of identifying the part with the whole.

Return to orthodoxy

These deviations were, it has to be remembered, partial, temporary and counterproductive. As the popularity of Jainism and Buddhism waned, and many more kings, landed magnates, patronised Hinduism through the bhakti movement, the openness and flexibility of the movement gradually disappeared, i.e., it became a part of the establishment. Intellectual dissent—anti-ritualism, anti-caste protest, etc.,—came to an end by the beginning of the tenth century. The Alvars and the Nayanars no longer exist, instead their place is taken up by the *acharyas*; all of whom were brahmins and scrupulous ritualists. Naturally, with the threat of heretical creeds disappearing and with the achievement of social harmony, the forward urge of the bhakti cult came to an end. There was

a return to orthodoxy in all walks of life, especially in the field of culture. The temples with enormous landed property and established position in society became the conservative custodians of power and wealth. In the new context, there was no place for the aberrations of the devotee although the exploits of earlier saints continued to be sung and cherished. *Mathas*, headed by brahman *acharyas* increased in numbers and championed the cause of the *varnashrama dharma*. Kings depended no more on the prop of bhakti for consolidating their political power. Even the Tamil language was increasingly replaced by Sanskrit in the field of religion. The living spirit of the bhakti movement which rebelled against many things now gave place to the decorative charm of its myth and literature.

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1. An earlier wave could be identified in the *Vedic-Shastraic-Puranic* influences in the literature of the Sangam. For details, see M G S Narayanan, "The *Vedic-Shastraic-Puranic* elements in Tamil Sangam Literature" *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1975, Aligarh, pp. 76-91.
2. The identity and chronology of individual saints have been subject to much controversy among scholars. We have adopted the dates as given by K A Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, 1976, 3rd edn., Madras, pp. 368-72.
3. Sundaramurti's *Tiruttondattogai* shows a comprehensive understanding of the Shaiva saints. See K Subrahmanyam, ed., *Periyapuranam*, 1974, Srivaikuntam, pp. 54-7. Nammalvar's knowledge of the temples of South India is again an index to this fact. See *Tiruvaymoli*, K Gopalacharyar, ed., *Nalayira Prabandham*, 1959, Madras, Part 24, 1-196.
4. For a discussion of the Sanskrit terms *bhakti*, *bhakta*, *bhagavan*, *bhagavata*, etc., see Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaishnavism*, 1967, Delhi, pp. 37-9, 110-11. This point is strengthened by the fact that in the Indonesian language; possessing a large number of Sanskrit words borrowed in the ancient period, the word *bakta* (*bhakta*) is used in the sense of a servant. See Venugopala Panikkar, "Bahasa Indonesia", *Sarani*, 1977, Calicut University, p. 32.
5. A large number of inscriptions from early medieval South India pertain to temples. T N Subrahmanyam, *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, 1954, Madras, 4 Vols. especially No. 8 of 1918, *ARE*,

- 1918, II, 34 which records an otherwise unknown of Tirujnanasambandar.
6. There are many temples in which the saints are deified. See 400 of 1916 which records the consecration of a temple to Kulashekhara Alvar in *Mannarkoyil*. Bronze status of Ceraman Perumal Nayanar and Sundaramurti Nayanar are set up in the temple at *Tiruvanaikkalam*. Events from the lives of the Shaiva saints are depicted in temple paintings in Tanjore. R Champakalakshmi, "New Light on the Chola Frescoes of Tanjore", *Journal of Indian History*, Golden Jubilee Volume, pp. 349-60. For Shaiva sculptures, see *Annual Reports of South Indian Epigraphy*, 1908, para 65 and 66 and *id.*, 1920, pp. 102 ff.
 7. K A Nilakanta Sastri, "Hindu Renaissance of the Pallava Period", *The Hindu*, 25th May, 1961.
 8. See V Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, 1904, 1966, Madras, p. 10.
 9. Kalladanar, *Akananuru*, 209. There are different theories regarding the origin of the Pallavas but there is no certainty about their early history. This view is put forward by the authors as a possible solution to the riddle.
 10. C Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life Under the Pallavas*, 1938, Madras, passim. See also Sastri, *A History of South India*, pp. 146-50.
 11. See S R Balasubrahmanyam, *Early Chola Temples*, 1971, New Delhi; *Middle Chola Temples*, 1975, Faridabad.
 12. Sastri, *A History of South India*, pp. 174-5.
 13. K A Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pandyan Kingdom*, 1929, London.
 14. M G S Narayanan, "Political and Social Conditions of Kerala Under the Kulashekhara Empire". Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Kerala, 1972.
 15. See n. 5 above. See also K A Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cholas*, 1955, Madras, 2nd edn. pp. 635-40. There is the case of Manikkavasagar, one of the greatest names in the history of Tamil Shaivism who belongs to c. 9th century but who is not, strangely enough, counted among the Nayanars. However, his *Tiruvacakam* embodies all the qualities characteristic of the bhakti movement including the superb form of ecstasy, opposition to Buddhism, attachment to the temples, and complete surrender to the master. For a recent study of the saint, see Glenn E Yocum, "Mainkka vacakar's image of Shiva", *History of Religions*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 20-41.
 16. T V Mahalingam, *Kanchipuram in Early South Indian History*, 1969, Bombay, pp. 64-76.
 17. N P Unni, ed *Mattavilasa*, 1974, Trivandrum.
 18. Mahalingam, *op. cit.* pp. 71-3
 19. Sastri, *Pandyan Kingdom*, pp. 59-66.

20. Narayanan, "Kulashekhar Empire", op.cit. pp. 620-36.
21. Ibid. also M G S Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, 1972, Trivandrum, pp. 31-7.
22. For the inscription, see D C Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, Vol. I, 1942, Calcutta, pp. 90-1. For the identification of the Pillar in a temple complex, see John Irwin, "The Heliodorus Pillar : A Fresh Appraisal", *Art and Archaeology Research Papers*, No. 6, Dec. 1974, London.
23. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicalum*, Vol. III.
24. Jaiswal, op. cit. pp. 112-13; D D Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, 1965, London, pp. 114-15.
25. Minakshi, op. cit. p. 176; Narayanan, "Kulashekhar Empire", pp. 556-9.
26. See No. 250 of 1926; No. 154 to 1895, *South Indian Inscriptions*, III, No. 202; No. 120 of 1925; Narayanan, "Kulashekhar Empire", pp. 568-71.
27. K C Varadachari, *Alvars of South India*, 1966, Bombay, p. 1.
28. Ibid., p. 105.
29. Ibid. pp. 133-4.
30. T N Subrahmanyam, loc. cit.
31. The songs of the saints testify to this. For example, there are only six hymns of eleven or twelve verses each by Sambandhar, thirty-nine by Appar and four by Sundarar which are not dedicated to particular temples. Even many of these eulogise the temple cult. With regard to the Shaiva Nayanar's relation to specific temples, see George W Spencer, "The Sacred Geography of the Tamil Shaivite Hymns", *Numen* 17, December, 1970, pp. 232-44. Kamil Zvelebil also points out the importance of the cult of sacred places to both Shaiva and Vaishnava saints. See *This Smile of Murugan*, 1973, Leiden, pp. 198-99.
32. *Periyapuramam*, op. cit. pp. 229-68, 665-73.
33. *T A S*, II, i No. 9 (3) pp. 85-6, No. 7 (L) pp. 46-8; pp. 131-207.
34. Sastri, *A History of South India*, p. 425.
35. Ceraman Perumal Nayanar, *Adiyula*, in M Raghava Aiyangar, ed *Caraventer Ceyyutkovai*, 1951, Trivandrum, Vol. II pp. 136-64.
36. T A Gopinatha Rao, *The History of Sri Vaishnavas*, 1923, Madras, p. 5.
37. *Periyapuramam*, op.cit. p. 629.
38. Ibid., p. 625.
39. Ibid., p. 66.
40. Ibid., p. 81.
41. Ibid., p. 271.

42. Nilakanta Sastri has pointed out how Cekkilar's *Periyapurānam* is indebted to Camundaraya's *Trisastilaksanamahapurana* for its title. So also, even the number 63 for the Nayanars is an imitation of the 63 Jaina saints of the *Mahapurana*. See n. 7 above.
43. *Periyapurānam*, op. cit. p. 54.
44. Aiyangar, ed., loc. cit.
45. *T A S*, II, III, pp. 131-207. See also other *South Indian Temple Inscription*. Subrahmanyam, op.cit.
46. See n. 4 above.
47. See for example, *Perumal Tirumoli*, IV, 2; *Mukundamala*, V, 3. Here is a free rendering of a hymn of Sundarar, given by K R Srinivasa Iyengar which offers another typical illustration of this sentiment :
 I'm the slave of all His devotees true,
 The slave of all the laureates of the spirit,
 The slave of those whose minds do rest in God,
 The slave of all the inhabitants of Tiruvarur,
 The slave of the priests who daily conduct the divine service thrice,
 The slave of the ascetics anointed all over,
 The slave of the *bhaktas* beyond Tamilakam's confines,
 The slave for ever of Tiruvarur's Lord.
 See R C Majumdar ed., *The History and Culture of the Indian People*; Vol. III, 1954, 1962, Bombay, pp. 331-2
48. See Sastri, *The Cholas*, pp. 635-6.
49. T N Subrahmanyam, op. cit. passim.

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THE VIRASAIWA MOVEMENTS*

ARUN P BALI

Prologue

THE VIRASAIWA movement, intimately associated with the name of Basavesvara, rose to unusual significance and power during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries AD. It grew into a social force to be reckoned with and continues to be one of the most militant and strident forms of socio-religious protest in Karnataka even in modern times. The movement appeared in north-western Karnataka during the reign of Bijjala II, the Kalachuri king. Basavesvara spearheaded this movement and was mainly instrumental in popularizing and spreading the faith in the Kannada-speaking region of Karnataka. It was the state religion of the Wodeyars from AD 1339 to 1610, of the rulers of Coorg, Kittur, Polygars of Chitradurga, Uchangidurga, Pavgada, Sira, Hosadurga, Hodigere and Santebennur, and of the Nayaks of Keladi, Ikkeri or Bednur from AD 1550 to 1763. It also enjoyed some royal patronage from the Vijayanagar kings.

Today the Lingayats or the Virasaivas are found all over the State of Karnataka where they constitute the largest single ethnic group, accounting for nearly 15.57 per cent of the State's population.¹ Constituting 40 per cent of the population of the districts of Belgaum and Bijapur, and 50 per cent of the district of Dharwar's population,² they are also found in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu. The followers of Virasaivism are properly called Virasaivas,³

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Lingayats,⁴ Lingavants, Sivabhaktas or Sivachars. *Lingayats* has become a well-known designation for members of the Virasaiva community, though this name is not favoured by themselves; the name Sivachar of Sivabhakta being the one they generally assume.

Problems relating to the early history of the Virasaiva movement, and of the founder or originator of the movement have remained undresolved. This is a controversial issue which is like Pandora's box, which we will not open. But to illustrate, there is no way of precisely dating the emergence of the Virasaiva movement nor is there even a consensus about the issue whether Virasaivism was an innovation or merely a revival of the most ancient Saivite faith. If some scholars trace the origins of the Virasaiva movement to the hoary past, others opine that it was established long ago by the five prophets (*panchacharyas*), namely, Ekoramaradhya, Marularadhya (Marulasiddha), Revanaradhya (Renukacarya), Panditaradhya, and Visvaradhya. Still others have cogently argued that Basavesvara is the "founder-pioneer" of the movement. There are also scholars who say that it is fallacious to attribute the founding of Virasaivism to any single individual.⁵ At any rate, the available evidence strongly indicates that in the twelfth century Basavesvara revived and reformed the Virasaiva philosophy and religion, and guided the destiny of the movement. He was primarily instrumental in giving the Virasaiva movement its present shape. Even if the movement's origin is obscure, it is fairly certain that it crystallized into a definite shape sometime in AD 1141 and gained momentum after AD 1162.

We shall confine ourselves to the Virasaiva movement as it flourished during the time of Basavesvara and down to the present day. The objective being to probe the elements of dissent, protest and reform which underlie the ideology of the Virasaiva movement. After all it was a dynamic social force which undermined the brahman's supremacy elbowing him out from most spheres of influence, such as the social, economic and political domains of Karnataka.

Ideology of protest : the blueprint of action

Social unrest during this period against brahman domination

in Karnataka was characterized by two salient features which made it possible for the emergence of the Virasaiva movement. One was its persistence and continuity, whereby even the passage of time did not weaken but intensified it. For instance, while the underlying causes of social unrest varied in the course of time, they followed each other in such rapid succession that they prevented any relief to the persistent atmosphere of conflict and tension. The second was that the singular cause of social unrest was the brahman and the social ethos associated with Brahminic Hinduism.

Basically, the Virasaiva movement was against the inequality of men prevalent in society. Inequalities were sanctified by all kinds of ritualisms that served as classic facades to camouflage the realities of exploitation. Society was enmeshed in a labyrinth of rituals tainted by animal sacrifices. By the time of Basavesvara, Brahminic Hinduism was in the iron grip of a rigid and grotesque caste system. The Virasaiva movement was especially against the subordination and exploitation of the lower castes by brahmins, and it was a forthright quest for equality, liberty and fraternity, i.e. a quest for equal access of the unprivileged sections to political power, economic share, and for limiting the arbitrary powers so long wielded by brahmins. The movement posed a serious challenge to time-honoured traditions and systematically rejected the core values and social institutions associated with brahmins. For instance, in its desire for "human relationships", it felt it was necessary to break down interpersonal barriers and conventional norms that prevented, interpersonal contact on issues like interdining and intercaste marriage, i.e. it discarded the notions of purity and pollution between brahmins and non-brahmins. It revealed the realities hidden by rituals, practices, conventions of brahmins, in order to be liberated from the oppression of brahman domination. In short, the Virasaiva movement was "a social upheaval by and for the poor, the low-caste and the outcaste against the rich and the privileged, it was a rising of the unlettered against the learned pundit..." (Ramanujan 1973: 21).

The significance of the movement's ideology lies in its creation of a growing conscience and sense of social awareness about social evils. The social evils it attacked were not new,

but they were definitely new in scale and social importance. Of course, earlier dissenters and protest movements had challenged established ideas and values. But this time the impact of the Virasaiva movement had a lasting effect against various forms of social inequalities. Unlike others, its notions of egalitarianism, liberty and fraternity received almost instant applause. The reasons are not far to seek. For example pristine Buddhism and Jainism had waged a relentless crusade against caste and its evils, as also the *varnashrama*, but it did so by being outside the ambit of Hinduism. Many other protest ideologies were "revolts from the outside", while the Virasaiva movement was a "revolt from within" (Nandimath 1942: 52). The Virasaiva movement not only challenged the legality of existing norms but also questioned the very legitimacy of these norms. Because the preamble of the movement was dominated by the egalitarian, libertarian and democratic values, the movement has continued to appeal. Thus, it aimed at establishing a society devoid of caste and class; i.e. it sought a fraternal community and universal brotherhood. Its egalitarian credentials have not only been the chief attraction for the masses, they have also caused new currents of thought which disturbed the ancient and comfortable verities.

The movement's ideology of protest is freighted with the notion of relative deprivation which is the result of a lopsided distribution of privileges and honours in the social, economic and political spheres. This is what provided the motivating force for all discontented sections of the people to join the bandwagon of the Virasaiva movement in a concerted effort to bring pressure upon the brahman community to change. The social discriminations tolerated for so long suddenly became the object of the deepest resentment and bitterness.

In this way, Brahminic Hinduism with its traditional civic orientation was all but transformed in this new kaleidoscopic age. The existing social order was threatened by strategies of conflict accompanied by varying degrees of violence, competition, confrontation and combat. The Virasaivas were involved in a more militant kind of confrontation that brooked no compromise. Naturally, the brahmins, still wedded to tradition and attached to their way of life, tenaciously defended their institutions against the surging floodwaters of change. To illustrate,

the first symbolic protest against tradition came from Basavesvara when he refused to undergo the thread ceremony,⁷ and later ate meals with Sivanagamayya (an untouchable convert). In this way Basavesvara and the others encouraged interdining and intermarriage and they reached the zenith of their expression of protest when there was the intercaste matrimonial alliance between Haralayya (an untouchable convert) and Madhuvayya (a brahman convert). This event evidently invited hostility from brahmins, who saw the movement as a social and political threat.

Thus, the Virasaiva movement brought in its wake the transformation of institutions, changes in the legitimacy of power, and coercive changes in the core values and dominant ideologies of the brahman community. This was accompanied by abolition of rituals, prohibition of certain symbolic behavioural patterns and destruction of symbols associated with brahmins. In the history of the Virasaiva movement, ritualistic and symbolic substitution has played a major role in their ascendancy to power. By questioning the very legitimacy of the existing order it prophesied the legitimacy of a new social order. It appealed not only as a critic of society but also as a positive programme of reform based on their consciousness of the injustices under which the masses lived.

Rituals belief system and objectives

The Virasaivas repudiated the entire system of values and beliefs associated with brahmins and evolved their own rituals and rites, equipped with a new content which were relatively simple to observe. Once the basic norms and beliefs of Brahminic Hindu society were weakened and destroyed, new social institutions and structures built on a different set of values appeared. For instance, they developed their own institutions fabric parallel to those of the brahman's canonical scriptures; they evolved an ensemble of symbols and ways to salvation as well as generations of religious virtuosos to uphold the Virasaiva traditions. This is because the Virasaivas believed that the corpus of beliefs, rituals and rites of the Brahminic cosmos had lost much of its original charm and meaning. They protested

against a religion which had tended to become a formal mechanism of animal sacrifices conducted and supervised by the sacerdotal class. It was this ritual complex that perpetuated social inequalities for members of all other castes, except brahmins who were the only ones permitted to perform rituals. Women of course were totally denied access to the performance of many rituals and seeking salvation on their own was not possible.

The Virasaiva movement shunned the brahman's elaborate ceremonialism and complicated ritual system. They rejected the authority of the later commentaries on the *Vedas* together with the caste system, pilgrimage, fasts, penance, child marriage, but permitted widow remarriage. The dead were buried instead of cremated and there was neither *shraddha* nor anniversary ceremony or festival for the dead. Basavesvara was impatient with those who argued that the performance of religious rites helped to realize God. He exclaimed often, "How can devotion to Siva and adherence to rites agree?" He maintained that "Siva could be won over only by devotion and not either by music or by Vedic chants". He believed in the full surrender of oneself to God. Among the many pathways to *moksha*, Virasaiva saints (*sivasaranas*) advocated for the devotees (*bhaktas*) the path of devotion (*bhakti marga*) in preference to knowledge (*jnana*) and rituals (*karma*). On this path there is a gradual development of devotion and divine qualities. *Bhakti* is ubiquitous; it is found in all the six stages (*satsthalas*) where it assumes various forms. In *bhaktasthala* devotion is termed *sraddhabhakti*, in *mahesasthala* it becomes *nisthabhakti*, in *prasadisthala* devotion assumes the form of *avadhanabhakti*, in *pranalingisthala* it is *anubhavadbhakti*, and in *aikyasasthala* devotion is termed *samarasabhakti*.

The words *Om! Guru, Linga* and *Jangama* comprise the creed of the sect which exalts work (*kayaka*) in the name of the Lord. It does not believe that religion is something one is born with or into, i.e., it is achieved and not ascribed to. Devotees acknowledge only one Supreme Godhead, Siva, and in all their *vacanas*, "they all speak of Siva and speak to Siva" (Ramanujan 1973 : 11). They advocate monotheism and the worship of *istalinga* because all worship is essentially a personal communication between the devotee and God.

The movement granted equality to women in the sphere of rituals together with the right to worship, instead of continuing with the social stigma of pollution (*sutakas*). For the Lingayats there was no pollution resulting from caste (*jati*), birth (*janana*), death (*preta*), spittle (*uchchista*) and menstruation (*rajasa sutaka*). There was great emphasis on family life which was not considered to be a disqualification for salvation, and the hypothesis of rebirth was not accepted for it believed that an individual soul (*jiva*) could attain *moksha* during one's own lifetime (*jivan-mukti*) without the renunciation of the world.

Thus, Virasaivism systematically challenged the core values and institutions so dear to brahmins and gave the right to all Virasaivas, irrespective of their former caste affiliations, to perform various rituals enunciated in the Virasaiva scriptures. It dispensed with the services of brahmin priests and replaced them by the *jangama* priests in the performance of rituals and life cycle crises or rites of passage. The sacred lamp (*kalasa*) instead of fire or *agni* was used in the performance of rituals. They considered death to be a union with Siva or *Lingam* and a Virasaiva who died was considered to have attained *śivaikya* or *lingaikya*. They had also done away with elaborate mortuary rites and ritual mourning and image worship.

In their rituals water occupied a special place in the worship of Siva, and it was usually poured on the feet especially the toes of an officiating *jangama* priest. Most of the rites of passage also involved the worship of the priest's feet. There were two modes of their worship of Siva, the Supreme God-head: each Virasaiva worshipped his own *jangama guru*, and he also worshipped the *istalinga* which he constantly wore on his body. One of the saints, Ambigara Caudayya, said that all the holy centres abide in the human body, hence, he reprimanded those who went in search of them all over and also for undertaking pilgrimages to holy centres.

Basavesvara declared that there was holiness when there was due regard for three things—the *guru* (the spiritual teacher), the *linga* (the symbolic emblem of Siva) and the *jangama* (his wandering mendicant). The trinity of the *guru*, the *linga* and the *jangama* were three, yet one. The saints declared that every Virasaiva must have a *guru* who was to be held in deep

veneration. Because, again, great importance was attached to inward and outward purification of the individual in Virasaiva texts, the saints prescribed five codes of conduct (*pancacaras*)⁸ and eight aids (*astavarnas*)⁹ and certain *samskaras* to help an individual in his spiritual pursuits.

The ideas of liberty and equality seem to be interrelated to the movement's notion of work-ethic. It fiercely opposed not only the degradation of human labour but also the social stigma attached to some of its forms. Since its basic tenet attacked inequalities, it aimed at reasserting moral values for cooperation among men. It believed that this could be achieved through the dignity and function of work, and a harmonious society which would regenerate mankind, i.e., all kinds of work—noble or venal—must receive—without discrimination—and be accorded equal status. The movement attached great importance to a sense of duty rather than to the rewards a particular work had to offer, not even Siva was exempt from this! The values of industry, selfless service, devotion to work and freedom of thought were emphasized and given the pride of place in this work-ethics, which is epitomized in *kayake kailasa* or 'Work is Heaven'. *Kayaka* literally means physical work, but in its wider connotation, it denotes an occupation, a profession, a vocation, work or duty undertaken as a means of self-realization. The Virasaiva saints, naturally, derided idleness and beggary which were heinous crimes for they had no place in their economic order. The vitality and stability of a society lay in the fact that every individual had a calling to attend to and this he had to perform assiduously. *Kayaka* exalts the dignity of man and the dignity of labour; virtues which were alien to Brahminic Hindu society, i.e. *Kayaka* was a spiritual view of labour and not materialistic. But in keeping with the true spirit of *Kayaka*, man had to sublimate his physical labour into a spiritual pursuit; or work must lead to self-realization through social service. Basavesvara cautioned the Virasaivas against undertaking any work with the sole object of earning money, for pecuniary gains or amassing wealth. *Kayaka* was, he stressed, to be done in the spirit of service (*dasoha*) and its earnings must be dedicated to the *jangama* who in turn would utilize it for the welfare and well-being of society.

The movement had its own symbols of protest. The principal insignia and symbols carried in their religious processions were the *makarathoranam* (a banner with a tortoise or whale embroidered on it), the *hagaludevatti* (holding torches during the day), the *swetachachatram* (white silk umbrella); the *nandidwajam* consisting of a long pole at the top of which floated a flag with a representation of Nandi, the bull, to which was fixed an image of Basava, his *avatar*; and the *Vyasa hasta*, a long pole from which a wooden arm, believed to be that of Vyasa, was suspended. The Virasaivas carried a bell suspended from the flat end of a ladle, which was generally rung by the Chalavadhis (belong to the Holeya caste) with their feet. The hollow ladle represents *Brahma Kapala* or Brahma's skull (Nanjundayya and Ananthakrishna Iyer 1931: IV, 109).

Consequences and processes

Ridiculed and doubted, brahmins moved steadily away from the centre of the socio-religious life in Karnataka towards its periphery. The movement not only championed the cause of the relatively deprived sections of society, but itself predominantly had a lower-class following, albeit enjoying the support of the class of priests (collectively known as *jangamas*), traders, peasants and craftsmen.¹⁰ Among them there were well-to-do merchants as well as weavers. The Statement at the end clearly depicts the social composition of the movement. Amidst the diversity and heterogeneity of its membership the common bond was provided by those predominantly of low social status. The socially discontented masses viewed the formation of the Virasaiva movement as some form of compensation for their inferior social status. In the early days of the movement, its leaders advocated and practised an open recruitment to its ranks, and caste was considered irrelevant to salvation. This openness and voluntariness of the vocation advocated by the movement brought together every strata of society on an equal footing. The main mode of recruitment of new members was conversion, especially groups or bloc recruitment in a bid to mobilize mass support for the movement's cause.

If the main recruiting grounds in the beginning were the lower castes, and the bulk of Lingayat saints outcastes, Basavesvara's death marked a turning point. Later Virasaiva leaders discouraged the impure castes from becoming members of the Virasaiva community. The doors of admission were slammed shut against the lower castes, and rules for recruitment made more stringent.

In any case, Basavesvara's religious zeal and missionary activities coupled with his piety and munificence played an important role in the spread of the movement to the masses within a short span of time. People from various cross-sections of society began embracing it. Basavesvara personally undertook the work of initiating the newcomers and converting them to Siva worship. Conversion of the people led to an increase in membership of the community. Later, the task of recruiting new members was entrusted to the mathas. Some of them played a prominent role in conversions, such as the Suttur, Mysore, Chitradurga Brhan, Taralabalu, Sirigere, Siddaganga, and the Tumkur mathas. However, the Siddaganga matha had not evinced much interest in conversion. The conversion of the last twenty took place twelve years ago. (Sadasivaiah 1967: 205). The exact figures are not available but Malledevaru¹¹ mentions the conversion by the head of Suttur matha of some Tamilians about thirty years ago and that they were being made by Suttur matha and Taralabalu matha. In contrast, Sadasivaiah¹² points out that conversion had virtually come to a standstill, and during the last twenty years there have not been more than a dozen conversions.

If leaders are the agents of group mobilization and the architects of organization and ideology, Basavesvara who embodied these qualities is definitely a leader. He played a pivotal role in mobilizing the social discontent of the masses, and preferred the liberation of the many as against the oppression of brahmins. As the architects of the organizational apparatus, the mathas and the *jangamas* formed the major underpinnings of the movement and became the carriers of its ideology of protest particularly against brahmins. An extensive network of mathas (in charge of *jangamas*) was entrusted with the task of transmission, propagation and popularization of Virasaivism. This was to maintain social cohesion and solid-

rity within the community because they were powerful instruments of social control. Both the mathas and the allied order of *jangamas* (the wandering itinerants of Siva) were created with a view to reinforce their missionary activities. Thus was this sectarian movement able to attain a high degree of politicization for the confrontation—often adopting a military posture—brahmans. The development of an elaborate organizational network at all levels provided the necessary infrastructure for the formation of other non-brahman movements at the turn of the present century in an effort to restore parity in the vital areas of social existence.

However, the Virasaiva movement, in the course of time, succumbed to the process of institutionalization. This process may be visualized in two ways. First, there was regularization and routinization of the movement itself along organized lines. The movement codified its belief and value systems in order to provide institutionalized arrangements which would enforce the codes of conduct. Thus, the movement became highly routinized and institutionalized in certain aspects. But in many ways it is still dynamic especially in continuing the fight against the brahmans, for economic and educational advantages and the increased share in political power. Second, there has been the process of absorption by the social order following the partial achievement of its goals.

Protest ideology and the backward classes movement

The Virasaiva movement was guided and dominated by an anti-brahman ideology ever since its inception. It was this ideology which became the mainstay of non-brahman movements that began during the 1920s in the former States of Madras (Tamil Nadu), Mysore (Karnataka), and Bombay (Maharashtra). The Virasaivas once again have been in the vanguard of non-brahman movements and the Backward Classes movement in Mysore. In this section we shall examine the nature of the organizational experience of the Virasaiva movement as it engaged itself in the quest for new goals in the twentieth century.

In seeking new goals the pre-existing infrastructure enabled

the Lingayats to be in a commanding position over the Vokkaligas and the other non-brahman communities, to take advantage of the educational benefits being offered by the State. They agitated for educational benefits and reservation of seats in educational institutions and sought preferential treatment in government employment. One of the goals of Virasaiva associations has been for the general progress of the community by means of education, and for a guaranteed share in the modern political process.

The Virasaivas established new associations with a view to promote and safeguard their interests, and created new social links that bypassed the old. They felt that "only a united caste consciousness could act as a saviour of the Lingayats and extricate them from the depressed state they were in" (Harrison 1960 : 112). Towards the turn of the century the idea of revitalizing the Virasaiva movement formed the focal point and provided the motivation for the creation of an All-India Virasaiva Mahasabha in 1904. The chief architects of the Mahasabha were Sri Hanagal Kumaraswamy, Tyagavira Sirsangi Lingaraju, Sir K P Puttana Chetty, and Beechnahalli Basavaradhya. The Mahasabha which has now branches spread all over the State at the district, taluka and village levels became the new vehicle of the movement's protest ideology. It not only played an important role in the electoral process but gave a fresh lease of life to the Virasaiva movement. From its very inception the Mahasabha envisaged the formation of an unified Karnataka which would include the Kannada speaking areas that were a part of the erstwhile princely state of Mysore. If this happened, it would provide the Lingayats a lever for domination. The desire for unification provided a rallying point for the Lingayats to mobilize themselves under the banner of the Mahasabha. They campaigned actively and vigorously for unification which was intensified after the Bangalore session of the Mahasabha in 1927, and actively supported by the Lingayat religious organization (Harrison 1960 : 112).

Today, the Mahasabha has district committees in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerala and of course in Karnataka. Taluka committees have also been formed in the districts. Bangalore (where it has its headquarters), Belgaum, Gulbarga, Raichur, Mysore, and Shimoga.¹³ It has

also constituted the following committees : The Constitution Revision Committee; Committee to consider the question of setting up a Finance Corporation; the Industries Committee; Committee to consider the Registration of the Mahasabha; and The Dharma Grantha Committee.³⁴ The working committee is compiling a census, through its district units of the Virasaiva population in Karnataka. It is also planning to bring out an authenticated and authorized "Dharma Grantha", designing an emblem, a flag and compose an anthem. These proposals are to be referred to the Dharma Grantha Committee. Efforts are being made to set up effective organization in each of the State Universities, namely, Mysore, Bangalore and Karnataka (Dharwar) with a view to impart training to brilliant students of the community aspiring for a job in the All India Services and other competitive examinations. The Working Committee has appreciated the fact that Basava Jayanthi has not been declared a holiday either by the State or the Centre, and this objective is also being actively pursued.

Another association which has been set up is the Basava Samiti. Its headquarters are at Bangalore, and its branches in various districts are known as Zilla Basava Samitis that work under the guidance of the Rajya Basava Samiti. The Kendriya Basava Samiti situated at Bangalore controls the Zilla and Rajya Samitis.

Apart from the Mahasabha and the Basava Samitis, the other associations are; Annana Balagas, Akkana Balagas, Virasaiva Tarun Sanghas and welfare associations like Sri Virasaiva Kare-Kul Samaj, Bijapur; Sri Mad Virasaiva Kuruvishetti Samaj, Rabkavi; Sri Virasaiva Kuruvishetti Samaj, Banhatti; Sri Virasaiva Sajjan Samaj Sudharana Sangh, Bevr; Sri Mad Virasaiva Sivayoga Mandir, Bagalkot; Sri Virasaiva Vidyalaya Association, Almatti; Sri Lingayat Samaj Sudharana Sangh of Hubli; Sri Nandikol Basavesvara Devasthan Sanstha, Dharwar; Sri Sadguru Muppinendra Mahaswami Dharmadev Fund, Byadgi; Sri Ulavi Basavesvara Dharma Fund of Dharwar; Sri Virasaiva Mahasamaj of Hirekerur; Sri Virasaiva Pattasali Sangh of Hubli. The aim of these associations, like before, is to protect, promote and safeguard the interests of the Virasaiva community, to gear activities towards their uplift and progress in the spheres of religion, education, culture and

other social activities. To illustrate, they celebrate festivals and birth anniversaries of Virasaiva saints, act as the agents of social mobilization and social control, help in creating a collective caste consciousness among Virasaivas, and keep alive a social awareness of the depressed plight they were once in.

Educational aims and activities

Many Virasaiva leaders strongly influenced by the course of the development of the movement and noting that formal education was essential to society, urged the mathas to embark upon a massive drive to rapidly promote education within their ranks. To implement this programme effectively the mathas undertook the task of instituting Sanskrit *pathshalas* at various places. The rationale of establishing these *pathshalas* was that a basic grounding in Sanskrit was necessary, on three counts. First, many of the texts like the *Saivagamas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas* which the Virasaivas accept are in Sanskrit. Second, to bring about a better appreciation of the Virasaiva tenets, philosophy and texts. Third, to enable them to break up the monopoly of the brahmins in Sanskrit learning.

The *virakta* monks and mathas had been the mainstay of the movement's drive towards education, and were actively engaged in this venture since 1900. Their efforts have had a great impact on the Virasaivas in particular and the society in general since 1920. This period heralded the proliferation of the activities of the mathas. There was a mushroom growth of educational institutions under the aegis of various heads of mathas and various Virasaiva members who combined to form and promote educational societies.

By virtue of their training in English the brahmins were able to monopolize many of the clerical, administrative, educational and political positions in the State services. The Virasaiva movement directed its efforts at undermining this brahman dominance in the field of education. The *matha-jangama* axis was reinforced by the establishment of caste associations and educational societies to accelerate the proliferation of education. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the

Lingayats "formed a special educational association at Dharwar, which raises funds to advance the education of their own sect. The association gives scholarships to Lingayat boys to enable them complete their education at the colleges at Poona and Bombay; and in 1888 it collected over Rs 15,000 for the purpose of sending a Lingayit student to England to compete for the Covenanted Civil Service or to read for the bar. As an instance... of the educational zeal of this sect, it may be noted that in 1887 fourteen Lingayit gentlemen of Belgaum raised a sum of money... to be paid to the first Lingayit MA and the two first Lingayit LLB's, who may obtain those degrees from the University of Bombay" (Hunter 1892 : 180 81). The Lingayat Education Association was started in 1883. Its objectives were to promote education among the Lingayat community by awarding scholarships, establishing schools, colleges, libraries and hostels, and to promote the development to Lingayat Literature, culture, and history.

The turn of the present century signalled a spurt in educational activity in another direction for the Virasaivas saw such potentialities which would enable them not only to combat brahman domination in the educational arena but also saw in it the key to strategic centres, to the instruments of political power. It was during the interlude between the two World Wars that the Virasaiva educational system was transformed. They responded to the new realities of the time by moving away from their preoccupation of establishing Sanskrit *pathshalas*, and opened schools and colleges where English was the medium of instruction. This shift carried with it a multitude of implications. It enabled the movement to join the mainstream of non-brahman movements, and the Backward Classes movement in Mysore. This association necessitated the gearing of its organizational apparatus towards the promotion and advancement of education among the Virasaivas.

Thus, the numerous mathas and educational societies with their extensive network of educational institutions spread all over Karnataka served to promote education both among the Virasaivas and non-Virasaivas. The latter were included owing to the secular demands and pressures of the State. Another reason for the Virasaiva educational institutions catering to the educational needs of non-Virasaivas was the involvement of

the Virasaivas in the non-brahman movement and the Backward Classes movement. However, the Virasaivas dominated their educational societies and institutions, in the management, staff and students. For instance, the president, the four vice-presidents, and fifteen members on the managing committee of the KLE society were Lingayats. Even the teaching staff in the Lingayat run institutions were dominated by them; accounting for 55.6 and 60.4 per cent of the teachers in their institutions in Belgaum and Dharwar districts respectively, during 1965-66 (Madan and Halbar 1972 : 139). Lingayat students also dominated, constituting 35.7, 52.9 and 31.9 per cent, the institutions managed by the Lingayats in the districts of Belgaum, Dharwar and Mysore respectively (Madan and Halbar 1972 : 137). In the twenty-five secondary schools in the districts of Dharwar and Mysore there are forty-six Lingayats who are members of managing boards. In five colleges, of which three are in Dharwar district, twelve Lingayats are members of managing boards. They do not figure on the managing boards of the two colleges in Mysore district as these colleges are managed by Mysore University, a stronghold of the brahmans (Madan and Halbar 1972 : 137). In the institutions run and managed by the Lingayats themselves, the percentage of their own castemen as members of managing boards is 75.0 per cent (Madan and Halbar 1972 : 135).

It may be pointed out that in order to encourage education among Virasaivas, the mere establishment of educational institutions was not sufficient. The Virasaiva leaders were aware of this. They supplemented it by instituting scholarships, freeships for the deserving and needy students and setting up free boardings and hostels for Virasaiva students. The Mysore Lingayat Educational Fund Association, Bangalore, was established in 1905 to "stimulate a desire for education among the Virasaivas of Mysore, to build and maintain Homes for Virasaiva students in Bangalore and other places, to help poor students by awarding scholarships and generally look after material, moral and social advancement of the community".

We thus see that in this way of the Virasaivas have wrested the initiative from the brahmans in the field of education

which, along with power, wealth and status, was legitimately monopolised by a small elite. Today, the Virasaiva movement has expanded its scope to include the norms of mass access to social, economic as well as political power. In all this education has played a vital role. Current trends exhibit tendencies towards a shift in emphasis; from Sanskrit to English as the new medium of instruction and from the sacred to the secular in the mode of education. This demonstrates an awareness of the changing needs and demands of the times, especially of acquiring education in English because it holds the key to economic and political progress. This has immense potentialities of wresting the initiative from the brahmans, and to enable them to become a force to be reckoned with in society. The accent now is also on providing education in science, engineering and technology for which various educational societies—including mathas—help each other in order to establish institutions to cater to these needs as well as promote welfare programmes. For example, they began raising funds for various facilities which would enable Virasaiva students to obtain a formal education so that, by 1921, the number of Virasaiva literates in English headed the list of non-brahmans. This was an advantageous position for them, as they benefited them more than any other community by the Backward Classes concessions which were adopted in that year.

Educational movement and political power

In Mysore the brahmans had gained considerable power in higher appointments during the three or four decades prior to the appointment of the Miller Committee in 1919. Naturally, the distribution of political power favoured the brahmans. Perceiving this, the non-brahmans mobilized themselves in a bid to pressurize the Mysore *Durbar* to grant concessions particularly in the modern political process. They did not want clerical jobs. The clamour was for guaranteed and preferential treatment in education, government jobs, and a share in political power. The Virasaivas cogently put forward these demands and became the spokesmen of the non-

brahman movement; they agitated for educational benefits and reservation of seats. For a brief while it appeared that the organizational apparatus of the Backward Classes was oriented towards wresting power from the brahmans. Following a non-brahman deputation to the Maharaja, His Highness appointed a "committee to consider steps necessary for the adequate representation of Backward Communities in the public services" under the chairmanship of Sir Leslie C Miller on 23 August 1918. This is popularly known as the Miller Committee, which submitted its Report in July 1919, but was released to the public only in 1921.¹⁵ It had made twenty-nine recommendations of which ten related to public services, while the rest were concerned with the problem of education. Nearly all the recommendations on education were accepted by the Government Order of 25 May 1921.

The Committee employed the criterion of literacy in English to determine which community was 'backward', i.e. those communities in which the literacy rate in English was less than 5 per cent. The Committee did not dwell upon the problem of "adequate representation of communities" at length. On the matter of what representation was "adequate" it proposed a minimum target of adequacy to be accomplished in seven years.¹⁶

If by the end of this period not more than half of higher appointments, administrative and ministerial, be held by Brahmans, and not more than one-third of the subordinate appointments, we think that the question of adequate representation will be answered for the time.

The Government Order of 1921 accepted this recommendation, except that the target of 50 per cent was for lower, as well as for higher appointments.

The rejection of the substantive recommendations made by the Miller Committee as well as the time limit advocated by the Committee to facilitate the entry of non-brahmans into the public services virtually demolished the validity of the target. The Government also refused to abandon the system of competitive examinations for jobs, to recruit non-Mysorean non-brahmans if qualified Mysorean non-brahmans were not

available, or to reserve posts in every grade and adjust those reservations annually to make sure that efforts were made to maintain a fifty-fifty parity. In deference to these recommendations the government followed the policy of preferring a non-brahman candidate to other candidates who had better qualifications, even if the former had just the bare minimum qualifications specified. It persisted in maintaining this preferential treatment until the required parity was obtained. Recruitment rules to various jobs were relaxed in favour of candidates of the Backward Classes. But the concessions granted applied only to initial recruitment and not to promotions. Most of the upper grade posts were promotional posts. This hurt the non-brahmans most, for they felt that they were being deprived of advantageous positions. The brahmins had dominated most of the posts in the superior services of Mysore State in 1918 when they were measured against the yardstick of salary grades.¹⁷ For all the salary grades—ranging from under Rs 25 to Rs 800 and upwards—the Brahmins had held 69.3 per cent of the posts in the superior services of the State, while the corresponding figure for the three largest non-brahman communities, consisting of the Vokkaligas, Lingayats and Kurubas, was 6.3 per cent.¹⁸

During the time when the Government Order on the Miller Committee was in effect, the major thrust of the non-brahman movement was to influence the policy that was education oriented rather than concentrate on influencing policies relating to government recruitment. Education—both its achievement and promotion—occupied the top place on the agenda of most caste associations interested in promoting the welfare of their respective communities. The various caste associations worked to secure grants for student's hostels, and for an increase in the amounts allotted to Backward Class scholarships.

An issue which created great resentment and led to repeated agitational protests by the non-brahmins, related to the question of admission to Government Sanskrit colleges. For the Lingayats particularly, these restrictions against studying Sanskrit were unbearable. The entire organizational network of the Lingayats went into immediate action for a massive agitation which was supported by other non-brahmins. The Government then agreed to admit them in the Government

Sanskrit College at Bangalore, in 1925, and not the one in Mysore city. Since this proposition was unsatisfactory, complaints, demonstrations and protests were renewed. The issue of admission to Sanskrit Colleges seemed to have been guided by the need to improve status, rather than any strong urge to study Sanskrit.

At any rate, soon, the non-brahmans began to seek a share in the political process. There was a shift in their emphasis to an electoral charter. The year 1923 signalled a series of constitutional reforms which paved the way for the expansion of franchise and the extension of privileges of the elected representatives. The younger non-brahmans attempted to build power bases in the districts. It resulted in a demand for more electoral reforms and, in 1930, they sought responsible government. Until the 1920's the brahmins had enjoyed power and dominated all higher appointments. But they suddenly found themselves forced to share various forms of government employment, political influence, educational opportunity and high status life styles that had previously been their monopoly, with the non-brahmans. This was in 1923, after the constitutional reforms were implemented.

The 1930s witnessed the take over of the non-brahman movement by a younger generation of non-brahmans. This decade also saw a spurt in the availability of political opportunities for these young non-brahman leaders who were willing to exploit them to their advantage. The sudden acceleration in the availability of political opportunities was due to the implementation of political reforms. The new Government Order issued in 1927 on the recommendation of the Miller Committee clearly demonstrated that the *modus operandi* for gaining power through preferential treatment in government employment, had limited utility.

In the early years of his tenure as Dewan, Sir Mirza Ismail tried to whet the political appetite of the non-brahman leaders by providing them State patronage conducive to building up a power base in the districts. Towards the close of the decade, these very same leaders at the district level began challenging the authority of Sir Mirza Ismail himself. The young non-brahman leaders in their bid to build their political image

operated on two axes. First, they endeavoured to build a base for electoral support at the level of the district by exploiting the new opportunities of the district and municipal boards. Secondly, they aimed at capturing power from the state-level representative bodies. By now the anti-brahman ideology was articulated in a more militant tone than it had been earlier.

The period between 1930 and 1937 was a transitional phase for the non-brahman movement, because after this period there was a shift of emphasis in their political objectives, ideology, and degree of mass politics. The post 1930s saw both the brahmans and non-brahmans altering their perspectives and priorities on communal issues. They made adjustments in order to pursue a common set of objectives under the banner of the Congress.

There was a remarkable lessening of tensions between the brahmans and non-brahmans during the period between 1930-1973 on the issue of education. Two factors account for the decline in the intensity of conflict and confrontation between them. First, on matters of educational policy and budget priorities, political divisions seldom coincided with non-brahman-brahman alignments. Second, it was the manner in which the educational provisions of the Backward Classes were implemented.

During the 1930s the main focus of the non-brahman movement in the field of education was on admission to medical and engineering colleges. Immense pressure was exerted on the selection and scholarship committees to get a satisfactory communal distribution of and to establish quotas for admission. The period witnessed an increase in the competition for government jobs particularly in the clerical and administrative cadres.

The decade of the 1940s was characterized by an expansion of facilities and enrolments which profoundly affected both the non-brahmans and the brahmans than any caste related benefits to the development of the non-brahman movement after independence. There was an increase in the enrolment of Lingayat students at all levels. During the year 1940-41 there were 63,477 Lingayat students enrolled in various educational institutions, out of which there were 312 students enrolled in colleges, 1,211 in high schools, 7,944 in middle schools,

48,907 in primary schools, and 5,053 in special and vocational education and private schools. The corresponding figures for the years 1947-48 are; out of 113,374 students, 1,223 were in college, 4,594 in high school, 16,099 in middle school, 87,753 in primary, 3,705 in special and vocational education and private schools.¹⁹ The figures for the total enrolment of the Lingayats at the high school and college level, during the years 1940-41 and 1947-48, had more than trippled.

The decade of the 1950s witnessed the Central Backward Classes Commission Report ending in a fiasco. It was repudiated by its own Chairman. In Mysore there were special problems relating to the Backward Classes following the reorganization of the State in 1956. The merger of the districts which were governed by different administrations brought in its wake a medley of communities—each receiving preferential treatment or benefits of some sort or the other.

In 1958 a writ petition led to quashing a Government Order extending the old Mysore list to the whole of the newly organized State.²⁰ The High Court once again struck at another Government Order when the Government proposed another list.²¹ This resulted in the appointment of the Mysore Backward Classes Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr R Nagan Gowda in 1960, for the purpose of determining the criteria for the classification of Backward Classes in the State. In its Interim Report the Committee recommended that "backward classes should be listed only on the basis of their caste or community and their backwardness judged on the basis of the percentage of literacy in their community and their representation in government service".²²

The Interim Report deprived the Lingayats of being classified as a backward community. Much to their chagrin they found that the Vokkaligas had retained the status of a backward community. This exclusion from the category of the Backward Classes led to acrimonious debates, and the Lingayats sought to use their political power to exert pressure on the State Government to have their community retain the status of a Backward Class. Lingayat associations throughout the State passed a series of resolutions denouncing the Interim Report and called for an immediate reinstatement of the community among the "Backward Classes". The State Government yielded

to this pressure and the Lingayats were able to retain their status as a Backward Class.

In 1963 the Mysore Government adopted the yardstick of a non-caste-cum-occupation to determine backwardness for the purpose of giving benefits. However, this criterion was misused by those who had effective power in society as it was amenable to manipulation. The State was soon reprimanded by the Court for not including the caste-criterion along with income and father's income, in order to curb abuses.

In 1973 a New Mysore (Karnataka) Backward Classes Commission was appointed under the Chairmanship of L G Havanur to work out a rational criterion for backwardness, and to recommend a workable system of distributive justice. The Commission submitted its Report's to the Government of Karnataka in late 1975. It has evolved certain criteria for determining backwardness—economic, residential, occupational, educational, and so on. Applying two or more tests, it has found backward elements among the two dominant communities in the State—the Lingayats and the Vokkaligas.

The quest for political power involved the Lingayats in a conflict, which was intense and bitter, and a direct confrontation with the Vokkaligas and the brahmans. The rivalry for political power between the Lingayats and the Vokkaligas was thus eclipsed by the rivalry between the Lingayats and the brahmans.

Prior to the reorganization of the State of Mysore the political scene was dominated by the Vokkaligas. However, this dominance was undermined by the Lingayats following the State's reorganization. The emergence of a unified modern Karnataka brought in its wake a large influx of Lingayats. This altered the balance of power in the State. In the Bombay-Karnataka area the Lingayats were involved in a fierce struggle to oust the brahmans from power. In this area, the brahmans taking advantage of the various educational, social, religious, cultural, and political opportunities available, they were able to extend their hegemony on the Congress organization, and even assume its leadership. In this area the Ramdurg incident precipitated the confrontation between Lingayats and brahmans.²³ On the eve of the First General Elections the Lingayats had managed to displace the brahman domination in the Congress organization, and assume its control.

The political scene in Hyderabad-Karnataka was a replica of the Bombay-Karnataka scene described above. The Lingayats displaced the brahmans in the Congress organization but themselves were suffering from intra-group factionalism.

In the old Mysore area, State politics prior to independence was dominated by the Vokkaligas. They ruled the roost until the reorganization of the State in 1956, which changed the complexion of the political scene. Then, the Vokkaligas began to slowly lose their political dominance to the Lingayats.

We thus see that in the realm of politics there has been a significant growth of political elites among the Virasaivas, whose members have held positions of importance at all levels of political life. At the State level we find that from 1957 to 1972 four Chief Ministers belonged to this community. In the Mysore Cabinets there were 27 per cent Lingayat cabinet members in 1962, 35 per cent in 1967, and 23 per cent in 1972.²⁴ In the legislative assembly there were 61 Lingayat MLAs in 1957, 56 in 1963, 74 in 1967 and 56 in 1972. Members of the Lingayat community have also been presidents of District Congress Committees all over the State. Their members have been chairmen of the Khadi Board, speakers in the Assembly, members of Parliament, governors of States, presidents of Indian National Congress, chairmen and members of Public Service Commission, Mysore State Electricity Board, Coffee Board and so on. B D Jatti, a staunch follower of Virasaivism, holds the high office of Vice-President of India.

Virasaiva scholars who today have enriched the field of education include such literary stalwarts as Dasappa Sastry, Turamuri, S S Basavannal, P G Halkatti, Hardikar Manjappa, B Sivamurthy Sastri, R C Hiremath, S C Nandimath, S S Bhoosnurmath, Channavira Kanavi, H Thipperudraswamy, S S Malwad, R R Diwakar, B Puttaswamiah and others.

Epilogue

From its early beginnings, the Virasaiva movement did not merely tinker with the institutional system but brought about a radical transformation in Karnataka society and its culture. The experiences and pressures that Virasaivas suffered generated a whole series of concerted efforts to remove some of the most crippling legacies of the Brahminical system. The efforts

on the part of Virasaivas to bring about social change were pervasive and encompassed many aspects of society and culture.

The new circumstances made a mockery of all Brahminic forms of rituals, rites, beliefs and values. The Virasaivas repudiated the entire value system and belief system associated with the brahmans and replaced them by a parallel set of their own institutions. The non-recognition of pollution, may be considered as a major break from tradition. It is the anchor point of the movement's drive towards diversification of economic activities among the Virasaivas. The preamble of the movement is dominated by an egalitarian, libertarian imagery, which is at the heart of the movement's continuing reformatory appeal.

Critics point out that the social impact of the movement has not been significant, and that many of the social ideals envisioned at the time of its inception have not been realized. It is said that the varying degrees of hierarchical relationships within the Virasaiva community are familiar enough to require little or no commentary. It is alleged that the movement failed in its attempt to establish a casteless society and hold it responsible for further proliferation of the caste system. In this way, they also point out, the movement failed to achieve any kind of lasting egalitarianism.

There is an element of truth in these criticisms. The idea of caste lingered on, and soon it assumed the rigid form of the caste system, which process of rigidification seems to have set in around the close of the seventeenth century.²⁵ Ironically, introduced as a protest against the caste system and the "ecclesiastification" of culture, the Virasaiva movement quickly developed its own form of extreme clericalism. Today, within the Virasaiva community one finds not only "separate and distinct castes, but castes that are touchable and castes that are untouchable".²⁶ Recent trends show that the Virasaivas attempted to apply the four-fold classification of Manu, viz. brahman, kshatriya, vaishya and the shudra, within their community. They are now inclined towards styling themselves as Virasaiv Hindus, and exhibit a distinct tendency to revere Brahminic Hinduism.²⁷ Towards the end of the nineteenth century, that is, in 1891, "there were numerous representations

from Lingayats claiming the right to be described as Virashaiv Brahmins".²⁸ But in 1931 they made representations to the Government to be classified as a separate religious category like the Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists in the Census Reports. They were accorded the status of a separate religious group in the Census Report of 1931 outside the ambit of Hinduism.

Viewed in the context of a sectarian movement, the Virasaiva movement does exhibit tendencies towards change and moving away from its original programmatic aims, i.e. away from eventual denominational status. It later was manifested with the characteristics of an organization from which it originally withdrew and repudiated.

These criticisms do not dwarf the Virasaiva movement's achievements. It did provide a parallel system of beliefs and rituals in which the lower castes could participate. This undermined the monopoly of the brahmins, because it advocated the egalitarian principle of devotion and a different concept of ritual pollution. It provided a suitable work ethic (*kavakave Kailasa*) for the lower occupational categories. It also employed those employed in lower and manual occupational categories to gain self-respect and dignity.

For nearly five centuries, until the seventeenth century, the Virasaiva movement exhibited the tendencies of a fullfledged sect, without cleavages. Thus the criticism that the Virasaiva movement did not overcome the limitation of social stratification based on the criterion of caste holds good only for the post-seventeenth century Virasaiva society. Internal divisions were not pronounced until the seventeenth century. These crept in following a great deal of routinization and bureaucratization. The authority structure of the movement became more and more centralized in the mathas and their heads. Formal rules of recruitment and rules of conduct came to be formulated and enforced upon the Virasaivas with greater vigour than before.

The Virasaiva movement effected a redistribution of power, wealth, education and status on the principle of equal access. The ideology of protest of the movement undermined the basic principles of birth, hierarchy, purity and pollution underlying the caste system, through protest, challenge, competition, conflict and aggression. Seen in the context of the Backward

Classes movement the Virasaivas as a part of the Backward Classes movement relegated the position of the brahmans to the background in the religious, economic, educational spheres and even in politics.

It is erroneous to say that as part of the sectarian movement the Virasaiva movement did not bring about any change in society. It would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of the movement and the values it stood for and advocated. The movement is not dead but a living one. Its form has undergone a change from a purely sectarian movement to a Backward Classes movement, gaining increasing access to educational and economic opportunities and political power.

STATEMENT

SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF VIRASAIVA COMMUNITY

Priestly order 1	Trading/Commercial 2	Agricultural 3	Functional 4	Miscellaneous 5
<i>Jangama</i>	<i>Banajiga</i>	Ahir Lingayat	Ambis (Ferry-men)	Aidugadaya-
Aradhya (Linga- yat Brahmin)	Adi Banajiga	Gauda Lingayat	Ganiga:	davaru
Ayya	Badagalava	Gauda Mane	1. Bile Ganiga	Gavinga
Chikkamath	Bania Lingayat	Gauliga	2. Daksavant Ganiga	Hirehasube
Ganacari	Banna Dava	Gurikara	3. Kare Ganiga	Janagonda
Ganadhisvara	Basale	Guruthala	4. Rasavant Ganiga	Kambe
Hiremath	Bavani	Mallava	5. Silavant Ganiga	Koriavaru
Hugar	Gada Lingayita	Nonaba	Jadar:	Pavaliyuru
Math apati	Gaddigevara	Panchachara Lingayat	1. Bile Jadar	Sajjana
Puja ^r	Joti Banajiga	Panchamasali Totiga	2. Kare Jadar	Sthalavada
Shavara	Kaikola	Lingayat Reddis:	Koshitis (Hatkars)	Tamadi
Swami	Kannadiga	1. Narada Lingayats	Lingayat Agasurus	Virabhande
	Kanthapavade	2. Pakanati Lingayats	Lingayat Goulis	Wara Bande
	Kori Setti	3. Pasubumati Lingayats	Lingayat Holeyas	
	Linga Banajiga	4. Renati Lingayats	Lingayat Jyandras	
	Lokavant Banajiga	5. Yellamma Kapus	Lingayat Kapus	
	Melpavade	6. Yellamma Reddis	Lingayat Kumbaras	
	Nirumelinava	Sadarus	Lingayat Kurumas	
	Panchamasale Banajiga	Lingayat-Vokkaligas:	Lingayat Mangalas	
	Pattana Setti	1. Hande-Kurubas	Lingayat Nayandaru:	
	Pavda Setti	2. Kuda-Vokkaligas	1. Non-Silavant Nayandaru	
	Petemane	3. Pakanaka-Reddis	2. Silavant Nayandaru	
	Silavant Banajiga		Lingayat Panchalas	

1	2	3	4	5
	Toga Setti Turukane Banajiga			
			Lingayat Parit (Washermen)	
			Lingayat Simpis :	
			1. Nagalik Simpis	
			2. Shiva Simpis	
			Malis	
			Mochi	
			Nhavis	
			Neygi	
			1. Bilimagga	
			2. Devanga	
			Sale	
			1. Pattusale	

NOTES

1. *Mysore Backward Classes Committee* (Nagan Gowda) *Final Report* 1961, pp. 43-6.

2. Nandi (1975 : 33).

3. Interpretations of the term "Virasaiva" are to be found in religious works like *Siddhanta Sikhamani* and *Kriyasara*. The *Siddhanta Sikhamani* provides two interpretations. According to it, the term "Vi" denotes knowledge about two things; first, knowledge of the identical nature of the individual (*jiva*) and Saiva. Those devotees of Saivism who revel in such a knowledge are called "Virasaivas". Second, it also refers to the knowledge acquired from the study of *Vedanta*. Hence, "Vira" is one who finds peace of mind in it.

There is yet another connotation of the term "Vira" as given in *Kriyasara*. According to it, "Vi" means "doubt" (*vikalpa*), and "ra" means "without". Thus, the term "Vira" means the Saiva faith and philosophy which is free from all doubts (Sadasivaiah 1967 : 13-14).

4. The term "Lingayat" is the anglicized word for *Lingavant*. The Lingayats derive their name from the Sanskrit word *linga*, the phallic emblem, with the affix *ayta*, and are the people who bear the *linga* habitually.

5. Thipperudraswamy (1967 : 381) opines that it is fallacious to attribute the founding of Virasaivism to any single individual, for Virasaivism is an offshoot of Saivism and the latter (Saivism) is in its turn one of the main branches of Hinduism. Though its early history is shrouded in mystery, scholars subscribe to the view that it is certain that most of the principal tenets of Virasaiva system as enunciated in the *Saiva Agamas* have been imbued in the Indian culture since early times and have left their indelible imprint on the nation's culture.

6. See Desai (1968 : 182).

7. The narration regarding this ceremony is not the same in all the versions of Basavesvara's biography. For a discussion of the different versions, see Hiremath (1967 : 14-16).

8. The five codes of conduct (*pancacasas*) are *lingacara*, *sivacara*, *sadacara*, *brthyacara* and *ganacara*.

9. The eight aids (*astavaranas*) are *guru*, *linga*, *jangama*, *padodaka*, *prasada*, *bhashma* or *vibhuti*, *rudraksa* and *mantras*.

10. Nandi (1975 : 32).

11. Interview with Dr H P Malledevaru on 1 November 1975 at Mysore.

12. Interview with Dr H M Sadasivaiah on 28 October 1975 at Mysore.

13. *Annual Report* 1974-75, p. 7.

14. *Proceedings of the General Body Meeting of the All India Virasaiva Mahasabha* held on 20 June 1975, p. 13.

15. Government Order No. 1827-80-E.A.G. 308 dated 16 May 1921.
16. *Miller Committee Report* (1919), p.3.
17. Refer to Government Order No. 1827-80-E.A.G. 308 dated 16 May 1921 and Annexure 3: *Miller Committee Report* (1919).
18. Figures taken from the documents mentioned in note 17.
19. *Report on Public Instruction in Mysore for the year ending 20th June 1941*, and also the *Report on Public Instruction in Mysore for the year ending 20th June 1948*.
20. See *All India (Law) Reporter* 1960 Mysore 338 for writ petitions 363, 370 ff of 1958.
21. See *All India (Law) Reporter* 1960 Mysore 338.
22. *Mysore Backward Classes Commission* (Nagan Gowda). *Interim Report*, p. 3.
23. See Halappa (1964: II, 470-481).
24. Source: Glyn Wood and Robert Hammond (1975: 151), Table IV: 1.
25. Thurston (1909: IV, 249-50).
26. *Census of India* 1921, Bombay, Vol. 8, pp. 67-3.
27. *Census of India* 1901, Bombay, Vol. 9, p. 58.
28. *Census of India* 1901, Bombay, Vol. 9, p. 183.

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SAINT-POETS OF MAHARASHTRA : THEIR ROLE IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION*

G B SARDAR

Introductory

WHILE considering the theme of dissent, protest, and reform movements, it is necessary to understand the nature of Indian society from about A D 1200 to 1600. There is a section of opinion which believes that this period was one of stagnation and decay since the Golden Age which ended around A D 1000. But there are various dimensions of the static nature of society. One way to judge stagnation would be in economic terms, but should we not introduce here the concept of the quality of life of the people at that time as a whole? Then, again a static society may be one with a stable pattern that is not easily amenable to change. This becomes possible in a very highly stratified birth-status conscious society with hardly any scope for change. Such a highly stratified caste society is also legitimized for its perpetuation by religion in this case by the theory of 'karma' which also continues the social, economic, cultural differences, and various kinds of deprivations and disprivileges.

At a certain point of time when deprivations, and disprivileges reach such a low level that human life becomes impossible for these sections, and they do not have even a desire or the capacity to rise in protest, what is required is leadership, from among the privileged themselves, and from those who possess the necessary compassion, social sensitivity, humanism, a concern for social justice, and a drive for leadership in

*This paper written in Marathi was rendered into English by Y B Damle of the Department of Sociology, University of Pune, who has also written the introductory and concluding portion.—Ed.

thought, and action. But despite such a lead, in a highly stratified society it is very difficult even to try to change the main politico-economic foundations of society. It may, however, be possible to question the legitimacy of certain, aspects viz., reform in the field of religion, and culture. This is what was attempted by the followers of the 'bhakti' tradition. Till that time the Vedic tradition communicated through Sanskrit was not available to women, Shudras, and the untouchables i.e., a large section of the population did not even have the prospect of salvation. Therefore, the first task of the saint-poets was to open the path of salvation to all, by emphasizing the universalistic, humanistic, and all-inclusive nature of religion. These saints emphasized the Bhagawat Dharma instead of Vedic religion, and since this period was dominated by a religious ethos, the emphasis turned out to be both ingenious, and expedient. These saints did not explicitly address themselves to the power structure. However, by opening the path of salvation to the majority, they wanted to create a ferment in society, so that the people could lead a life of self-confidence, and self-respect. In this way they avoided direct antagonism.

While making an analysis of social transformation, the importance of the cultural milieu together with the prevailing notions, and priority given to different media has to be taken into account. This would help us to thoroughly appreciate the contributions made by the saints to the culture of various regions during that period. Apart from being a major contribution to religion, the development of regional languages as well as the discovery of various devotional sects has been regarded as a significant development in the cultural history of India. However, it may be borne in mind that not only the social life, but knowledge, the pursuit of art, literature, philosophy, ethics, family life, and caste were all dominated by religion. Social life would therefore have a fresh outlook if attention were paid to religious awakening, and reform. This has been the role of both the Vedic, as well as the non-Vedic religions like Buddhism and Jainism. To illustrate, in southern India the impact of Jainism lasted considerably longer than that of Buddhism, for Jainism was unconfined. Moreover, Jain Acharyas had made their compositions in the

regional languages like Tamil, Telugu, and Kanarese. When the sway of Jainism was effectively stemmed by the Alvars, the devotional movement spread to Andhra, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Bengal, and practically all over India. In the devotional sects, all the castes ranging from the brahmans to the untouchables could come together under the same banner with profound oneness. This is why, unlike the Vedic religion, the compositions of the saint-poets, and their devotional songs in regional languages, became very popular. This is how a continuity of the Vedic religion to all the people became possible, and vitality was lent to the decaying, and moribund Vedic tradition. Those who claimed their heritage from the Vedic tradition viz., Hindus—high caste—were thus able to make Hindu religion more liberal.

Vedic Tradition and Warkari Saints

Hindu religion claims its heritage from the Vedic tradition which was once based on a liberal outlook. But from the very beginning it had two trends; one pertaining to the ancient and traditional ideas, and the other finding a golden mean between both, the old and the new ideas. In fact, any new sect was initially opposed. However, as soon as it was realized that new trends found favour with the common people, they were readily incorporated. This was the speciality of the Vedic tradition. For instance, Pancharatra, Bhagawat religion were regarded as non-Vedic by traditional pandits like Kumaril Bhatt, and Medhateethi (commentator of Manusmriti), who had also listed Buddhism and Jainism as non-Vedic.¹ However, Ramanuja, and other acharyas later on gave a systematic exposition of the principles of devotion by referring to the *Upanishads*, the *Vedantasutra*, and the *Bhagwadgita*. The Bhagawat religion gained popularity in all the strata of society, and therefore the Vedic tradition had to accord its approval to it.

Hindu religion has incorporated different kinds of groups, castes, and communities as well as sects for the past so many centuries. The autonomy of various castes, communities or

sects has never been questioned. Thus, if the *Vedas* are regarded as self-legitimized 'chaturvarnya' caste system, 'karma' theory, etc. are regarded as common principles for all the constituents of society. But, apart from these common elements, Hinduism has retained its independence in respect of such items as devotion, tradition of the 'guru' mantras, procedures of initiation, and so on. While accepting the authority of the *Vedas*, the variety of ways of worship, and acquiring final wisdom, knowledge, as well as salvation has always been guaranteed.² The final authority of the *Vedas*, the variety of attaining liberation, and consequent freedom of worship have been emphasized as important aspects of Hinduism by the late Lokamanya Tilak. Perhaps, this is why Hindu society is able to integrate diverse elements without having a central authority, and organization. This has resulted in the absence of common, social, and cultural bonds in respect of the various components of Hindu society.

Theoretically, religious principles are essentially traditional, and therefore are considered to have not only permanent validity but are also regarded as self-sufficient. This is why any kind of religious reform seems uncalled for. However, when such principles get distorted, it becomes necessary to resuscitate its true nature. This happens from time to time. Such an attitude reflects the importance of reinstating religion in its proper perspective, and this is what is also implicit in the Indian tradition. Since it is firmly believed that there is nothing fundamentally new in this world, any new ideas are nothing but a manifestation of thought of the seers who had propounded traditional principles. In fact in the case of something which is immutable, and unaffected by time it is futile to distinguish between the old, and the new, because certain important principles revealed to our sages and seers, form the very basis of Hinduism. Consequently, philosophers endowed with a capacity for original thinking, and analysis, were constrained to express their ideas in the form of an exposition of religious books, even if they were original contributions. Thus, the saint-poets of that period had to follow a similar path by trying to discover new meanings in the old scriptures.

In Maharashtra, several devotional sects came up of which

the Warkari sect proved to be the most popular, and influential. Their literature reflected not only the devotion to God, but it contributed significantly to the emergence of the Maharashtra culture. This is why they are treated with great respect. It would therefore be worth while to confine this paper mainly to the contribution of the Warkari saints, from Dynaneshwar to Tukaram. Politically, this period extended from the last days of the Yadava rule to that of Shivaji, roughly a period of about three and a half to four centuries, when the Muslim rule had extended into Maharashtra also, albeit here it operated differently from the north. This was partly because the Muslims were relatively few in number, and because the area was remote from the centre. Muslim rulers therefore maintained good relations with the higher, and influential strata of Hindu society despite some of the Hindus facing a certain amount of religious oppression. But the propagation of Islam did not effect the various rural institutions as the caste system. The routine of life which had been determined by the age-old traditions was more or less undisturbed. It may be worthwhile to discuss this social background against which the saints had functioned, to modify or retain the old traditions.

Social Background

Dynaneshwar, and Namdeo, founders of the Bhagawat religion, functioned under Ramdeorai, the Yadav ruler when his kingdom expanded through conquest, beyond Maharashtra. But, since he did not have the capacity to handle such a large kingdom, internal feuds, and disputes, along with inefficient administration, reduced the effectiveness of the rule in such regions as Karnataka and Konkan.³ The founder of the Mahanubhav sect, Chakradharswami, described Ramdeorai's rule as intemperate, and unwise. Ramdeorai was defeated, in his very first encounter, by Alla-u-ddin Khilji, and he utterly humiliated himself by being a stooge to both Khilji, and Malik Kafoor. To the latter who had come to the South to conquer the kingdoms of Warangal, Madura, and Dwarsamudra, Ramdeorai gave all help underscoring the fact of his superficial loyalty, and devotion to Hinduism.

With declining kingly rule, social life also lacked any direction, especially learned men, who pursued learning under royal patronage, albeit this quest was given to mere pedantry despite the respect accorded to them. In other words, they followed traditions without scrutiny, and seldom related to the needs of the common people. The language of exposition being Sanskrit, cultural heritage was confined to the higher varnas. It is well known that the shudras, and the untouchables were not only deprived of knowledge but also had to lead a sub-human existence. Hindu religion made people believe that the shudras were meant to serve the higher varnas. Thus, the deteriorated religious life was inextricably tied to social life which itself reflected corruptions. Religion was dominated by the ritualists, and in a treatise called *Chaturvarga Chintamani* by Hemadri, a mere perusal of the contents indicate the stress given to rites, and rituals, charity, pilgrimage, salvation, etc.⁴ E.g. the worship of different deities with certain material objectives in view was mistaken for religion, and there are so many centres of pilgrimage in Maharashtra. In the Mahanubhava literature about one hundred and fifty three different deities, gods and goddesses have been mentioned. Dynaneshwar condemned severely the commercial aspect of such devotion, and worship.⁵

If this was the condition of the elite, the mental state of the rural illiterate and the orthodox people was no better, for it was dominated by ignorance, fear, and a fascination for the ceremonials. They worshipped such folk-deities as Jakhai, Manglai, Mesabai, Dobai, and Mhasoba. Namdeo has castigated this kind of devotional worship by saying that wherever one finds a piece of stone embalmed with 'sindoor' divinity is accorded to it.⁶ In order to appease such deities, and in order not to incur their wrath the shudras, and the untouchables also followed mechanical rites, and rituals.

If the pandits of the Vedic tradition never mixed with the common people, the Jains, Lingayats, and those of the Nath sect propagated their views and philosophy to all strata of society. All the same, mutual trust, and understanding was lacking even amongst them. In the Chakradhar formulations,⁷ it was prohibited to fraternize with the Jains and the Lingayats, who settled mainly in southern Maharashtra, and had their religious

literature written mostly in Kanarese. Since the Jain and the Mahanubhav religious sects emphasized asceticism, it held no appeal to the common people. But people had respect for the Yogis who belonged to the Nath sect. Many saintly persons from the Lingayat, Mahanubhav, and the Warkari sects owe a great deal to the Nath sect. In spite of such an impact, if one were to scrutinize the anecdotes in *Lilacharitra*⁸ of Kamakhya, Kanha and Bahudi, one would be convinced that the original higher impulses of this sect were lost and they were substituted by indiscipline, misbehaviour, and uncontrollable passions. This may be one of the reasons why Dynaneshwar decided to bring about religious enlightenment by following the Warkari sect, even though his preceptors belonged to the Nath Sect.

Warkari Sect

Pundalik was the founder of the Warkari sect; its main deity being Vithal, and the main centre being at Pandharpur. Vithal had been worshipped in Karnataka for a long time, and a stone-inscription (written in Sanskrit, and Kanarese) in the Vithal temple at Pandharpur mentions the organic link between Pandharpur, Vithal, and Pundalik; that it was the warrior Someshwar from Hoyasal Yadav clan who donated the town of 'Hiriyā Garanj' in order to take care of the expenses involved in the worship of Vithal. Madhwacharya, the famous leader of the Madhwa sect, had also presented three of his disciples with icons of Vithal for worship.⁹ Kanarese poet, Choundras, who was a contemporary of Namdeo, also described himself as a devotee of Vithal.¹⁰ On the other hand, the inscription bearing the names of eighty four donors of Vithal is written in Marathi; this list contains Maharashtrian, Kanarese, and Telugu donors. Vithal was originally a Kanarese deity, as mentioned in the literature of the saints. But when Vithal (Pandurang) went to Pandharpur to meet his disciple Pundalik, it is worth nothing what Namdeo said, "Vithal speaks in Kanarese, his language is not understood by Pundalik".¹¹ Even if Vithal was originally Kanarese, once he came to Pandharpur he was so engrossed in the congre-

gation of the Maharashtrian saints that he was fascinated by Marathi. Not only that, the entire devotional literature was in Marathi, but through the contribution of Dynaneshwar, Tukaram, and other saints, the Warkari Sect which had propagated the devotion, and worship of Vithal, provided the foundation of Maharashtrian culture.

Dynaneshwar and Namdeo

The Warkari sect was very popular in Maharashtra, since the devotees of Vithal included persons from Ramdeorai to the common people. Though not significantly different from the other devotional sects, Dynaneshwar (1275 to 1296) metamorphosed this sect to propound the Bhagawat religion in Maharashtra. He was the son of Vithalpant Kulkarni, and Rukmini of Apegaon. Vithalpant once had embraced Sanyasasaram, but his preceptor asked him to become a householder again when he had four children : Nivruti, Dynaneshwar, Sopana, and Muktabai. This re-entry into the householder's stage was sacrilegious. This is why both Vithalpant, and Rukmini had to expiate their sins by giving up their lives. Their orphan children, for no fault of theirs, considerably suffered for they received neither justice nor fairplay. Despite this background Dynaneshwar did not become a rebel. He believed in religious reform in order to maintain the continuity of social life. This approach was realistic. Without attacking the sacred religious literature, he tried to incorporate fundamental truths in it in order to re-vitalize social life. His personality is reflected in literature, for he combines the philosopher's vision, the firmness, and mental poise of a 'yogi', the compassion of saints, and a literateur's love for aesthetic beauty, and creativity. He composed *Dynaneshwari*, *Amritanubhav*, *Changneo-pasasthi*, *Haripath* and some other stanzas in which there is a remarkable combination of poetry and philosophy. Yet, his literature though very rich in poetic qualities cannot be compared with the classical Sanskrit literature, because he was not an exponent like Sankara or Ramanuja.

The main themes of Dynaneshwar have contributed to

metaphysics, and total devotion. These expositions were for him only a means for shaking off the lethargy amongst people. Namdeo has mentioned that by expounding metaphysics, Dynaneshwar really reactivated people's life,¹² especially since it channelized the devotion of the shudras, and the untouchables into the direction of philosophical reasoning. Dynaneshwar had in fact captivated the mind of the Warkari saints so much, by his enlightening composition, and literature, that these saints realized the importance of the dormant inner vitality of every human being. Dynaneshwar belonged to the Nath sect. But his friendship with Namdeo was mainly responsible for his attraction towards the Warkari sect.

Namdeo (1270 to 1350) was born in the Shimpi caste (tailor), and was recognized as an intense devotee of Vithal ever since his childhood. But his uncle Goroba (Saint Goroba) was not really convinced about Namdeo's spiritual authority. A remark like this convinced Namdeo that mere devotion was not enough, without self-realization; so he became the disciple of Visoba Khechar. This changed his entire outlook. He was convinced of the importance of devotion to God, irrespective of size and shape, and was able to get over any kind of dualism.¹³ His poems denote a new kind of literary form in Marathi literature, in which he has described his own experience in the attainment of higher spiritual life. Acuteness, intensity, repentance, compassion, sensitivity, heart-rending inner strife, a sense of fulfilment, and such emotions have been rendered in words by Namdeo; and, that is why his writings became extremely appealing to the common people, and to those who were regarded as authorities in the field of spiritualism, such as those belonging to as diverse castes as the Janabai, Gora Kumbhar, Savata Mali, Narhari Sonar, Joga Parmanand (teli), Chokha Mela, and Banka Mahar. Namdeo devised the medium of 'kirtan', to preach the Bhagawat religion, and he has described himself as performing kirtan on the banks of the river.¹⁴ This was an open house policy so that a devotee who was also a shudra was able to clearly see the essence of spiritual knowledge, which was until then a taboo. In these kirtans, the audience also participated as it was a group offering of prayer. Dynaneshwar's thinking is aptly expressed as "Freely ye have received,

freely give".¹⁵ Such was the conviction of these devotees of Vithal that created a definite reassurance for the helpless, and the downtrodden. Many of his follower saint-poets were already dead by the time Namdeo died in 1350. Perhaps, this is why the movement declined after his demise.

Just about that time, the Bahamani kingdom was founded and the Muslim rule was stabilized in Maharashtra. However, even before that, many preachers of the Sufi sect had already arrived here, such as Nizamuddin Aualia, Sirajuddin, Khwaja Bandanawaj, Gesu daraz, etc., who had very good and close relations with the Bahamani rulers. Naturally the political authority supported their religious propagation. The Muslims easily established themselves in a short period, and their language, religion, dress, and customs soon made a deep impression on the social life. To the many Hindu Gods, and Goddesses, were now added various peers, and aualias, who were reputed to grant one's worldly desires with suitable prayers, and vows. Eknath and Ramdas expressed their displeasure at the Hindus being so impressed by Dawal Malik;¹⁶ even Prince Maloji Bhosale had prayed to Shah Sharif to grant him a male child. Thus, within a span of two centuries, Islam—the rulers' religion—had captivated the people high and low. The Hindu sects suffered a loss of nerve, and the Warkari sect receded into the background because after Namdeo until Eknath one does not come across any important saint. But Kanhopatra, Damajipant, and Bhanudas had kept alive the flame of devotion to Vithal.

In south India, Islam's political and religious aggression was stopped by the Vijayanagar kingdom which through the efforts of the Vidyanarya, and Sayanacharya, had become a centre for the rejuvenation of Vedic religion. Hemadri, Bopadeo and Madhav Sayan followed more or less the path of devotion as traditionalists. The contribution of Madhava-charya acquired special significance because it facilitated the revival of the old religious tradition in Maharashtra. Narsimha Saraswati (AD 1378 to 1458) also belonged to the same tradition as Vidyanarya, and was the founder of the Datta sect, which emphasized both the performance of religious rites according to the shastras and also the flouting of the routine rituals and taboos styled as the Avadhoot Marga. Narsimha

Saraswati, following the first path of emphasizing the observance of various rites, and rituals, was convinced that when religion, and culture are threatened with extinction, it is necessary for the higher classes to maintain the purity of traditional rites, rituals, sense of devotion, etc. The first Sankaracharya also believed that 'varnashrama dharma' had to be accorded priority, and expounded by the brahmins which alone would contribute to the protection and continuity of the Vedic religion.¹⁷ The main book of the Datta sect *Shree Guru Charitra* (Biography of the Preceptor) has given a detailed exposition of the proper conduct of brahmins, 'varna' system, doctrine of 'karma', expiation, importance of pilgrimage, fasts, rituals, and such other features that are in favour of the re-instatement of the old order, especially because it was a time of crisis.

Politically, the Bahamani rulers faced opposition from the Vijayanagar kingdom, and could not expand very much in the South. There were two fighting factions within the Bahamani kingdom Muslims, i.e. the local converts, and those who were outsiders. Later on, it was split into five sections, which again continued the in-fighting. After the fall of the Vijayanagar kingdom these different factions wanted to enlist the support of efficient, competent, and brave persons. It offered an opportunity for ambitious persons belonging to the Maratha community. Under the Adilshahi and Nijamshahi rule, clans like Bhonsala, Jadhav, Nimbalkar, More, Mohite, etc. came into prominence, acquiring authority, wealth, social status, and reputation.

These developments in the religious, political and economic field were to be reflected in the socio-cultural spheres, and this when Eknath was to influence in cultural transformation.

Eknath and Tukaram

Eknath (1533 to 1597), a Deshastha brahman was born and brought up in Paithan, an important ancient pilgrimage centre, and a seat of both Sanskrit literature as well as the orthodoxy. His great grandfather Bhanudas, an ardent devotee

of Vithal, it is claimed, was responsible for bringing back the idol of Pandurang which had been taken to Vijayanagar during the Muslim rule of Pandharpur. Devotion to Vithal was thus very much in the family of Eknath whose preceptor, Janardan Swami, was a devotee of Datta. Janardan Swami could also study and recite *Dynaneshwari* and *Amrutanubhav*. Thus, Eknath combined in him several qualities such as tolerance, compassion, and spirit of accommodation. Never accepting a static or stereotyped version of the old tradition, he did not accept either the orthodoxy of the Datta sect as well as the Avadhoot approach. This is why, even though his own preceptor belonged to Datta sect he adopted Bhagawat Dharma as preached by Dynaneshwar; synthesizing the old Vedic tradition, the path of devotion of the Warkaris, and the devotion to Datta. In many ways he resumed the work of religious enlightenment undertaken by Dynaneshwar and Namdeo, writing various commentaries on the *Bhagvadgita* and the *Bhagawat*. Apart from writing a comprehensive commentary on the eleventh Canto of *Bhagawat*, Eknath also wrote—moving away from earlier stereotype writing—on *Rukmini Swayamvara*, *Bhavartha Ramayana*, *Chatushloki Bhogawat*, *Anandlahari*, *Swatmasukha*, *Hastamalak*, *Shupashtak*, stanzas, and songs, *Bharud*, etc. In short, his literary contribution is of a variegated nature that took into account the path of devotion, aspects of higher learning, and taking care to address himself to different castes at the same time.¹⁸ Learned pandits from Banaras acclaimed his *Bhagawat*, while his Gavalani and Bharuds—folk songs and compositions—gained popularity and are recited even today. Eknath worked under the opposition of both the traditionalists as well as Muslim rulers for the continuity and revitalizing of the old religious tradition and his contribution is significant.

Tukaram and Ramdas, who followed Eknath, were inheritors of his tradition. They devoted themselves to the task with a rather logical fruition. Tukaram adopted aggressive approach because the nature of protecting religion is always double-edged. It is not enough to support religious fervour, for it is equally necessary to counteract such elements which are against religion. Unlike Eknath, Tukaram castigat-ed people for the undesirable trends in religious and social

life. Ramdas also influenced by Eknath, contributed differently from Tukaram. Ramdas tried to rejuvenate the aspect of Eknath's spiritual humanism, broadmindedness as well as dynamism. That is why, even though Ramdas was influenced by Bhagawat religion, he founded a new sect based on the worship of Rama. Apparently, the Bhagawat sect of the Warkaris, and the Maharashtrian sect of Ramdas had the same philosophical foundations. But there was a great deal of difference in their practical approach, and social content. Creativity, and independence or autonomy of the Warkari sect came to an end with the demise of Tukaram. Dynaneshwar constructed the temple of Bhagawat Dharma of which Tukaram is regarded as the edifice.¹⁹ Consequently, this paper's discussion is confined to saints upto Tukaram, and the contribution of Ramdas has not been discussed.

Tukaram (1608 to 1650)

Tukaram, residing at Dehu, near Poona, was a mahajan, and had some ancestral land. He belonged to the Kunbi caste, and was a grocer by vocation. That Kunbis are shudras is plainly mentioned by him in his stanzas. Since the time of his ancestor, Vishvambhar-Bava; eighth in the line of ascent, the family was a traditional devotee of Vithal. Tukaram followed the family tradition, conducted family and financial affairs with a sense of duty. However, this state of affairs did not last long for he was faced with several familial calamities, and the loss of trade. During a severe famine, his wife, and son died; none of his relatives would lend him any support. Under this disconcerting mental state, he adopted the path of appeasing God. But out of such an escapist's path, he saw a new light that was to transform his life. He was soon convinced that being able to overcome directly temptations, and calamities was to signify the real 'purushartha' (manly conduct or attainment of goal laid down for human beings to attain), with a sense of detachment. Thus, Tukaram, unlike others, did not have to seek any preceptor because he was able to attain the acme of self-improvement and ennoblement by his devotion, determination, and self-effort.

Of course, he had to encounter hurdles, and opposition every now and then: both with his own mind which was afflicted by different kinds of passions, and also from the elite of society rooted in tradition who regarded the exposition of spiritualism as the privilege, and duty of brahmans.²⁰ Tukaram, though a shudra, performed kirtans, claimed to have understood the essence of Vedanta. He decried the path of karma hemmed in by different rites, and taboos, and extolled the supreme importance of the path of devotion which was naturally not palatable to the arrogant, self-acclaimed traditional propounders of Hindu religion. They later tried to set the whole town against Tukaram, exposing him to various kinds of sufferings, and deprivation. Tukaram, unperturbed faced this double-edged conflict, meritoriously, and emerged victorious.

Tukaram was a firm believer in the importance of Bhagawat religion into which could be traced the main streams of compassion, and therefore, he undertook to propagate the path of devotion to all and sundry, including shudras, untouchables, etc. Even as he did so, he did not neglect the necessity of rebutting adverse propounding of religion by blind traditionalist and hypocritical element.²¹ He waged a battle against all kinds of blind faith, wrong action, and hypocrisy in respect of all the sects, and in doing so he did not even spare his own sect, i.e. the Warkari sect. His compositions make a very pleasant reading, but at the same time they are very pungent and critical because they are essentially based on self-criticism. Hence, they make a direct appeal to the readers because of authenticity, and gems of thinking more readily accepted by the people than the expressions of the other saint-poets.

Religious Awakening, Guiding Spirit and Content

Although all the four, Dynaneshwar, Namdeo, Eknath, and Tukaram, belonged to the same sect they do not have the same literary style, owing to the circumstances, tradition, and temperament. However, all of them were convinced that it was necessary to combine wisdom with devotion, and rites and rituals with ethics, in order to steer clear of the various obstacles, and to make spiritual progress. Emphasis on devotion

and ethics provides the necessary societal dimension. In fact, even though apparently the tradition of the Warkari saints appears to be of a religious nature, a careful scrutiny of its content indicates its emphasis on societal dimension quite clearly. Their contribution is, therefore, fundamentally different and this very difference accounts for their popularity. Of course, they accepted the holiness and final authority of the Vedic religion, but at the same time they were aware that since religious life was beset with many shortcomings there was the need to provide a different direction without destroying social continuity. They felt that new trends, and aspirations could be coalesced with the active principles of the old tradition; and, that is why they never abandoned the old religious literature or tradition in their quest for religious awakening. They opposed blind faith, orthodoxy, and pedantry emphasizing that religion should really concern itself with matters of heart, i.e. to sentiments and emotions instead of undue emphasis on mechanical performances. Neither mere rationality, nor learning by rote which was antithetical to the comprehension of truth, were sufficient for the comprehension of religion. The essence of the true pursuit of religion must be first comprehended, and because this is not done, it leads to a great amount of irreligious behaviour perpetrated in the name of religion. Such a warning was given in a very blunt manner by Tukaram.²² This is why saint-poets of Maharashtra were not interested in the endless discussion of the purely metaphysical nature or details of action, and observances, but emphasized the purity of religious action and advised people to take care of the inner core of true religion.

Dynaneshwar and the other saints were convinced of the great necessity of making Vedic religion broad-based in order to incorporate people belonging to various strata under the banner of Vedic culture. Brahmans, and kshatriyas were the only two varnas which had been the inheritors and torchbearers of the Vedic culture, whereas the vast majority of common people were rotting for generations together in sub-human existence. This sort of unwholesome division between different strata was extremely injurious to social unity, and progress. This the saints were well convinced of, and felt that even though it was practically impossible to root out inequality

in day-to-day life, and relationships, at least in the holy sphere of Bhakti Marg no quarter was to be given to differentiation or discrimination on the basis of birth. All human beings were entitled to worship God, whether he was a learned brahman or an illiterate untouchable; the Warkari sect welcomed everyone to follow the path of devotion.²³ In such a broad-minded attitude lay the greatness of the Warkari sect, that did not stop with only describing this but also by creating the right or sympathetic attitude in the minds of the high-brow regarding the shudras and the untouchables. They also encouraged the shudras and the untouchables to seek self-improvement, and upliftment. This egalitarian attitude has been expressed by all the saint-poets; e.g. Dynaneshwar emphasized that guidance has to be provided by taking into account the recipient's capacity.²⁴ Even Christ said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light", when he wanted to reassure his followers.²⁵ That is why they had recommended the easier path of the pursuit of religion and other-worldiness like 'namsankirtan' or repeating the name of the God. They recommended further steps only to those who had made some progress in a very discrete way.

Genuine compassion for the common people was a major plank of the thinking, and analysis of the saints. In order to make them follow the right path, they felt that it was very important to fraternize with the masses in order to provide the right example. Dynaneshwar had advised wise people to participate freely in their dealings with the masses and not to parade their extraordinariness.²⁶ The saints were not only content with the exposition of the path of devotion, but also emphasized ethical principles in social relationships. Hence, they emphasized on inner purity, tolerance, universal brotherhood, charity, etc. The purification, of religion, propagation of devotion, and the cultivation of ethical principles was the trinity to which the saints had addressed themselves.

Acceptance and use of Marathi Language

The Maharashtrian saints had very little original contribution to make, in the sense that their philosophical exposition was

largely based on the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavadgita* and *Bhagawat*. But their contribution lies in their being able to appeal to the masses through various simple formulations. While the tradition of the path of devotion is very old, the Warkari sect made it into a popular movement. The literature of these saints is in Marathi; unlike before when for spiritualism the language or medium was Sanskrit as it was for metaphysics and philosophy. This was a radical departure, without belittling the importance and worth of Sanskrit. They had no doubts about the competence of Marathi language;

"I shall so bring out the beauty and the melodiousness of the Marathi language that she will adorn the literature and would even surpass nectar in sweetness. If my *Dynaneshwari* which is a critical book were to be compared with the *Bhagavadgita*, nobody would be able to make out as to which is the original and which is a translation. Whether *Dynaneshwari* is an exposition or extension of *Gita*, or *Gita* is the digest of *Dynaneshwari*, such doubts will arise in the minds of the people".²⁷ And, "if Sanskrit was supposed to be the language of the Gods, was Prakrit or Marathi a contribution of the thieves, and the lowly elements?" Eknath had posed this question to the protagonists of Sanskrit.²⁸ That their pride for the mother-tongue was well placed, is fully justified by the high quality of the literature which they had produced. Marathi then was mainly the language of day-to-day affairs, but these saints lent it the status of the language of literature. The Warkari sect combined two trends in it, i.e. Marathi language naturally became both a medium of devotional literature, and also conveyed philosophical knowledge. The idea was not merely to make use of Marathi in place of Sanskrit, because Mahanubhava Acharyas had already started using it as such; their poetic composition being unduly influenced by classical Sanskrit poetry, with unnecessary imitation of Sanskrit style, and this is why Mahanubhava literature reads very artificial and pedantic.

The composition of the Warkari saints was not only cast in a different mould, this sect was not prone to asceticism. Many devotees of Vithal like Gora Kumbhar, Narahari Sonar, Savata Mali, and Sona Nhavi carried on their normal household duties. That is why their literary composition was acceptable to the common people. During Islamic rule, there was a consi-

derable influx of Persian words. While the literature of the saint-poets contributed to the maintenance of the purity of Marathi, they did not totally abandon the use of Persian words, or of course Sanskrit and Prakrit words that had become a part of the day-to-day vocabulary. But the saints made sure that the progress of Marathi language was not to be hindered by aggression either on the part of Sanskrit or Persian.

Scriptural Authority

The saints in Maharashtra were fully convinced that they were carrying forward the glorious tradition of the ancient sages. The authority of the *Vedas* is the starting point of all religious discussion. '*Shruti, Smriti*', virtuous behaviour, and contentment which were emphasized as the proper characteristics of religion by Manu, find adequate mention in their composition or literature.²⁹ In the very first canto of *Dynaneshwari*, Dynaneshwar has made use of the symbol of Ganesha and has beautifully described Vedic tradition. Any one who was interested in attaining the four 'purusharthas' had to accept the directives given by the *Shruti* and *Smriti*. Whatever has been condemned by *Shastras* should be discarded.³⁰ It was not only the saints who belonged to the higher varna like Dynaneshwar, and Eknath who had accepted the supreme authority of the *Vedas*, but Tukaram, and Chokha Meher had also propounded the upremacy of the *Vedas* and even observed that those who do not accept the authority of the *Vedas*, *Shastras*, and *Puranas* should be ostracized. Of course, such acceptance of scriptural authority was slightly modified by the Maharashtrian saints, since they were not in favour of giving undue importance to literary or verbal analysis without seeing to the existing situation.³¹

The *Vedas* are based on the conception of the trinity of knowledge; 'Satvagunatmak' (righteousness), worship and rituals—'Rajogunatmak'—and emphasizing earthly pursuits including rites and rituals and emphasis on action—'Tamogunatmak' or passion. Such divisions of the *Vedas* was characterized by Eknath.³² Of course, the composition of these three aspects of the *Vedas*, are prescribed according to one's competence, and

it is necessary to choose what would be beneficial to oneself. That is why wise men are engaged in continuous thinking and meditation of the *Vedas*, and naturally accept those aspects of the *Vedas* which they regard as desirable.³³ The discussion about what is proper and improper action in the *Vedas*, is extremely deep, and complicated, and therefore it is not only illiterate persons who get confused about the core of the *Vedas*, but also those with a philosophical bent of mind and competence. Under such circumstances, who provides guidance, and direction to the common people? According to the old tradition, shastris and pandits who were trained in the *Vedas* because they had acquired the necessary intellectual discipline to analyse the content of the *Shastras*, and the *Vedas*. But since their minds were considerably influenced by a static way of life, their discussion of religion was more characterized by undue pride rather than the quest of the truth. Dynaneshwar has described this predicament by saying that such thinkers were like ticks who were interested only in sucking blood; they did not delve deep into the holy and sweet milk.³⁴ It was inevitable then that the influence of these pandits, who were well-versed in the art of debating, was on the decline, and leadership was taken over by the religious preceptor (guru) and saints who depended more upon inner experience than on logical or critical abilities. This is why their expositions were alive to the needs of the time and also relevant.

The characteristics of a good preceptor has been indicated in the saint literature. i.e. he has to be well-versed in the language and knowledge of the sacred literature, he should be immersed in the bliss of the 'Brahma' and hence be a competent teacher who will effectively be able to train his disciples in a proper way. This was emphasized by Eknath who said that the *Vedas* get sanctified only when instruction from the guru is received.³⁵ Therefore, the devotional authority of the saints was accepted as much as that of the preceptor; e.g. Dynaneshwar regarded saints as the living images of God and like sandalwood they exude fragrance and coolness even while they themselves were undergoing process of destruction. This was regarded as a fundamental characteristic of the saints, for their action was a demonstration of the quintessence of the *Vedas*. It is in this sense that Tukaram

had also emphasized the preachings of the *Vedas*, and the imitation of the saints in respect of their actions, and this is what would protect religion.³⁶ Of course, experience was not to be confused with merely sensory experience; for experience implied a transcendence of sensory perception which was normally not comprehended by reason but an extraordinary type of mystical experience. But even if the saint-poets emphasized mystical experience, they equally well reflected on the social situation. Hence Tukaram, in his personal statement, exhorted people that one should not be guided by the opinion of the majority to decide as to the nature of the truth or untruth, but by one's own reflection and experience.³⁷ But intuition is not to be mistaken for common impulses, and such a capacity developed through a peaceful and unwavering state of mind as a result of intense devotion. Tukaram clearly mentions that those who get lost in words, and are mere readers of the *Vedas* and *Shastras* are only beasts of burden and nothing else.³⁸ The self-knowledge of wise devotees is superior to the holy religious books. This assertion of Dynaneshwar is along the same lines.³⁹ Dynaneshwar in his own way glorified the *Vedas*, but he also characterized them as being narrow-minded in the sense that the right to Vedic knowledge was confined only to the three higher varnas. The women, shudras, and the untouchables who were afflicted by the household worries, were disqualified. The *Bhagavadgita*, on the other hand, has done away with this blemish of the *Vedas* and taken under its wings everyone, and therefore it could be looked upon as re-incarnation of the *Vedas* without the blemish.⁴⁰ The exploits of Krishna have been beautifully described in the *Bhagawat*. Both these books, the *Gita* and the *Bhagawat*, epitomize the essence of the *Vedas* and are liberal as well as impartial. It was natural therefore, that the Maharashtrian saints felt a great deal of affinity for both of them.

Absence of Discrimination in the Devotional Sect

The three main institutions on which Hindu society is based are family, caste, and varna. Action, and behaviour accord-

ing to status of one's family, and the caste are traditional. *Bhagavadgita* also asserts that the four-fold division of community into four varnas has been ordained by God. The status of the family, pride of the caste and the sense of superiority regarding the varna dominated day-to-day relationships. The status of an individual, and his rights and obligations, were largely determined by his or her caste. If a person were outcasted he was automatically thrown out of society. The rights and privileges as well as notions of superiority and inferiority were indispensable features, and hence discrimination. But this was so not only in the social sphere but it had also affected relationships in the sphere of religion for centuries. The Maharashtrian saints were quite alive to this problem and that is why they advocated equality and fraternity. However, since they were greatly attracted towards the principle of compassion as adumbrated in the *Bhagawat Dharma* and karma which legitimized gross inequalities, they were in two minds, and wanted to steer clear out of this situation. Without disputing social life, they were very keen to bring about reforms in religion. Although the undesirable elements of the caste system made it imperfect, yet they could see no other alternative to it. Hence, they wanted to purify, and reform the social order instead of changing it radically by combining the doctrine of karma, and the emphasis on compassion. They refused to say anything directly about practical affairs, but insisted on the equity in the other domain, i. e. religious life. Treating everyone equal was the essence of devotion and was the fundamental plank of their sect,⁴¹ and there was no taboo on anyone following the path of devotion. For example, the Warkaris worshipped Vitthal and referred to him as an affectionate mother who bestows her affection without discrimination on all her children. Dynaneshwar who has been described as Yogiraj or prince among yogis, as well as Chokha Mela who was untouchable, were equally linked by the God Pandurang. The path of devotion does not respect caste or varna and that these divisions are unwarranted, said Shri Krishna to Arjuna, as emphasized in the *Dynaneshwari*, is clearly reminiscent of the acceptance of the value of equality;⁴² distinctions based on varna, and caste are forgotten while

engrossed in chanting God's names.⁴³ This atmosphere, which emphasized doing away with discrimination, was responsible for creating affinity, and familial relationships amongst the Maharashtrian saints. Dynaneshwar's authority was regarded as very high, who was referred to by Janabai—female servant of Namdeo—as her personal friend.⁴⁴ Namdeo has asked in a very appealing manner that, if milk given by cows of different colours is the same, how could the distinction between brahman and shudra stand scrutiny.⁴⁵ Even though Chokha may not be a very handsome man, the inner intensity of his devotion was not in any way different from that of others, i.e. one should not be taken in by external features but should approach the core of all human beings. The very fact that Chokha could raise such questions in a telling manner symbolizes the contribution of the Warkari sect regarding the awakening amongst the shudras, and the untouchables.⁴⁶ But the Maharashtrian saints were not opposed to the greater or lesser recognition accorded to a person on the basis of his or her own attainments, and performance. They regarded the importance of the guru or preceptor as equal to that of God and yet there was no insistence that one's preceptor should belong to one's own caste; any saint was equally venerable irrespective of his caste. Eknath regarded an affectionate, and devoted untouchable, superior to an undevoted brahman.⁴⁷ Authority and status of family and caste is not acceptable but what matters is one's qualities and action, says Tukaram.⁴⁸ This assertion of Tukaram clearly reflects the viewpoint of all of the saints.

In spite of such convictions, the saints did not discard the differentiation in respect of worldly and practical life, because they believed that the four-fold division was acceptable to God and that they had the authority of the *Vedas*. Even if it is true that four varnas were born out of the same 'purusha',⁴⁹ their duties and functions despite being different are mutually supporting. This is like the five senses which though they belong to the same individual perform different functions. In the same manner 'varnashram dharma', and 'jati' were regarded as natural, and this is why they did not feel it necessary to enquire into the differentiation in status. Dynaneshwar's exposition in this respect leaves no doubt

about this,⁵⁰ for this world, governed by 'trigunas', nobody is without any blemish. Moreover, since divine disposition cannot be comprehended, whatever is prescribed in the *Shastras* is regarded as God's will,⁵¹ and therefore it is better to pursue one's duties without any expectations of rewards and that is the only way to attain God. This is the sum and substance of Dynaneshwar's argument and the other saint's also have accepted this argument. The duties which one has to perform for making a living, if looked upon as a service to God, then such duty becomes worthy. On the other hand, if tasks and, duties are performed only for earning one's bread, and making a living, then such a task becomes onerous and heavy.

But there are many persons whose tasks and duties are extremely onerous and hard, and in return for such performance they are not even adequately fed, and under such circumstances how would they derive any pleasure in the performance of such a task? Chokha Mela was acclaimed as a great devotee of God and yet there was no relief for him in respect of his unpleasant duties as a Mehar. The disparity between the higher status on the plane of spiritualization and the lowly status in respect of worldly affairs became quite jarring to the shudras, and the untouchables. In a state of abjection, Chokha interrogates God, "Extremely bad food to one, very good to the other; one may not get food even after demanding and another gets pleasure and the grandeur of kingly title, the other begs for food in different places; is this your sense of justice?"⁵² Of course this radical posture and attitude of defiance is due to adverse circumstances, and yet Chokha reconciles himself to his fate and castigates himself by saying that, "I must have adversely criticized God Krishna, and that is why I have been born a Mahar".⁵³ There is no denying that this state of conflict between the old traditional modes of socialization, and the new impulses and howsoever short-lived the discontent about one's poor state, is much better and represents a higher state than the state of mind which was totally indifferent to one's deprivation, and the sufferings and injustice which one had to put up with.

The saints did not approve the emphasis on rites, and rituals, taboos, and purity and yet they also equally felt that

every person should follow the prescription of his caste without affecting others. Dynaneshwar has said that even if a brahman were to be hungry he should not partake even a feast of a shudra. Eknath emphasized the observance of restrictions in respect of partaking water, and food. Tukaram has castigated against inter-dining irrespective of differences of caste.⁵⁴ References about the untouchables in the literature of the saints clearly mention their low status. Even Dynaneshwar has mentioned that speaking with the untouchables should be avoided, and therefore there was no question of having any contact with them.⁵⁵ All these examples make it very clear that the saints did not really try to change the traditional structure of social relationships. By throwing open the path of devotion, they had provided access to all and sundry of all castes, in respect of religious life.

Relationship Between God and Devotee

Eventually the path of devotion, as preached by the Maharashtra saints, was not confined to common people with good impulses, but there is an assurance even to those who indulged in misbehaviour and were fallen. The image of Vithal, as depicted in the poetic construction of Namdeo and Tukaram, is such that he is the saviour of the fallen, extremely compassionate, and has tremendous affection for his devotees. However sinful a person may be, once he genuinely repents, he is entitled to be included in the devotional sect, and can improve himself. Even as the good people have certain blemishes, similarly those who are normally regarded as wicked, and ambitious may also have certain good impulses in them. It is necessary to arouse such good impulses, and to ensure their cultivation with a sympathetic attitude. If a person who has resorted to misdeeds is really repentant, and keen on striking a new path, he should be welcomed into the fold (Warkari) without reservations of any kind;⁵⁶ as a result of repentance, the blemish vanishes instantly.⁵⁷ The Bhagawat Dharma emphasizes the dormant good qualities in human beings, and therefore has tremendous faith in the capacity of all human beings to improve their lot.

Thus, the emphasis was on the affectionate and compassionate nature of God, rather than on his strength, and power. The devotee never felt threatened by Vithal, and was fully aware that Vithal was equally eager to meet his devotees. He even forsake Vaikunth, or his heavenly abode, especially for the sake of those who could not look after themselves such as orphans and the poverty-stricken.⁵⁸ Namdeo observes that Vithal is intensely in search of such persons.⁵⁹ While the Maharashtrian saints held a brief for the oppressed, and the deprived, they equally well insisted that such persons should make their life more righteous, and pure. Tukaram asserts that we are not such kind of devotees of Vithal who only inspire an attitude of pity amongst others by our begging but it is possible to control even the highest authority by our virtuous behaviour.⁶⁰ In fact the saints believed that only a person who has reached the highest stage should be regarded as a worthy devotee of Vithal. Firm faith, and action based on insistent efforts, and virtuous behaviour was the only strength of the devotees. What was important was genuine, unstinted devotion. That is why the Warkari saints did not even bother about insisting upon premises of a temple to perform their kirtans, because wherever they would perform a kirtan with devotion, Vithal had to attend it.⁶¹ Chokha Mela was not allowed to enter the temple and yet he was very anxious to participate in the ceremonial kirtan. That is why the kirtan was performed on the banks of the river and Vithal made it a point to leave the temple and attend the kirtan. The Warkari sect lays greater emphasis on the devotees rather than on God. Tukaram used to say that there was no duality between the devotee, and the God, because both of them had become one, and he had himself experienced such a lack of duality.⁶²

The Warkari sect was mainly concerned with the shudras, and the untouchables because it was necessary to chalk out a path which would be practically possible for such persons since the Jains and the Mahanubhavas emphasized asceticism, the common people never had any attraction for these sects. Farmers, and the related Balutedars or service castes naturally had no attraction for asceticism. This is why instead of abandoning their family, and household duties, such a path

had to be found out which would not disturb their day-to-day duties and performances, and yet enable them to attain spiritual progress. The path of devotion did not mean either retirement or renouncement, and not even spending one's time in performing bhajanam all the time. Wherever at a congregation for prayers, it is necessary to steer clear of the day-to-day problems, and to resort to meditation in order that one may attain peace of mind, and this was exactly the dual purpose of the repetition of the God's name not mechanically but with love, devotion, charitable disposition, obliging nature, purity of mind, and a control over the senses. Knowledge and understanding ensure inner purification, and the performance of a day-to-day task ensures external purity.⁶³ These saints never accepted any kind of conflict between day-to-day life or householder's life, and spiritual life. The performance of one's duty without any pride and arrogance of one's ability, and without any attachment for reward, is to be regarded as the true worship of God. The Maharashtrian saints exhorted their followers to immerse themselves in the pursuit of their occupational, and family life without in any way losing sight of spiritual goals. Thus, it may be said that they had not taken any steps to transform the social system, but they were concerned about improving life conditions of the shudras, and the untouchables even within the existing framework.

Summary and Reterospect

The bhakti movement of the Maharashtrian saints has been indirectly responsible for generating broad-mindedness, and social consciousness. Their literary contribution reflects due pride of the Marathi language, a sense of concern for Marathi speakers which transcends caste, clan, and religious sects. It is out of this pride that ideas of regional identity later on evolved and developed. Before the twelfth century, various stories and folk songs were composed in the local dialects in Maharashtra but there was no such thing as a well-developed, and standard literary language of Maharashtra. This task was accomplished by the Mahanubhava Acharyas, and the Warkari saints. The Mahanubhava sect later on lost its

active touch with the main stream of Marathi literature because they had adopted a code language. The literature in the middle ages in the Maharashtra regarded Mukundraj and Dynaneshwar as the precursors, and founders of the literary tradition, and derived inspiration following the teachings of the *Upanishads*, the *Gita* and the *Bhagawat*. Moreover, they also claimed they were creating something new, *Dynaneshwari*, Dynaneshwar's famous composition, uses such words as 'citadel of Marathi language', Maharashtra region, etc. and, similarly the Mahanubhava literature also contains phrases to denote the greatness of Maharashtra. In this task, the saints belonging to different strata like Dynaneshwar, Eknath, Namdeo, Tukaram, Chokha Mela, Banka Mahar were associated equally and have contributed effectively. Even Muntoji Brahmani and Sheikh Mahamad, the other Muslim saints have composed literature in Marathi with great inspiration. "Though I am a Muslim, brahmans, and shudras very fondly listened to my Marathi composition".⁶⁴ This observation of Sheikh Mahamad typically reflects the Maharashtrian confidence.

The devotional cult of Vithal was not monopolized by any one sect. It had incorporated various sects like the Nath, Datta, Chaitanya, Anand, and the Sufi. Vithal was worshiped as a deity and *Dynaneshwari*, *Eknathi Bhagwat*, stanzas (*Pads*) of Namdeo and Tukaram were accepted as authoritative literature and that is how centres associated with Vithal, and with Dynaneshwar, Eknath, and Tukaram are acclaimed as holy centres of pilgrimage which have contributed to the solidarity between persons belonging to different castes and regions and sub-regions within Maharashtra. However, the saints never lost sight of their Indianness because they have all the time expressed, and emphasized their reverence for the old religious literature like the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Gita*, and the *Bhagwat*. Moreover, Namdeo, Eknath and Tukaram have also composed literature in Hindi. Meerabai, Narasi Mehta, Ramanand, Kabir, Tulsidas, and several other saints operating in different languages and in regions have been often mentioned with due respect in the literature of the saint-poets which was essentially universal and humanist. "The whole universe is my house",⁶⁵ this quotation aptly reflects their attitude.

"Mutual help and enabling everyone to adopt the right path",⁶⁶ was the dominant attitude of integration and amalgamation amongst the saints. A devotee of Vithal, whether he was a Hindu or Muslim, was treated with the same affinity by these saints. Maharashtra was ruled at that time by the Muslims. Therefore, one would naturally surmise that there would be constant bickerings, and conflicts between the Hindus and the Muslims. But the rural folk were indifferent to these political developments. Even as there were people belonging to different castes in a village, similarly the Muslim community was treated for all practical purposes, as one more caste and that is why in conducting the affairs of the village, particularly in terms of division of labour, and co-operation, no difficulty whatsoever was encountered by the Muslims to participate effectively in the village community. Thus, in the pursuit of spiritual goals, one comes across several Muslim disciples of Hindu saints, and Hindu disciples of Muslim aualias. For instance, the preceptor or guru of Muntoji Brahmani (Muslim) was Sahajanand Swami who had many other Muslim disciples as well. The lineage of the gurus of Eknath was closely associated with Sufism. Sheikh Mahamad's father, Raje Mahamad, was an ardent follower of the Qadri branch of Sufism. Janardan Swami, and Sheikh Mahamad accepted Chand Bondale, a disciple of Raje Mahamad, as their preceptor, and sought his advice. It is well-known that Janardan Swami was the preceptor of Eknath. Maloji Raje Bhosale had great respect, and devotion for various peers, and 'fakirs', and he himself, and his Diwanji Balaji Kanhere had accepted Sheikh Mahamad as their preceptor. As Eknath says, all this transcends caste, sects, and religion, while the entire humanity is one, the differences which manifest themselves are entirely due to exterior factors and circumstances.⁶⁷ As already mentioned, Sheikh Mahamad was a devout follower of Islam,⁶⁸ yet he internalized the principles underlying Advaita philosophy from Hinduism, and was well-versed in the *Puranas*. Mahamad's attitude towards religion is very broadminded, for he treats with equal reverence a Muslim as well as a Hindu saint who has attained a very higher stage in self-development.⁶⁹ It may be argued that even there were saints amongst both Hindus, and Muslims with strong convictions, they did not succeed in their attempts at social

integration. The factors responsible for their lack of success in this matter were essentially political and economic; a problem which cannot be discussed in this context. The only thing to be emphasized here is as to how the approach of the saints was congenial to social solidarity.

The Maharashtrian saints were keenly interested in spiritual values and as such they not only rejected secular prosperity but even heavenly pleasures. As single-minded devotees of Vithal, they would not mind being born again and again. Dynaneshwar has castigated those who resorted to sacrifices, and rituals in order to attain the heavens, as followers of "the path of ignorance even though benevolent".⁷⁰ But the other world had to be attained in this life, and here only;⁷¹ that Vaikunth or heaven could be only here and now.⁷² The strength of these saints was loyalty to God, righteousness, and a social concern for the people. From Dynaneshwar to Tukaram, no saint from the Warkari sect felt the need of kingly or princely support nor were they interested in any kind of gifts of land. They did not depend on the generosity of the wealthy. Through their own living example, the performance of kirtans and the exposition of philosophy, and religion, they carried on the work with a missionary zeal. But once a religious movement becomes well organized, it gives rise to vested interests that alienate the leaders from the followers. This is why the Maharashtrian saints did not start the maths. Tukaram has exhorted kirtankars not to accept food where they performed kirtan, and renounce any kind of pride, and hypocrisy.⁷³ In short these saints emphasized non-attachment, which alone was conducive to self-respect, and proper relationship.

While the devotional movement covered the span of three-and-a-half centuries, it did not develop into a broad-based movement to take care of the day-to-day problems of the masses. Soon after Tukaram's death, even the devotional movement was on the wane, probably due to the revivalist trends which are reflected in the thinking of Hemadri, Vidyaran and Narasimh Saraswati that became dominant since the period of Ramdas. Despite the efforts of the saints in making the religious life of women, shudras, and untouchables a little more rational, and to incorporate them in the path of devotion as laid down by Dynaneshwar as well as to bring about equality

and fraternity in the field of religion, apparently social conditions were far from receptive for the propagation of these noble principles. Even if there were exceptional persons who could translate these principles into life and living, it was very difficult for the common man to do so. Moreover, the accommodative policy of the saints also fanned the old traditional path-ways, which contributed to the later revivalistic tendencies.

However, the saints contributed to the sophistication of the Marathi language, and that is why Marathi literature can boast of a long tradition. Namdeo, and Tukaram made valuable contributions to Marathi literature. People from all strata read the *Dynaneshwari* and *Eknathi Bhagawat*, especially those who were not interested in understanding the important principles of philosophy but were concerned in achieving merit or 'Punya Sanchaya'. But after the demise of Tukaram, there has not been a single literature from the common people. Devotional literature henceforward found believers in superstitions, and people were attracted by miracles. The compositions of Shreedhar, Mahipati, and Shahirs reached common masses while the composition of Waman Pandit, and Moropant could be appreciated only by the high-brow, who possessed knowledge of Sanskrit. There were thus two distinct streams in the Marathi literature. Consequently, if the saints were keen to forge solidarity between different layers of society, little impact was made and even this proved to be very short-lived. But once their impact was lost, there was a resurgence of pedantry and sophistry. In the later half of the rule of Peshwas, undue importance was given to shastries, and puandits, and there was once again a concentration of political power, and cultural leadership in the hands of the brahmans; there was a re-instatement of the traditional narrow, and separatist trends.

The same thing happened at the social level. Even while retaining the caste system, the saints wanted to do away with the notion of hierarchy, and social distance or separation between different components. Similarly, they were also concerned about doing away with the limitations imposed on individuals by the distinctions of family, caste, varna, which provided a tight steel frame. Their endeavour was to enable people belonging to all strata to inhale and enjoy free

atmosphere as permitted by the path of devotion, which would be conducive to the development of the self. The Maharashtrian saints, however, gave priority to change amongst individuals. They felt that once a person was convinced about his own inner strength, then such confidence would not be confined to a limited sphere but would make inroads into other spheres too. As a consequence, in all the movements of the saints, there was a release of energy, and activity amongst all the strata. Competent, ambitious individuals belonging to different strata made their contribution, and asserted their capacity because of certain opportunities which were available to them. This naturally meant their own personal, and familial prosperity in the sense of being socially acclaimed. However, this did not initiate a fundamental process of social change, because the citadel of the caste system remained impregnable.

The saints have again and again emphasized that there is only one God, and also castigated people who resorted to the worship of unworthy deities for their own ends. They had unshakable faith in Vithal, who was the God of Gods, and therefore they were not interested in worshipping all kinds of Gods.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the saints have even paid respect in their composition to Ganesha, and Saraswati. Eknath in his *Bhagawat* has paid obeisance to the deity of his preceptors, i.e. Dattatreya and their family deity Ekveera. This is because Eknath's insistence on the God was not of an aggressive nature. Instead of attacking what is conventionally current, the saints preferred to offer something better to the people, and persuaded them to accept it. This is why they freely allowed people to worship, and follow the rites, and rituals of their family, and caste. Their main objection against the worship of the deity was in the expectation which people had from the deities in lieu of worship, and they did not like fickle mindedness in worship or that devotion meant a kind of bargain with God. The saints allowed the worship of different deities on the basis of their thinking on a very high plane, which could not be comprehended by the ordinary people. But the worship of various deities continued unabated, and that is how the message of accommodation, preached by the saints, was lost on the people. The people were convinced about the

superiority of Vithal, and they would worship Vithal for attaining the spiritual goals of other-worldliness, while to attain worldly desires, and aims they would resort to worship of all kinds of deities. Such was the dichotomy in religious behaviour of the people.

A movement is circumscribed by the social conditions, and the emergence, and decay of social movements can be largely explained in terms of limitations imposed by the social conditions on a movement. That is why limitation of the conditions at that time have to be taken into account while evaluating the contribution of the movement initiated by the Maharashtrian saints. It is beyond doubt that the saints provided a broad base to Vedic religion, and were the founders of Maharashtrian culture. These saints were greatly concerned about the manner in which the old tradition had kept a majority of the people from the lower strata out of its bounds. Consequently, they fraternized with people of such strata and were all the time actively interested in throwing open the path of selfprogress through the path of devotion. That is why, while extolling the virtues of devotion to Vithal, they have emphasized with due pride that Vithal is a near relation of the down-trodden, and is also their protector. All these efforts were certainly looked down upon by the traditional pandits and shastris. But even the devotees of Vithal belonging to the Madhwa sect from Karnataka shared such notions, and this can be scanned from the composition of Shridavithal, a Kanarese poet of the seventeenth century, i.e. the Madhwa sect did not find palatable the insistence of the Warkaris on transcending considerations of caste or varna.⁷⁶ There is a tale about the temple of Vithal in Vijayanagar (as given in the Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey) which clearly emphasizes the simplicity of Vithal who had great compassion for the downtrodden. It is reported that Vithal never actually entered the temple built for him in Vijayanagar: "But the God, having come to look at it refused to move, saying that it was far too grand for him and that he preferred his own humbler home".⁷⁷

Finally, the various anecdotes and tales about Warkari saints in Maharashtra, which are current, should not be interpreted literally nor should one try to test their veracity in

terms of their actual historical occurrence. What is important to note is the attitude or viewpoint which is emphasized in such tales, and anecdotes. For example, Vithal helps Janabai in the making of cow-dung cakes or helps Chokha Mela (Mahar) to drag the dead cattle. But no useful work can be basically inferior or impure, for the worth of work whether small or big, depends on the attitude of the performer. It is precisely this point that is emphasized through these tales, and anecdotes. This makes amply clear the liberal outlook of the Maharashtrian saints. When there was a resurgence of religious enlightenment in Maharashtra in the nineteenth century, it is not small wonder that Dadoba Pandurang, Dr Bhandarkar, Justice Ranade, and other intellectual elite naturally thought of the Bhagawat Dharma of Dynaneshwar, and Tukaram, and tried to liken it with the Protestant sect. This clearly is a very important contribution of the movement in the cultural tradition of Maharashtra.

Conclusion

Certain propositions were made of a theoretical nature in the introductory remarks. It is time to gather the threads together, in the light of the substantive material presented. What happens when a society is highly stratified, static, and stagnant? If religion is all pervasive, then attempts may be suggested for reforms in the field of religion with special emphasis on spiritual life; hoping thereby that the availability of avenues for spiritual improvement would also favourably affect social, and material life. The Maharashtrian saints made a deliberate use of religion hoping that people would be able to overcome many of their difficulties, and at last promote spiritual progress. In fact, they had divided life into the mundane, and the spiritual, and they wanted to tackle the latter aspect of life by invoking the use of religion, and emphasizing the path of devotion, which was to be accessible to all, and sundry. Religion until then, in so far as it was a monopoly of the higher caste, and male sex, was restricted in its scope. It became one more dimension of the already rigidly stratified society. That is why these saints hit upon

religion as an important avenue for recording dissent, and for initiating protest, and reform. Through the appropriate use of religion, various results could be attained such as social criticism, education of the masses, inculcation of self-respect amongst the downtrodden, social mixing, by passing of stratification, and hierarchy at least in the field of religion, asserting equality in the spiritual field, etc.

The path of devotion, as propagated, and made available to all, at least succeeded in creating a ferment in the minds of the common people. It enabled them to at least enjoy a degree of self-respect, which was otherwise denied to them. Of course, these saints did not address themselves to challenge the basic politico-economic power structure. On the other hand, they taught people to disregard the notions of high, and low, operating in the mundane sphere, and exhorted them to pursue their traditional tasks in a conscientious manner, with dignity. It has been mentioned time and again in the text that these saints followed a policy of accommodation of the Vedic tradition, Bhagawat Dharma as well as the path of devotion. Indian society, and particularly Hindu, have a penchant for accretion rather than substitution. The path of devotion, as propagated and made available by the Maharashtrian saints, meant that the availability of one more model to the common people. This by itself was a matter of great relief, and signified the opening up of a social structure by reducing the erstwhile monopoly of the higher caste, and strata even in respect of spiritual life. This is very well borne out by the insistence on the use of Marathi language as a vehicle for effective communication with the masses, and also in terms of throwing open the path of salvation to everyone. It also meant the inculcation of self-respect, and a new sense of pride in terms of opportunities for attainment in the spiritual field. Consequently, the rigid system of stratification at least became palatable, so that people could afford to disregard it at least in certain spheres. Of course, there is no denying the fact that the system of stratification in the mundane sphere remained almost unaffected. But the dissent, and protest voiced by the Maharashtrian saints against permanent condemnation of the lower strata of society paved the way for reform, though of a limited nature. Thus protest, dissent,

and reform have to be analysed in a given structural context, instead of analysing them without consideration of the time, period and the character of social structure.

NOTES

1. *Tantravartik* 1-3-4; *Manusmriti Bhashya*, 2-6.
2. *Kesari*, 25-9-1900.
3. *Mahikawati's Bhakar*—Introduction, p. 43.
4. *Lilacharitra*, Vol. 2 p. 46.
5. *Dynaneshwari*, 13, 10-21.
6. *Namdeogatha*, 530.
7. *Sutrapath*, A.M. 76.
8. *Lilacharitra*, Ch. 1-4, 20, conclusion, 410.
9. *Vithal Sampraday*, p. 15.
10. *Shri Vithal and Pandharpur*, p. 2.
11. *Namdeogath* 431.
12. *Dynaneshwar's Prabhaval*, p. 320.
13. *Namdeogatha*, 1726.
14. *Ibid.* 2377.
15. *New Testament, St. Matthew*, 10-8.
16. *Eknathgatha*, 3892-36, *Dasbodh* 14-7-32.
17. *Geetabhashya*, p. 5.
18. *Bhavartha Ramayan, Balkand* 12-183.
19. *Tukaramgatha (supplement)*, 9.
20. *Ibid.* 4091.
21. *Ibid.* 2136.
22. *Ibid.* 90, 93.
23. *Ibid.* 519.
24. *Dynaneshwari*, 3-170
25. *New Testament, St. Matthew*, 11-30.
26. *Dynaneshwari*, 3-169.
27. *Ibid.* 13-1151, 10-42.
28. *Eknathi, Bhagawat* 1-129, 123.
29. *Manusmriti*, 2-12.
30. *Dynaneshwari*, 16-456-59, 463.
31. *Tukaramgatha*, 2186.
32. *Eknathi Bhagawat*, 12-220

33. *Dynaneshwari*, 2-260-63.
34. *Ibid.* 9-56.
35. *Eknathi Bhagawat*, 3-298; 21-142.
36. *Tukaramgatha*, 260.
37. *Ibid.* 1333.
38. *Ibid.* 295, 2266.
39. *Anubhavamrit*, 10-18
40. *Dynaneshwari*, 18-1446-49.
41. *Namdeogatha*, 1778.
42. *Dynaneshwari*, 9-448, 452.
43. *Tukaramgatha*, 2391.
44. *Namdeogatha*, 2365.
45. *Hindi Padyavali*, 184.
46. *Dynaneshwar's Prabhaval*, p. 386.
47. *Eknathi Bhagawat*, 5-60.
48. *Tukaramgatha*, 337.
49. *Ibid.* 1472.
50. *Dynaneshwari*, 18-881-83.
51. *Ibid.* 11-907.
52. *Sakal Sent Gatha, Chokha Mela*, 148.
53. *Ibid.* 89.
54. *Tukaramgatha* 2972.
55. *Dynaneshwari*, 17-106.
56. *Ibid.* 9-416.
57. *Ibid.* 730.
58. *Namdeogatha*, 1152.
59. *Ibid.* 378.
60. *Tukaramgatha*, 3147.
61. *Namdeogatha*, 519.
62. *Tukaramgatha*, 1038.
63. *Dynaneshwari*, 13-462.
64. *Sheikh Mahamad*, collection of poems, 177.
65. *Dynaneshwari* 12-211.
66. *Tukaramgatha*, 2732.
67. *Eknathgatha*, p.840-44.
68. *Sheikh Mahamad*, *op.cit.* p. 20.
69. *Yogasangram*, 16-66,67; 17-23; 11-94.
70. *Dynaneshwari*, 9-310.
71. *Tukaramgatha*, 630.

72. *Dynaneshwari*, 9-202.
73. *Tukaramgatha*, 3084, 1307.
74. *Namdeogatha*, 427.
75. *Vithal and Pandharpur*, p. 32.
76. *Vithal Sect*, p. 16.
77. *Vithal and Pandharpur*, p.27.

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DISSENT AND PROTEST IN HINDI BHAKTI POETRY

SAVITRI CHANDRA

THE tradition of dissent and protest by various sections has been a long one in India, especially among those with 'a low status'¹ but also on occasions among other sections including those who enjoyed 'high status'. The early Jain and Buddhist protests against a rigid religious 'great tradition' ideology and the caste system were continued in later times. In north India Mahayana Buddhism was followed by Tantrism and much later by the Nath Panthi movement. All these movements were generally opposed to the caste system and many of their leaders belonged to the lower classes. In south India, the popular bhakti movement led by the Alvars and Adyars and also the Lingayat movement, continued the tradition of protest against religious rigidity and caste inequality.²

Scholars have paid little attention so far to the social content of the bhakti movement which developed in north India from the fifteenth century. If some critics regard the movement as a reaction to Muslim oppression, others see it as a Hindu reform movement that arose in order to counter the challenge of Islam. Yet others see the radical wing of the bhakti movement as representing the protest of the influential growing number of artisan groups which came into existence as a consequence of city life developing under the Turks. Leaving these controversies aside, this paper analyzes the elements of dissent and protest in the writings of the Hindi bhakti poets under three broad heads, i.e., dissent and protest against, (a) social forms and institutions, (b) economic and political institutions, and (c) ideological and cultural ideas.

Dissent and Protest against Social Forms and Institutions

Social thinking, and values in early medieval India were dominated by the caste system, which not only justified and sanctified the division of society between the rich, and the poor—the privileged, and the unprivileged—it also gave the rulers protection in the name of righteousness (*dharma*), kingly duty (*niiti*), and social stability (*santulan*). But a new situation arose with the advent of Turkish rule, for with it the help of the Muslim king could not be invoked in support of the fourfold division of society, and its chief upholders, the brahmins. At a lower level, however, the case was different because the local *rajas*, and *zamindars* being Hindu could be depended upon for support, while they and their help were vital to the political stability of the Turkish rulers. Even so, the state could no longer be regarded as a means of upholding the *varnashrama dharmia*, or even for that matter, for putting down dissenting movements. However, caste remained the basis of Hindu society, and for political reasons the Turkish rulers took no active steps against it. In fact, Abul Fazl tacitly accepted the fourfold division of society, albeit assigning scholars, and religious groups the third place, instead of the first, as was given by Hindu social philosophers.³

The tradition of opposing, and criticizing the caste system which is reflected in the writings of the Siddhas and the Nath Panthis,⁴ was continued by Kabir who lived mainly in the fifteenth century. Kabir firmly believed in the fundamental equality of man, and said :

हम ती एक एक करि जाना

दोह कहैं तिनहीं को योगज, जिन नाहि न पहिचाना⁵

Again, he remarks sarcastically, "If you are a brahman, being born of a brahmani, why have you not been born in a different way?"⁶

Elsewhere he says, "Do you have milk in your veins while we have blood (If not,) how are you a brahman and we sudras" ? The same strain is echoed by Guru Nanak who says, "every one obeys His orders and He is the originator of all. The form, content, and colour of every one, and everything has been determined by Him".

एकै हुकुम बरतै सब लोई रंग परंग
उपारजना बहु-बहु विधि भाती ।⁸

Since the *Granth Sahib* was given its final shape towards the end of the sixteenth century, this expression of equality must be considered a continuing sentiment. Dadu Dayal (d. 1603) asserts that all human beings have the same essence or spirit derived from Brahma; differences based on colour, caste or name are meaningless. Comparing Brahma to a flowing river he says, the water of the river contained in different pots is the same.⁹

दादू पानी के बहु नाम घर, नाना विधि की जात

Writing towards the end of the seventeenth century, Dharmadas, Yari Sahib, and Darya Sahib, of Bihar echoed once again their belief in the fundamental equality of man, and the illogicality of the caste system based on differences of birth. Yari Sahib Says, "Gold is the same, every where whether it is in a melted form or as an ornament. Who can say which is higher or which is lower?"¹⁰ Darya Sahib says, "All human beings suffer from hunger or thirst, and feel pain or pleasure in the same way." He goes on to conclude that the forms of ritual, or the idea of sin (committed in the previous birth) cannot make a difference to the status of human beings.¹¹

From their belief in the fundamental oneness of man or the human spirit followed not only the rejection of the caste system, but also inequalities based on the concept of the superiority of a particular race or religion. Asserting the fundamental unity of the Hindus and the Turks, Kabir (who indifferently used the word Turk for all Muslims as well as for the ruling elite of Muslims who had come from Turkistan, Iran, etc., and looked down upon the Indians) says, "the Hindus and the Turks are not two."

एक निरंजन बलहू मेरा, हिन्दू तुर्क दुहु नहीं मेरा

He considered it a fallacy (bharm) to regard the two as distinct entities, since all human beings are produced by a drop of semen and have the same skin and semen. They discharge their bodily functions in the same manner. All have been born from the same Supreme Being (Jyoti or Light). Hence how can one be called a brahman and another a sudra? Exhorting all to repeat the name of Rama he concluded, "there are no Hindus

or Turks." Making fun of claims of superiority, Kabir says, "In that case, why was not the Turk (Muslim) born circumcised?"¹³

In a society where the concepts of racial, and religious superiority were deeply entrenched, Kabir's enunciations of the essential unity and equality of man must have sounded revolutionary. To illustrate, there is the Muslim orthodox opinion as reflected in a letter addressed by Sheikh Abdus Quaddus Gangohi to Babur: "...they (the kafirs) should be subjected to all types of indignities, and humiliations.... They should have no parity with the Muslims in matters of dress... (and) should be allowed to consider themselves equal to the Muslims, so that the glory of Islam may reach its zenith".¹⁴ Later, in the seventeenth century, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi repeated the same ideas, urging Jahangir and his own followers neither to mix with the Hindus nor to have any public dealings with them.¹⁵ Such narrow ideas were equally prevalent among the brahmans, who were not prepared to drink water from a pot touched by a low caste Hindu, let alone by a Muslim. Ridiculing this notion, Kabir asked, "if the Brahman refuses to drink from one earthen pot because it is polluted, are not all earthen pots equally polluted because the earth contains dead bodies?" Similarly, all water is polluted because animals such as fish, tortoise, crocodiles live and die there. In the same manner he sarcastically condemns the brahman for drawing a line in his kitchen and for all the other taboos which he observes when eating food.¹⁶

Kabir was not engaging in a philosophical debate, but using that most potent weapon—ridicule—in order to undermine the prestige, and authority of the brahman in the eyes of the common man. Because the brahman behaves in an overbearing manner, projecting himself as a repository of ancient wisdom, Kabir shows him up as a pompous fool, an ignoramus lacking insight into reality.

पंडित बाद बदन्ते भूठ।¹⁷

The common man had no access to textual religious knowledge, especially the shudras who were forbidden even to hear, much less read the *Vedas* and other scriptures. Therefore, Kabir stated that the word of the *Vedas* and the other scriptures were

secondary to the direct experiences of an individual 'anubhavajnana.'¹⁸

While condemning caste system and other forms of discrimination, Kabir apparently accepts caste as a secular phenomenon. Thus, he names a large number of castes—many of them based on professions—such as washerman, barber, carpenter, potter, cobbler, oil man, kshatriya, vaishya, etc.,¹⁹ without questioning their duties, and privileges. Not only that, he accepts the meta-psycho-sis which provides a philosophical basis for caste. He goes on to say that he was a brahman in his previous life, but was born a weaver (julaha) on account of his sins during that life.²⁰

पूरब जन्म हम ब्राह्मन होते, बोले करम तप हीना

This shows the deep pervading influence of caste. Although by example if not by precept, Kabir upholds the right of the shudras to preach, and read the scriptures, yet he is curiously silent on the right of the untouchables to enter temples. Perhaps, this may be because he was opposed to idol worship.

Many of these ideas of Kabir's, voicing dissent against the existing institutions, and values are echoed by his successors. Raidas (born c. 1415) a cobbler by profession, does not explicitly denounce the caste system, but subscribes to the idea that differences of caste or status do not matter where saints, and their devotees are concerned. He says,

जिहि कुल साधु बैसनी होई

बरन अबरन रंक नहि ईश्वर, बिमल बासु जानिये जग सोई

वामन बैस सुद अरु ख्यत्री, डोम चांडाल मलेच्छकिन सोई।²¹

God does not reside only, "In families where there are Vaishnav sadhus. He resides everywhere and does not distinguish between high castes and outcaste, between the rich and poor. For Him brahman, vaishya, shudras, khatri, dom, chandal and mlechcha are the same".

Evidently large sections, including persons holding positions of power, and prestige, were prepared to show respect, and follow the teachings of the saints, irrespective of their caste background. It is said that even a Rajput queen accepted Raidas as her Guru.²² Commenting on his raised status with some wonder, Raidas says he was a chamar (untouchable) by

caste, and tanned the skin of dead animals near Banaras, yet how brahmans, and chiefs (pardhans) saluted him.²³

To some extent, both Sur, and Tulsi echo Kabir on the superior status of a devotee. Sur believed that even an untouchable had a higher status than others if he was a devotee of Gopal. Sur and Tulsi, although they represent a more conservative trend, affirm not only equality among devotees, irrespective of caste, but that a devotee, even if he belongs to the lowest caste (chandal), is superior to the brahman who is not a devotee. Thus Sur says,

स्वपचहु खेचु होत पद सेवत, बिन गोपाल दिवज जन्म न भावे ।²⁴

And Tulsi says,

तुलसी भगत स्वपच भली भजै रैन दिन राम ।²⁵

The idea that there should be no caste distinction among the devotees was widely accepted. Tulsi says that, as he is a devotee of Rama he has no caste, nor is he bothered about anybody else's caste.²⁶

“मेरे जाति पाति न चहौ काहू कीजाति पाति” ।

A saint although a Rajput or a weaver by caste, can beg from any one, and can sleep anywhere, even in a mosque.²⁷

However, Sur and Tulsi also echo contemporary ideas on the privileged position of a brahman. Sur considers the killing of a brahman a major sin. In his opinion, a brahman even though guilty (of murder) should not be executed.²⁸ Tulsi is also a strong believer in the privileges of the brahmans, especially their privilege of reading the *Vedas* and instructing the other varnas about them. In a slight reference to some of the low-caste followers of Kabir (such as Dhanna, Saina, Raidas, etc.) and to contemporary reality Tulsi, while talking of the Kali age, laments that Surdas considers himself as learned as the brahmans, enter into disputations with them, and also adopt an overbearing attitude and participate in ‘jap’, ‘tap’, ‘vrat’, and sit on high seats, and discourse on the scriptures.²⁹

Thus, the Hindi poets of the time put forward two distinct, and somewhat contradictory ideas : (1) there can be no caste distinctions among the saints and the devotees, i.e. the bhaktas who are intrinsically superior to the others irrespective of their caste status, and that they (the devotees) attain salva-

tion by virtue of their constant repetition of the 'name', and (2) that caste distinctions could not be abolished from secular society, and hence many of the privileges of the brahmins such as their exclusive right to read, and preach the *Vedas* had to be maintained. In fact, Tulsi goes so far as to say that it was preferable to worship a brahman though lacking in qualities, to a shudra endowed with qualities, and knowledge.

पूजिस बिप्र सील गुनहीना, सूद्र नागुन गन ज्ञान प्रवीना ।³⁰

Simultaneously, Tulsi condemns those brahmins of the Kali era who had forsaken the study of the *Vedas*, and given up their true calling (dharma) because they were absorbed in worldly pleasures.

सोचिअ बिप्र जो वेद बिहीना ।

तजि निजु घरम, विषय तप लीना ॥³¹

Apparently, there were varying views on the privileges of the brahmins. But these privileges were not acceptable, especially to the more radical section of the saints, and poets. Even Tulsi could not defend the *varnashram* system as it existed, despite, upholding the traditional duties of different varnas. He, therefore, tried to relate the varnas in terms of intrinsic qualities rather than to birth.³²

The attempt of the orthodox elements in Hindu society to deny the non-brahmins, especially the shudras, the right to preach or to impart instructions to others was not accepted either before the time of Tulsi, or afterwards. To illustrate, apart from the low-caste disciples of Ramanand in the sixteenth century, Singaji (born in Madhya Pradesh) who was a cowherd by caste, during the seventeenth century, Vakhana (d. 1643, Rajasthan) was a 'mirasi', Bulla Sahib (d. 1709) was a 'kumi', while Darya of Marwar (d. 1758) who was a Muslim was 'dhunia' (cottoncarders), and Panodas (d. 1773) was a mason by profession. It is therefore clear that a saint of repute, irrespective of the fact whether he is a brahman or not, was respected by people of all castes. Paltudas who is placed in the second half of the eighteenth century, says that though he was low caste, people of all the four *varnas*—including Rajas and amirs—bowed before him, made offerings, washed his feet and drank that water as 'charnamrit'.

हाथ जोरि आगे मिलै, लैले भेट अमीर।
 लै लै भेट अमीर, नाम का तेज बिराजा ॥
 सब कोउ, रगै नाक, जाइकै परजा राजा ।³³

Dissent and Protest in Economic and Political Life

Logically, the belief in fundamental equality undercuts privileges based on family, status, and wealth. However, the attitude of the medieval Hindi saints is somewhat ambivalent on this point. Kabir is critical of those who pride themselves on their wealth, family status *kul* or power. He says the man who prides himself on the high status of his family, and remains immersed in worldly affairs will be brought on par with the common man when taken to the burning 'ghat'.³⁴ The word *kul* used here by Kabir and by the other bhakti saints implied a family which is financially sound and a status which depends upon social prestige, political office, and the like. In a caste-dominated society, social prestige implied high caste, and the prestige of birth-status, i.e. a good position enjoyed by a family for more than one generation. The association of the family with land is implicit rather than explicit. In other words, a man belonging to an *ucha kul* (or a family enjoying high status) may be associated with the privileged minority of land-holders and royal officials (*samant*, *amirs*), i.e., people who enjoyed wealth, power, and prestige in an essentially feudal society. This is underlined in the section where Kabir warns those people at whose doors music (*naubat*) is played ten times during the day, at whose gates proud elephants stand, and before whom drums and instruments are played when they move about out that all their pride is futile in the face of death.³⁵ He goes on to say that it is profitless to be proud of lofty houses, or of high breed horse with a *chatra* (an umbrella) over one's head.³⁶ For one who wears clothes unsullied with dust (i.e., expensive clothes) and chews pan, and betelnuts, (i.e., indulges himself in choice food), but does not recite the name of Hari will go straight to hell.³⁷ This is strikingly similar to the Biblical adage—it is difficult for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. Kabir ridicules the man who is puffed up with self-importance

for acquiring a little wealth, warning him that pride of wealth and authority (swamitva) will not lead to any success in worldly affairs. He criticizes the swami of the Kali age who haunts the doors of royalty like a hungry cow in a green field.

राज दुबारां यों फिरें जूँ हरिसई गाय ।³⁸

He also criticizes the money lender who keeps a careful record of his own account, but forgets the account which he has to render to God.³⁹ The word 'swami' used by Kabir is applicable as much to a saint as to a person of wealth and power.

In a striking simile, Kabir says that a man of high status will destroy himself if in his arrogance he does not perceive what desirable qualities are. Thus, an entire group (family or *vansh*) of bamboos is destroyed (by fire) while the humble sandal-tree because of its qualities is saved.⁴⁰ Hence, Kabir advises the rich man to collect only as much 'wealth' as would serve him in the next world, i.e. to earn a good name for no one can take his wealth along with him.⁴¹

In short, if Kabir criticizes the people of high status and asks them to avoid pride, arrogance, and avarice by following the precepts of the saints, to avoid attachment, and continuously repeat the name of God in order to be redeemed, this condemnation of the privileged sections does not imply for him any change in the social order, nor does he call for such a change. In fact, he nowhere explicitly postulates a society based on equality, and brotherhood of man.⁴² The saints therefore were not social revolutionaries, or even consistent social reformers. However, their writings do, to some extent, reflect the sentiments of the common people towards the privileged groups, and individuals.

On the other hand, for these poets, poverty is neither to be lauded nor condemned. A poor man is superior to a rich man because basically the poor man has humility, while the rich man is arrogant, and his heart is deeply attached to worldly pleasures.

दीन गरीबी दीन कौं, बूंदुर को अभिमान

दूंदुर दिस बिष तू मेरी, दीन गरीबी राम⁴³

However, if it was futile for a sadhu to gather riches, it was equally futile trying to pray on an empty stomach.

भूखे भगत न कीजै, अपनी माला लीजै⁴⁴ ।

Kabir's ideal is that one should have enough to feed his family and a little more so that a hungry sadhu is not turned away from the door.⁴⁵ Perhaps, Kabir was expressing the attitude of the artisan—the man who lived with the sweat of his brow, but never had enough to save. For Kabir begging was like death, and even a sadhu should not beg from door to door.

कबीर सतगुरु ना मिल्या, रही अधूरी सीप

स्वांग जती का पहिर करि, घरि घरि मांगे मीष⁴⁶

Kabir advocates self-labour (*purushartha*). The world is full of poor, ignorant people and full of sorrow. "But", says Kabir, "poverty could be made bearable by self-labour and by chanting the name of 'Hari'".⁴⁷

For most medieval poets, the man who exploited the poor, including the small traders, was the bohra, the wholesale trader-cum-money lender. The petty trader is warned that if he borrowed money on interest from the bohra he would not be able to pay him off for generations to come.⁴⁸ The prejudice against the bania is also voiced repeatedly.⁴⁹ In Tulsi, poverty is not an important virtue but a source of sorrow and at evil to be shunned as far as possible. It is only the saint who is praised for his lack of attachment to worldly goods, compassion, charity, and kindness towards the poor, the helpless, and the virtuous including the brahmans.

Since peasants comprised a majority of the population, the poets naturally refer in their similes to their hard life, to the harshness of the officials, the patwari, the muqaddam, the village zamindar (*thakur*), the royal diwan, etc. Thus, Kabir refers to peasants fleeing their village because the *thakur* measured the fields with old ropes and the *Kayasth* (*patwari*) showed a balance against them. When they objected the *mahto* (*muqaddam*) as well as the diwan not only resented but had them bound up and beaten. Kabir says, in another context, that a poor man had no access to the king for putting forth his complaints.⁵⁰

Similarly, Surdas condemns individually, and collectively those officials with whom the peasant had to deal with directly or indirectly. E.g. he says, "the *patwari* is arrogant, and produces a false *bahi* (account book) which shows a balance against the peasant,⁵¹ the *amin* or land assessor is dishonest,

the mustaufi or accountant is high-handed, the kotwal is deceitful, and given the opportunity plunders everything,⁵² and even the wazir is sinful. All of them conspire against the peasants, and send the ahadi (Messenger) who is like an agent of the Death God, to collect the arrears from them. If this is not done, a military contingent is despatched which surrounds the village and arrests the peasants along with their families.⁵³

The above is a graphic description of the doings of some of the Mughal officials. Perhaps owing to the knowledge of the revenue system, Surdas mentions in detail how the various account books—the *awaraja*, the *minzalik*, the *syaha*, the *mujmil*, etc.—are manipulated to show a balance in favour of the state. Surdas does not spare the thakur who plunders the peasant like the others and imprisons even the respectable men in the village the *mahtos*.⁵⁴

According to Tulsi, repeated famines are a feature of the Kali age, and in *Kavitawali* he boldly narrates the sufferings of the peasants and artisans who having lost land are forced to flee to nearby towns. Perhaps, this resulted in their lands being taken over by the agents of the raja who is denounced as 'bhumi chor'. The well-known result is that the artisans (*kasbi*) in the cities, and the peasants in the villages are forced to sell even their children during famine.⁵⁵ Business people (*bania*) also suffer, and since famines are sometimes accompanied by diseases, Tulsi gives a vivid account of the havoc caused by the epidemic and famine in kashi. The city was turned into a graveyard, all the citizens were depressed, and owing to disease and death the roles of different castes had been upset.⁵⁶ "Thus", he says, "the brahmans become beggars, cowards, and a prey to avarice, greed, sensuality, and anger. Crime was rampant, way-farers were plundered, and some others had accumulated riches by crimes of all kinds, including the killing of the brahmans. No one made any effort to improve these conditions, and various officials including kotwals and judges, ceased to function."⁵⁷

In normal times the people were also harrassed by tax-collectors who, according to Tulsi, were like human devils.⁵⁸

कर मिस मानव देव

Viewing all these problems, the poets developed certain concepts about the state and rulership. For Kabir, the ruler

was so remote from the people that he was almost inaccessible. He does not refer generally to the state or to the ruler, except to say that saints should not seek their favour.⁶⁰ This was because the ruler was associated with the rich who, according to Kabir, were evil in comparison to the poor. For Tulsi, on the other hand, the vast majority of the people were evil in nature.⁶⁰ Hence the need for social and political controls—which implied the need of a ruler. Tulsi, therefore, carefully discusses the qualities required of a good ruler. According to him a good ruler is one who bases himself on *niti* or kingly duty, i.e. he upholds the four-fold division of society, protects the privileges of the brahman, and also sees to the needs of the people by means of justice and not through plunder or oppressive collection of taxes.⁶¹ Tulsi concedes that just a ruler has to be careful so that his trusted officials do not become arrogant and corrupt, thus echoing Surdas's distrust and disparagement of the officials of his time,

प्रभु तेँ गन दुखद लाखें प्रजहि सभारे राउ ।

कर तेँ होत कृपान को कठिन धीर धन घाउ ॥⁶²

Tulsi realized that it was improbable for a just ruler to appear particularly in the Kali age. Hence, he postulates an idyllic society or utopia where a just ruler such as Rama would be the ruler, upholding a modified version of the *varnashrama dharma* based on intrinsic qualities rather than on birth.⁶³ The very postulation of a utopia is obviously a form of dissent, and protest against the existing social reality.

Dissent and protest against religious practices and beliefs

Kabir was very critical of the externalia rituals and practices of the two faiths; Hinduism, and Islam. Pilgrimages including haj, ritual bathing, image worship, formal prayers and fasting (namaz, roza, counting the rosary etc.), applying sandalwood paste or ashes, wearing the sacred thread, circumcision, etc. were meaningless to him. Not only were these practices irrational, they also obscured the reality that God is one. These superficialities were for Kabir the cause of Hindu-Muslim conflict, especially because these ideas were propagated and upheld by

the religious leaders of the two communities—the brahmins, pandits, mullahs, sheikhs, qazis, etc., and he says,

इनके बाती मुला पीर पैगंबर, रोजा पछिम निवाजा ।
इनके पूरख दिसा देव दिल पूजा, म्यारीस गंग दिबजा
कुरक मसीत देहुरे हिंदू बहूडा राम दुलदाई
जहां मसीति देहुरा नाहीं, वहां काकी ठकुराई
हिंदू कुरक दोउ रह लूटी, फूटी सरु किन राई
अरख उरख बसहूं दिस जितवित, पुरि रह्या रामराई ॥⁶⁴

He concludes by saying that those whose hearts are black cannot reach upto God. He sought true Islam i.e. surrender, but found nothing except arrogance,

पुर की घरम बहुत हम लोजा, बहु बजागर करै ए जेवा⁶⁵

Kabir is also critical of the Nath Panthi saints, Buddhist, and Jain monks, and the worshippers of shakti, mainly because he was opposed to the idea of renunciation. He makes fun of the sanyasis who pluck their hair, shave their heads and retire to the forest; the worshippers of shakti for immoral behaviour, and the Jains who profess non-violence yet commit violence in otherways,

पारी पूजा बैसि करि, भयै मांस मद दोइ
पद्मीसी सू संसया, तिल तिल मुलकी हाणि
पंडित भए सराबगी, पाणी पीवै छाणि ॥

He also criticizes meat-eating, and cow slaughter.⁶⁶

It is clear that for Kabir and the other bhakti saints, true devotion did not mean renunciation of the world. It meant repeating the name of God and seeking Him within oneself while carrying on with the daily chores. Thus, their mysticism was fundamentally humanistic and individualistic, and one that rejected institutionalized or organized religion and its accompaniments. In short, in a highly authoritarian society which was ruled by precept and tradition, the affirmation of the belief that the individual apprehension of God was the basis of the true religion, integrally amounted to dissent and opposition to the prevailing social, economic, political, and intellectual systems.

Kabir did not reject the *Vedas* and the *Quran*. But he did assign them a secondary position compared to the direct knowledge or *anubhava jnana*. Almost all the saints clearly

realized that true religious feelings depended on the direct realization of God within each person than on a set of meaningless traditional forms and ritual, which were in fact being used by vested religious leaders of the two communities to keep their hold on the people through social and religious discriminations. Hence, these saints did all they could do denounce, oppose and ridicule these so-called self-motivated religious leaders of the two communities.

However, there is a considerable difference in the attitude of the saints towards knowledge based on scriptures, and on the role of priests and the clergy. Tulsidas does not consider the *Vedas* as contradicting the path of true devotion (*bhakti*), or as standing in the path of communal harmony. Surdas, too, does not reject the scriptures, but his love transcends all. Brijbhumi, the land of Krishna's alliance with the gopis, is an idyllic land where love encompasses the limitations of caste and social propriety,

प्रथम ज्ञान, विज्ञान क द्वितीय मत, तृतीय भक्ति कौ भाव

सूरदास सोई समपरि करि, व्यष्टि दृष्टि मत लाव ।⁶⁷

In an effort to broaden his appeal and establish harmony among all the sections of people, Dadu Dayal goes the farthest. He says that he wanted to be considered neither a Hindu nor a Muslim; he is not concerned with either of the scriptures—the *Vedas* or the *Quran*, and is willing to identify himself with any of the established schools of thought. He says,

दादू न हम हिन्दू होंहिगे, ना हम मुसलमान

षट् दर्शन में हम नहीं, हम रातै रहमान ।⁶⁸

Therefore in a bold bid to rise above the disputations of various religious sects, Dadu Dayal puts forward the concept of Nipakh.⁶⁹

दादू हिन्दू तुरक न होइवा, साहिब सेती काम ।

भट् दर्शन के संग न जाइवा, निपख कहवा राम ।।

That is, Nipakh implied rising above the narrow limitations of sectarian beliefs.⁷⁰

Dadu was conscious of the tension between different sections of the Hindus, and the Muslims. In fact, he compares them to two maddened elephants fighting each other.⁷¹ But for this, he blames the religious leaders of the two main faiths who

were pursuing him like two black faced dogs of the Kali age. The path chosen by Dadu was a different one, and according to him, hardly anyone could rise above sectarian narrowness,

पला पलीं संसार सब, निरपल बिरला होइ
सोई निरपल होइगा, जाके नाम निरंजन होइ।⁷²

Dadu sadly confesses that ever since he adopted the path of Nipakh' everyone had become hostile.⁷³ Thus Dadu underlines one of the dilemmas of the dissenter; since religion was strongly entrenched and the leaders of the two paths, the brahmins and the mullahs, wielded considerable influence, it was often used to incite sentiments against the other community. The attempt of some of the saints to advocate personal devotion and to rise above narrow sectarianism led them into a position where they began to disregard the scriptures and this, in turn, enabled the orthodox elements to turn mass sentiment against them.

To conclude therefore, we can say there were two main strands in the movement of dissent and protest as reflected in the writings of the Hindi poets and saints during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. One strand represented by Kabir, Raidas, Nanak, Dadu Dayal, etc., considered the scriptures to be secondary, if not irrelevant to personal knowledge *annubhava jnana*. By implication they discountenanced the role of the priestly class, namely, the brahmins and the mullahs in the attainment of true knowledge, and the realization of the desired objective—salvation, nearness to God, etc. A second strand represented by Vallabhacharya, Tulsidas, and the Vaishnava saints emphasized personal devotion, but they did not consider the scriptures to be irrelevant or standing in the path of true devotion. They prescribed a meticulous code of conduct, and personal service (*seva*) to the deity in order to bring out the essence of devotion.

Both the above strands continued to be reflected in the writings of the bhakti poets during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, such as Dharam Das, Paltudas, Mulk Das, Rajjab, and Shri Prannath, etc. It is difficult for us to decide in our present stage of knowledge the extent of influence wielded by the two strands mentioned above over the broad masses. However, what is important to note is, the bhakti

poets as a whole tried to identify themselves with the sufferings of the common man. Further, their dissent and protest was not confined to the religious sphere, but extended to the existing social, economic, political spheres, and cultural ideas, and institutions as well. In this they continued, and even broadened the traditions of dissent and protest against prevailing ideas and institutions which had been a feature of Indian thought and culture and which had manifested itself time and again.

NOTES

1. For a fuller discussion of this concept, see *Rural Protest : Peasant Movements and Social Change*—ed. Henry A Landsberger, London, 1974, Macmillans.

2. See Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Allahabad, 1946, The Indian Press, pp. 2, 84-129; *The Age of Imperial Unity*—ed. RC Majumdar, Bombay, 2nd ed., 1964, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, pp. 257-356.

3. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, Delhi, 1965, H Blockmann, p. 4, reprint.

4. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, *Kabir* : Delhi, 2nd ed., 1973, p. 45, Rajkamal Prakashan.

5. *Kabir, Padavali, Pada 55.*

6. *Ibid. Pada 41.*

7. *Ibid. Pada 40, 55.*

8. *Nanak Vani*, 223, p. 19.

9. *Dadu*, 13/116, 29/21.

10. *Yori Bani*, p. 17.

11. *Dariya* (Trans) p. 94, 5, 2.

12. *Kabir, Pada 338; 31; Pada 57.*

एक बूंद एकै मल मूतर, एक चाम एक गूदा
एक जाति येँ सब उतपनाँ, कौन बंम्हन कौन सूदा ।

13. *Ibid. Pada 43.*

14. S A A Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalists*, Allahabad, 1965, Job Publishers; *Movements in Northern India in the 16th and 17th centuries*, Agra, 1965, Agra University, pp. 245, 227.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Kabir Bijak*, pp. 47, 179.

17. *Kabir, Pada 40.*

18. *Ibid, Rame* p. 182, *Pada 39.*

19. *Ibid. Pada 389.*

20. *Ibid. Pada 110, 250.*

21. *Raidas*, 37.

22. Tara Chand, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

23. *Raidas*, 60

मेरी जाति बिखिआत चमार कुटु बांडता डोर डबन्ता, नितहि बनारसी
आसपास ।

अब विप्र बरबरन तेहि करहि डण्डीति तेरे नाम स रबहि रविदास दासा ।

24. *Sur*, 233.

25. *Vairagya Sandipini*, 38, 41.

26. *Kavitavali*, 7/107.

27. *Kavita*, 7/106.

धूत काही, अबधूत कहीं, रजपूत काही, जोलाहा कही कौक
माणि कै खेबों मसीत में सोइबों, लेने को एकु न देने को दो ॥

28. *Sur*, 4401.

29. *Manasa*, 7/99/5.

सूद्र करहि जप तप ब्रत नाना, बैठि बरासन कहहि पुराना
सब नर कल्पित करहि अचारा, जाइ न करैनि अनीति अपार ॥

30. *Ibid.* 3/34/1.

31. *Ibid.* 2/172/2. See also Savitri Chandra, "Two aspects of Hindu social life and thought, as reflected in the works of Tulsidas", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, xix, pl. 1, 1976, pp. 48-60.

32. See Savitri Chandra, "Indian social concepts in the later half of the sixteenth century", *Diogenes*, No. 87, 1974, p. 24.

33. Viyogi Hari, *Sant Sudha Sar*—ed, 1969, *Paltu Sahib Kundallas* 5.

34. Kabir, *Sakhi Chintamani Ko Ang*, 10, 46.

35. *Ibid.* 2, 3, 1.

कबीर नौबति आपणी, दिन दस लेहु बजाइ ।

बपुर पट्टन ए गली, बहु रि न देखे आइ ॥

36. *Ibid.* 11.

37. *Ibid.* 5, 4.

38. *Ibid.* 6.

39. *Ibid.* 7, 8, 9.

40. Kabir, *Sak Nirguna Ko Ang*, 12.

ऊचा कल कै कारणे, बंस बंध्या अधिकार ।

चंदन बास मैदै नहीं, जाल्या सब परिवार ॥

41. Kabir, *Sak Mayo Ko Ang*, 13.

कबीर सौ घन सचिए, जो आगे झू होइ ।

42. Kabir, *Sak Chinta*, 52.

43. Kabir, *Sak Jivan Mritak Ko Ang*, 12.

44. Kabir, *Sak Vasas Ko Ang*, 10.

संत न बांधे गांठरी, पैट समाना लेइ ।

45. Kabir, *Sak Guru Dev Ko Ang*, 27.

साई इतना दीजिए, जामें कुटुंब समाय ।

मैं भी भुखा न रहूं, साधु न भुखा जाय ॥

46. Kabir, *Sak Guru*, 27.

47. Kabir, *Sak Chinta*, 47, 52.

48. Kabir, *Pada*, 108.

कहा भयो ब्योपार तुम्हारे, कल तर बड़ै सवाया ।

बड़ै बौहरे सांठो दीन्हो, कल तर काड्यो खोटे ॥

49. *Mansa*, 1/213/2.

घनिक बनिक बर घनद समाना बैठे सकल वस्तुलै नाना

Mansa, 7/28.

Sur, 2143.

ऐसी कहा बनिक को अटकी ॥

Dadu, 13/154,

राम नाम की बणिजन बैठे, ताते मांभा हारी ।

Kabir, Sak, Samrathai Ko Ang.

साई मेरा बाणियाँ, सहजि करै ब्योपार ।

50. *Kabir, Pada*, 222.

51. *Sur*, 185.

अहंकार पटवारी कपटी, भूठी लिखल बही ।

लागै धरम, बतावै अधरम, बाकी सबै रही ॥

52. *Sur*, 64.

मैन अमीन अधमिनि कै बस जहूँ को वहाँ छयों ।

बाज कुतवाल काम रिपु, संरवस लूटि लयो ॥

Sur, 143.

चित्र गुप्त सु होत मुस्तौफी ...

... जिम्मे उनके मांगे मोते यह तो बड़ी अभीति ।

53. *Sur*, 64.

पाप उजीन कह्यो सोइ मान्यो धर्म सुधन लुटयो ।

घेरियो आई कुटुम्ब लसकर में, जम अहदी पठयो ॥

54. *Sur*, 143. For a detailed analysis and reference, see the present author's book *Samaj aur Sanskriti*, pp. 45-6.

55. *Kavitavali*, 7/197, 7/177, 7/96.

किसवी किसान कुल बनिक भिखारी भाट

चाकर चपल नट चौर चारे बैठकी

पेट को पड़त गुन गड़त चढत गिरि

अटल गहन बन अहन अलेटकी

ऊँचे नीचे करम धरम अधरम करि ।

पेट ही को पचत, बेचत बेटावेट वकी

For details, see *op.cit.*, *Samaj aur Sanskriti*, pp. 50-7,
56. *Kavitavali*, 7/96 ; 97.

57. *Kavita*, 7/85.
 58. *Dohavali*, 3, 4, 5.
 59. *Kabir. Sak. Chanak Ko Ang*, 6.
 60. *Doha*, 348.

उत्तम मध्यम अधम खल

दस गुण बड़त बिभाग ॥

61. Savitri Chandra "Tulsidas's concept of rulership", *Proceedings, Indian History Congress 1972*, pp. 325-35; *Samaj aur Sanskriti, op.cit.*, pp. 58-9.

62. *Dohavali*, 501; *Sur*, 40, 64.
 63. *Samaj aur Sanskriti, op.cit.*, pp. 9-13.
 64. *Kabir, Pada*, 59, 60, 61; *Sak Sanch Ko Ang* 11, 5, 6.
 65. *Kabir, Rame*, 27.
 66. *Kabir, Sak Sanch Ko Ang*, 13, 14.
Kabir, Sak. Chanak., 12; *Pada*, 386.
 67. *Sur*, 2/38, 1/87, 2/22.
 68. *Dadu*, 16/38, 37; 18/37.

दादू जिहि बेरयां चहु सब भया, सो कछु करो विचार
 काजी पंडित बावरे, या लिख बांधे मार।

16/27.

जहं वेद कुरान की गम नहीं, तहां किया परवेश।

69. *Dadu*, 16/37.
 70. *Dadu*, 16/41.

दादू करनी हिन्दू तुरक की, अपनी अपनी ठौर
 बुह बिच मारग साधु का, यह संतो की रह और।

16/44/43.

दादू हिन्दू लोग देहुरे मुसलमान मसीति

71. *Dadu*, 16/45,
 दोनों हाथे हूँ रहे मिल रस पिया न जाइ
 दादू आपा भेट कर दोनों रहै समाइ।

72. *Dadu*, 16/52.
 73. *Ibid*, 16/49.

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10. *Yari and Dariya Bani*, Prayag, Belvedere Press.

THE BHAGAT MOVEMENTS IN CHOTANAGPUR

SACHCHIDANANDA

THE easternmost extension of the Deccan plateau is the Chotanagpur upland that comprises the Chotanagpur division covering 38% of the entire area of Bihar. Unlike the plains of north and south Bihar, this undulating area is interspersed by plateaus, hills and valleys. The plateau averages an elevation of 2000 feet above msl, and in some areas it reaches a height of 4,500 feet above msl. It is marked by huge isolated round or conical boulders which rise suddenly from the surface and are visible from afar. Chotanagpur is characterised by its vast mineral wealth. It has the world's largest reserve of mica and is a large supplier of the country's iron ore, coal, copper, bauxite, limestone, etc. Recent explorations have resulted in the discovery of uranium as well. Despite the fact that the iron and steel industry was set up early in this century, it is only since Independence that the pace of industrialization has gone up. Because the region was once largely covered by forests, the area was appropriately named Jharkhand. Recently indiscriminate deforestation has reduced the covered area to only 32% of the region.

Chotanagpur is also known as the home of the tribals¹ of Bihar for as many as thirty Scheduled Tribes, each having a population of 100 and above, live here. A few decades ago the tribals had a majority but in the Census of 1971 their predominance is only in the district of Ranchi. Today, in the region as a whole their percentage is less than 31%, because a large number of Hindus and Muslims have settled in the area during successive periods of history. The interaction between tribals and non-tribals has a long history in this region, and may be seen both in the extent of acculturation and at the linguistic level. Independence, with the growing pace of industrialization, the increasing rate of immigration have also

been factors that led to this. For example, the ratio of tribal to general population in Ranchi district has fallen from 66% in 1961 to 58% in 1971.

Racially, the healthy tribals belong to the Proto-Austroloid stock, with average Indian height, and dark-brown skin colour. Many of these communities have their distinctive cultures and institutions, such as world-view, traditional orientation and commitment to the past and so on. They differ among themselves also at the level of socio-economic development. Today, the number of people living entirely by hunting and food-gathering is very small, because 95% of them are settled plough agriculturists and 67% of tribal households have a holding of less than five acres. Because of the undulating terrain no surplus production is possible. Some of the tribals are artisans, like communities of basket makers, cloth weavers, etc. Now, a few thousands are also engaged as industrial labourers. The percentage of tribals listed as agriculturists has gone down from 77.43 in 1961 to 60.59, while the percentage of agricultural labourers has gone up from 9.63 to 27.47 during the same period. Similarly, there has been a decline in the percentage of these persons engaged in mining, quarrying, animal husbandry, household industry and other sectors. At any rate, the level of socio-cultural integration differs within their groups. If it is low in some cases, it is vigorous and potent in others since cultural institutions range from simplicity to elaborate complexity. For example, if some have very simple religious beliefs and rituals, others have a plethora of gods and goddesses. Most of them subscribe to belief in witchcraft and sorcery, and severe penalty is prescribed in the tribal social code for persons found guilty of breaking these.

Although the level of urbanization in Chotanagpur is much higher than that of the State as a whole, yet the tribals are largely concentrated in rural areas and only 5.6% of them are urbanized. Similarly, the level of literacy in Chotanagpur is higher than that of the State as a whole. This high level of literacy is due largely to missionary effort as also due to the impact of industrialization and urbanization. Literacy among the tribals increased considerably from 1961 to 1971. But in higher education the tribals lag behind though today they are making strides particularly in technical diplomas. There are

of course differences within tribal groups, such as the highest effective literacy rate is among the Oraon (who also have the highest number of degree holders), closely followed by the Ho and the Munda.

II

It is worth giving a background picture of tribal society and polity in the region at the turn of the century, because the impact of most of the Bhagat movements in Chotanagpur was made early in the present century. Different tribes have settled in the area in separate waves at various times. To illustrate, the Munda drove the Asur away from the eastern part of Ranchi district into the hills of the Netarhat plateau. In turn, they were later themselves displaced from the western part of Ranchi district by the Oraon. Today, both the Mundas and the Oraons form the largest group in Ranchi district. They had developed an agrarian society along with an elaborate village organization that for a long time had satisfied all their needs. For example, each village was dominated by a clan whose members were the original settlers, and it is for them that most of the offices in the village organization, such as the *Munda*, *Mahto* and the *Pahan*, were reserved. These members were known as the *Khutkattidars*, who held the entire land of the village in joint ownership. The village officers were given some land in perpetuity for the services rendered to the village community. The *Khutkattidars* did not originally pay any tax to the state authority but were expected to provide *chanda* or give contribution to the ruler. The tribal ruler claimed only to be a leader of the people and was not master of the land. Later settlers in the village did not have the same status as the *Khutkattidars* and were known as the *Parja* (subjects of the village community), and these included not only members of that tribe belonging to other clans but also certain Hindu artisan castes such as *lohar*, *kumhar*, *pardhan*. etc.

It was only with the 16th century that this region came into contact with the newly established Mughal empire, whose generals overran the area and it was during the reign

of Jehangir that the tribal ruler was defeated. He was taken to Gwalior as a prisoner where he remained for many years. The pomp and splendour of royal Delhi dazzled this ruler so much that he tried to duplicate this on his return at his own headquarters. He brought along with him a number of Hindu priests and some retainers known for their martial skill. In due course businessmen and adventurers began to swarm the area. As the ruler was always short of funds, especially to keep the high standard of his court, some of these adventurers were granted lease of villages and there they began to pose as fief holders. By implication, therefore, the ruler came to claim mastery over the entire land in the countryside. This process was further strengthened with the British rule, whose officers came to regard the Maharaja of Chotanagpur as a big landholder, with smaller landholders drawing their authority and power from him. Heads of villages were now forced to pay annual revenue, which they collected from the *Khutkattidars* in equal proportion.

In course of time, the alien assignees of the *jagirs*, in return for the supply of services to the Raja, claimed and secured proprietary rights over village land. In this way many tribal peasant proprietors were reduced to the position of tenants. By the end of the 19th century, out of the 7052 square miles of Chotanagpur estate, only 96.94 square miles were in the possession of Bhuihars (original settlers), 724 square miles were in the *Khas* possession of the Maharaja, 1050 square miles given out by him or his predecessors as *Khorposh* (maintenance holding to the Raja's descendants and kinsmen), and 4480 square miles were in the possession of jagirdars. Thus, not only had the communal ownership of land been broken but the bulk of the tribals were deprived of their land, which is both a source of sustenance for the tribal as well as a spiritual bond between him and his ancestors who had cleared the forests for cultivation by dint of their labour.

The systematic dispossession of tribal land naturally led to periodic resistance which was sometimes violent, especially, because of the various acts of oppression and ejection by petty officials and middlemen who were largely outsiders (known as *Sad* or *Diku*). Moreover, tribals now had to pay a number of dues (*kumats*) and render services to the landlord

(*begari*), who was also entitled to free labour for 50 to 60 days a year from each tenant. A number of other irregular exactions included, *Dasain* (payment due to the landlord on the annual Dussehra festival), *Bhatta* (payment due when the landlord or his servant visited the village), *Nawakhain*, (a contribution of rice made at the winter harvest), and *Dak masara* (payment made by tenants to landlords to help pay government cess). Even for the writing of receipts, the upkeep of the police, for payment and collection of Mahua flower and fruit from the jungle, charges were due. Numerous authorities have reported the greed and rapacity of these underlings as also the oppressive treatment of proprietors and moneylenders. Numerous stories are told of the enormous profits made by the big farmers and of the exorbitant interest charged by the moneylenders on loans given to the tribals. It became impossible for the tribal to get out of their clutches, as the farmer had the support of the police and the courts.

Not surprisingly, therefore, in the 19th century the tribals rebelled time and again against landlords, middlemen, moneylenders and the administration as a whole. The Kol insurrections of 1821 and 1831 ended in large-scale plunder and slaughter. In a large number of villages these oppressors and exploiters were plundered and murdered and their houses burnt. These rebellions forced the government to come to closer grips with the local administration and in 1834 the South Frontier Agency was established. But in 1854 this agency was abolished and Chotanagpur was placed under a Commissioner. In 1869 the Chotanagpur Tenure Act was passed and for the first time an effort was made to survey and demarcate the *Bhuinhari* tenures and the landlord tenures. However, this failed to remove tribal grievances. It was at this time that the Sardari agitation began and the leaders of the movement sent mammoth petitions to the government, praying not only for the removal of agrarian grievances but that they should be allowed to form their own village communities under the government. This was followed by the revolt of Birsa Munda in 1895 and 1900, which had agrarian, socio-economic and political dimensions. This movement took a violent turn and troops had to be called out

to curb the activities of Birsa and his followers. Birsa was a symbol of tribal resistance against all injustices and inequities, so that the demand was for a new social order wherein the tribal would have an honourable place without suffering at the hands of alien oppressors. But with Birsa's arrest and death, endless repression was let loose in order to curb whatever resistance there was left among the people. While his followers were hunted out of the hills and forests, the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act was passed in 1908 to mollify the feelings of the tribals and to protect some of their land rights.

III

The Oraon have a distinctive religion, complete with their own pantheon, priesthood, festivals, elaborate rituals, and so on. At the head of the pantheon is the chief god *Dharmes* along with a number of village boundary and disease deities. They also worship in many places a deity resembling Mahadeo to whom periodic sacrifices are made. There are a number of other benevolent and malevolent deities which are worshipped by the Oraon. Ancestors are worshipped at home, while the *Sarna* is the place where communal worship is held. All worship, except the family worship at home, is conducted by the *Pahun*, or the village priest. In parts of Bihars the term 'Bhagat' is often employed for sorcerers and magicians. But among the Oraon the name is applied to those who subscribe to the cult of bhakti and observe certain rules of ceremonial purity.

The entire Bhagat movement may be conceived as an attempt to raise the status of its members in the eyes of Hindu neighbours by Sanskritization which also included the inculcation of Hindu beliefs and practices. Today, there are Bhagats of numerous descriptions. The *Bachhidan* Bhagats, largely confined to the well-to-do Oraon, comprise the more Hinduised section. They employ *Gosains* or low grade brahmans as their *guru* or preceptor. Sometimes the Vaishnava or Vairagi belonging to lower Hindu castes also serve as their priests. They are known as *Bachhidan* because they gift a calf to their *guru* for cleansing them of their sins and ceremonial

impurities. All Bhagats are required to maintain rules of ceremonial purity in food, drinks and other habits. They retain most of the social customs and observances of the tribe which do not go against their own ideas of ceremonial purity. Anyone who wants to join the *Bachhidan* sect has to undergo a year's probation before the *guru* can give him *Kanphuki* or initiation. During this period the disciple has to strictly observe the rules of ceremonial purity, etc. to prove his fitness to become a Bhagat.

Those of the *Bachhidan* Bhagats who take Vaishnava *Gosains* as their *guru* call themselves Vishnu Bhagats. They do not eat flesh, including fish and their motto is *kaya shakti dhela bhakti* and restricting the pleasures (animal food, drinks, singing and dancing) of the body, for the worship of the earth is symbolised by a lump of clay. This lump of clay anointed everyday with white clay and incense, is worshipped by the elders before and after taking meals, by sprinkling water on it, singing devotional songs and ringing bells. Apart from worshipping Vishnu, who is depicted as having four hands, their other deities are the manifestations of various natural powers. They worship Indra, rainbow, thunder, lightening, air, sun, moon, Mahadev, Parvati, Ganga, Jamuna, cow, oxen, plough, and some saints. In some shrines, alongside the picture of Vishnu, the ox and the plough are also found. Vishnu Bhagats observe Phagu or Holi, when they worship Bhagwan in their own house and sing *bhajans*.

Vishnu Bhagats have an organization of their own. At the head of the community is the *mantri* who does not enjoy any special privilege unlike the *pahan* or the *pujar* or traditional Oraon villages where service or land is attached to the post. However, his income is derived from donations he receives from his community during birth and marriage ceremonies. To compensate, the post carries great prestige. Besides the head *mantri*, each village has its own selected *mantri*, where a substantial number of members of this sect reside. Internal disputes, religious problems, and quarrels with neighbours are settled by the panchayat comprising five or six village elders without the use of force. In each village there is a community hall-cum-temple known as *mangalghar*, where meetings are held every eight to twelve days. If a problem is not settled at the

village level, *mantris* from other villages are invited to solve it.

Among the Nemba Bhagats, those who observe all the rules very strictly, there has been a fusion of tribal and Hindu ideas. But their methods of worship are somewhat different from that of the Hindu. Visions and communion with God are more characteristic of this cult. Roy believes that even before contact with the Hindus the Oraon were familiar with the concept of visions and tutelary gods.²

There are the Kabirpanthi Bhagats with a system of having spiritual preceptors who may or may not be Oraon. This sect, as is clear from the name, drew inspiration from Kabir the famous fifteenth century saint poet. They neither worship idols nor use any other visible symbol of divinity, do not take intoxicating drinks, sacrifice or eat fawns, pigs and oxen. They believe in a single god and oppose the worship of minor deities and spirits. Bhakti or devotion is the mode of worship. Their *gurus* are also their priests, and elaborate rules exist for religious services at birth, marriage and death. As among the other cults of this nature, tribal customs are not altogether given up. While strict endogamy is not observed, marriage within these boundaries is preferred. They lay emphasis on certain ethical principles, such as upright and just conduct, regard for truth, kindness to living beings and tolerance towards those who differ in status and belief. Members of this cult wear a rosary around their neck which their *guru* ties at the time of initiation. Kabirpanthi Bhagats believe in malignant spirits and try to expel them with prayers.

IV

The early twentieth century saw a period of great religious ferment in Chotanagpur because the Birsa movement had left a deep impression in many areas. Birsa was the Bhagwan of Chotanagpur and not only of the Mundas, and some records report his influence even upto Barwari and Chechri in Palamau. Birsa himself is said to have visited Lohardaga once. Some of the Tana Bhagats of Karra near Khunti who are Mundas were originally Birsais. They observe Thursday as

the day of rest—Birsa's birthday, do not take meat, wear the sacred thread and their monotonously sung prayers and modes of worship are similar to those followed by Birsaitis. They believe that Birsa revealed the Tana religion. The following prayer reveals the impact of Birsa on these Tana Bhagats³:

“O Birsa Bhagwan, you revealed Tana religion
O Father of Chotanagpur, you revealed the religion
Father, you founded the religion for life”.

The western part of Ranchi district saw a variant of the old Bhagat pattern when a new religious movement known as the Kurukh Dharma or the real or original of the Kurukh or Oraon came into being. Its leaders believed that the status of the entire tribe could be raised by the worship of only one God, *Dharmes*; that they need not become either Hindus or Christians. Assuring their followers that old gods and goddesses, spirits and ghosts were powerless against superior forces, they urged that they could even get rid of economic distress and agrarian troubles provided everyone subscribed to the new faith.

The beginning of the new movement strikingly resembled the Birsa movement, specially in its religious aspects. It was started in April 1914 by a young man of twenty five named Jatra Bhagat who hailed from the village of Chipri Nawatoli, Bishunpur Thana. (Another person named as Hanuman Oraon is also credited with having founded the movement. As his place of birth is the same village as that of Jatra Bhagat, both these persons may be the same.) From his childhood, being contemplative, he wanted to be an *Ojha* or *Mati*. Everyday in the morning he used to meditate after his bath facing the Sun. He was undergoing training to become a *Mati* (witch doctor), when he started the movement. Like Birsa, he also had the vision of a luminous figure from whom he had a revelation. This vision of *Dharmes*, the supreme god of the Oraon, occurred at night while he was returning home after his lessons, and it asked him to give up his training in ghost-finding and exorcism, to eschew his faith in such deities and spirits that called for animal sacrifices, and to give up flesh eating and

liquor. Since ploughing in the fields meant cruelty to cows and oxen, he was also asked to stop this. Jatra Oraon later proclaimed that he had been entrusted by *Dharmes* to teach *mantras* and other incantations to his fellowmen, that he was to lead his people in matters temporal and spiritual. Those who did not join him to attain the desired goal would be struck down. His attack on the belief in spirits, insistence on ceremonial purity in food and drink, the agrarian and anti-government stance reminds one of the Birsa movement. Perhaps, this characteristic may be attributed to the presence of the Sardars who include both the Munda and the Oraon because the influence of Birsa seems to be discounted by S C Roy. But a close look at the movement and its later character makes one fall in line with the views expressed by Kumar Suresh Singh who clearly sees the impress of the former movement on this one.

The message of Jatra Oraon began to spread far and wide and the first manifestation of the new spirit of defiance began when he forbade his followers to work as coolies for the construction of a school in village Dokotoli adjacent to his own village. This enraged the local police which sent him up for trial along with seven of his followers to the court of the sub-divisional magistrate of Gumla who ordered them to keep the peace. Jatra had to spend a year in prison and he was released on the condition that he would not preach the new doctrine in order to maintain peace. One does not hear much about Jatra Bhagat after this incident but the new faith spread like wild fire. Many leaders carried his message to different parts of Ranchi district. The entire atmosphere was so charged with spiritual ferment that any new doctrine appeared as a ray of hope to the mass of the people.

At about the same time when Jatra Bhagat was giving expression to the new faith Devamania, a simple Oraon woman of village Batkuri in the Ghaghra Block of Ranchi district showed signs of a new consciousness. She had gone to take her bath in a tank where she stayed for hours. When her anxious husband went to look for her at the tank he found her seated on the bank in the semi-conscious state of spiritual ecstasy. She was rapidly uttering 'Bom, Bom, Bom...', the common salutation of Mahadeva. She was said to have had a vision of the deity and on being taken home she began to preach the new faith of

bhakti that had been revealed to her by Mahadeva. The theme of her teaching was the same as that of Jatra Bhagat. In her own and in neighbouring villages this woman is known as a prophet of the Tana faith. In Ghaghra, Balram Bhagat of the village Belgara spread the message of the Tana sect, stressing the worship of the cow, thereby forbidding the use of cows or bullocks for the plough. His followers gave up cultivation and became cattle herders; such Bhagats are found in Ghaghra and Gumla Blocks and are known as *Gau Rakshini* Bhagats.

By 1915 this corpus of teaching came to be known as the Tana Bhagat movement that spread from south western Ranchi district to its western and central parts, to finally reach the northern areas of Bero, Kuru and Mandar. From Kuru the movement spread to the north and west and made an impact on a section of the Oraon of Palamau district, and in the Hazaribagh district, while the movement declined in the south west, and the extreme western parts of Ranchi district. It came to stay in Lohardaga, Sisai, Lapung, Bero, Kuru and Mandar and its followers are also found in Gumla, Palkot, Chainpur, Raidih, Ghaghra and Bishunpur. There are some Tana Bhagats among the Mundas in Karra and also among the Kharia, Asur, Kherwar, etc. Some non-tribal castes like the Rautia, Sahu, Kumhar and Dusadh also follow this faith.

Among the Tana Bhagats the belief in the coming of the Messiah had been quite strong. In 1916 it was rumoured that God himself or his agent as Birsa Munda or the German Kaiser would come and liberate the Oraon from the British yoke. In Palamau, some Tana Bhagats even removed some tiles from their roofs to facilitate the entry of such a Messiah and killed their dogs lest they disturb his advent. While some Tana Bhagats went to the Mahuadaur police station and demanded a copy of the deed issued by the Kaiser setting them (free and authorising them) to rule their land, others spread the rumour that Kaiser had already arrived in Chotanagpur with a cartload of gold for them. This movement spread as far as the Sarguja States in Madhya Pradesh where Tana Bhagats demanded from the local ruler the grant of self-government, the abolition of kingship and rent so that equality could be established especially, because land was treated as the gift of God. Since the ruler did

not take any heed, it led to a revolt which was suppressed by military force in 1918.

The Tana Bhagat movement may be said to have developed in two phases. The first phase was that of the eradication of existing beliefs and practices in ghosts and spirits, i.e., a programme of cleansing and purging. Evil spirits had to be expelled from the land, and old habits and usages which militated against the new faith had to be stopped. The second phase had a constructive programme, because it consisted of the promulgation, formulation and codification of its doctrines, beliefs and rules and regulations for the conduct of followers of the new religion.

The first phase of the movement was taken up entirely by a campaign of ghost hunting at night. Good powers were called upon to expel evil spirits from the land. During the first few nights young men assembled after evening meals at village boundaries from where *bhuts* had to be expelled. When all of them were gathered at the place, someone would start seeking out the spot. They began by singing their invocations in local Hindi as follows : "Chander Baba, Suraj Baba, Dharti Baba, Taregan Baba, Nachan ke jayega kaun hai". (O Lord, Moon, Sun, Earth, Stars, which is the place for dance ?) This theme would continue until one of them was possessed by spirits, and stopping at this place they would all dance in a circle leaving an opening at the north. While singing these invocations they kept time by clapping and by lifting each leg alternately but did not use any musical instruments. They sometimes walked around in a circle and at other times knelt down and shook their heads while chanting these invocations. This ritual of dance continued intermittently throughout the night. The following night these exorcists would advance their operations nearer to the house sites in the village. In their incantation there is a mention of the German Baba who was supposed to be a great power on account of the German victory during the First World War. There is also the mention of such powerful devices as the steam boat, the railway engine and the motor car. They had realised that all their old beliefs and practices had not been able to drive away evil spirits. Therefore, they sought help from alien powers and even from such devices with which they identified strength. On the night when they

reached the outskirts of the village a white goat was brought out and given some dust to lick. It was not to be sacrificed but was let loose in the name of *Dharmes* or Bhagwan. The headman would then pray for the forgiveness of the past sins of the villagers which they had accumulated on account of the ignorance of the true religion which had been revealed only lately.

The authorities, however, erroneously treated these nightly gatherings as seditious and promptly stopped them. Several batches of the followers of the new religion were sent up to the courts, on the likelihood of having committed a breach of peace. They were asked to furnish security for good behaviour and in its absence many of them were sent to prison. Even day time meetings were prohibited unless they were strictly orderly. One such meeting was allowed to be held at Sisai. The local subinspector of police was deputed to report on the meeting where twenty resolutions were passed with regard to social, moral and religious affairs. One of the resolutions was that the Tana Bhagats should not have any quarrel with or give offence to the non-tribals who were spreading false rumours about them. This showed that they had no intention of making trouble for the non-tribals, much less for the government. They were only keen to purge their villages of old ghosts and spirits by the recitation of powerful spells. Thus, they hoped to raise their status, in the esteem of non-tribals, by giving up such practices as the keeping and the eating of pigs and fawns, and the use of intoxicants. They believed that it was on account of these that they were looked down upon by the non-tribals.

However, the stern measures adopted by the government made a large number of followers abandon the new faith because memories of repression let loose after the Birsa movement were still fresh in their minds. A large number of them, therefore, reverted to the old faith and style of life. Governmental action, however, diverted the attention of the Tana Bhagats from extending the area of their influence to consolidating the tenets of their faith. They began to build up a body of norms to regulate their social, moral and religious beliefs, attitudes and orientations. From then on the Tana Bhagats came to be a small but closely knit stubborn and somewhat esoteric community, the members of which held tenaciously on to their beliefs.

The origin and history of the movement is put down in narrative form by one of the Tana Bhagats in rhythemical language somewhat in the manner of Christian gospel at the request of S C Roy. It is noted therein that the movement started from the west and spread to the north east. The Tana Bhagats sing beautiful prayers invoking Dharmes, Suraj, Chander, Sita, Taregan, Ganga, Lakshman, Bhagwan and Dharti Ayo. Sometimes popular Hindu deities like Indra, Ganesh, Jagannath, Shatrughan are also invoked. The frequent use of the word 'Tana', meaning to draw or to pull, in their prayers gave the new faith its name. Some of their prayers are given below as illustrations⁴ :—

Tana Baba tana Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Tana Baba tana Kona Kuchi Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Tana Baba tana Lukal Chhapa Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Tana Baba tana Garha dhipa Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tona
 Tana Baba tana posal Pasal Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Tana Baba tana Daini Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Chandra Baba Suraj Baba
 Dharti Baba Taregan Baba
 Namse arji mangte hai
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Dainike Nasan Thapal Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Bapake manal deoa Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Aja par aja manal deoa Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Murgi-khaia Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Kara-Khaia Bhutanike tana
 Tana Baba tana tan ton tana
 Bhera-Khaia Bhutanike tana

Adnu-Khaia Bhutanike tana
Tana Baba tana tan ton tana.

These incantations may be roughly translated as follows :

Pull, Father, pull, pull down the bhuts,
Pull, Father pull, pull the bhuts (hiding) in corners and
turnings.

Pull, Father, pull-pull-pull-pull,
Pull, Father, pull-pull the bhuts that live in hiding.
Pull, Father, pull-pull-pull-pull,
Pull, Father, pull, pull the bhuts of persons slain.
Pull, Father, pull-pull-pull-pull,
Pull, Father, pull, pull the bhuts (familiar spirits) of the
witches.

Pull, Father, pull-pull-pull-pull.
O Father Moon, O Father Sun.
O Father Earth, O Father Starry Host.
In the names of ye all, we pray,—
Pull, Father, pull-pull-pull-pull,
Pull the bhuts that are by witches egged on.
Pull Father, pull-pull-pull-pull,
Pull the bhuts to whome vows were by grandfathers and
great-great-fathers made.

Pull, Father, pull-pull-pull-pull,
Pull the bhuts that on fowls do feed (as sacrifices).
Pull, Father, pull-pull-pull-pull,
Pull, the bhuts that on buffaloes do feed (as sacrifices).
Pull, Father, pull-pull-pull-pull,
Pull the bhuts which on sheep to feed (as sacrifices).
Pull, Father, pull-pull-pull-pull,
Pull the bhuts which men (Human sacrifices) do eat.
Pull, Father, pull-pull-pull-pull.

Socio religious practices

Prayers are also addressed to Brabma and Mahadeva in much the same way as the neighbourhood Hindus. Among the Tana Bhagats, Sita is identified with Parvati who is described as the

wife of *Dharmes* or the Sun God, the Oraon chief god who continues to be the supreme power. Obviously, the invocation of the sun, the moon, the stars and rivers like the Ganga, and gods like Indra, Ganesh, Brahma and Shatrughna have been borrowed from the Hindus. As the identity of Sita has been misconceived in popular imagination, Mahadeva and *Dharmes* become one and Sita or Parvati is regarded as his consort. The Tana Bhagat mode and timing of prayer also bears the Hindu imprint, and are offered up for such ethereal things as knowledge, wisdom, good qualities, virtues, happiness and purity of thought and speech. Sometimes the invocation is accompanied by weeping and crying which is very common in the bhakti school of Hinduism.

They also have the conception of God as the father; the incorporation of a Christian idea. In fact, all the deities are addressed as Baba or father, who reside in people's hearts and bodies and bring peace, understanding, intelligence and strength. Baba is also asked to visit courts, police stations, cattle ponds and store houses, in order to help the Oraon against powerful enemies. In their prayers and hymns the image of heaven is represented by the golden shield, chair, castle and the golden kingdom. This is also reminiscent of the Christian idea of the kingdom of heaven. But basically it represents the craving of the harassed tribal for comforts and riches unimaginable. The Tana Bhagats also believe that Kaliyug is coming to an end, and is to be replaced by Satyug. The prayers are in the form of hymns that are noted for their characteristic bhakti, passionate quality and religious fervour.

As said earlier, the Tana Bhagats have a great regard for personal as well as ceremonial purity, such as a bath before prayers and before partaking food, etc. Traditionally the Oraon was required to sacrifice animals to propitiate deities and to drive away ghosts. These sacrifices proved very costly, and therefore the taboo on animal sacrifice and liquor came as a great relief. Instead, they offer flowers and sweets at the shrine known as *Deokuri*, and burn incense and butter, as a token of his devotion to *Dharmes*. But prayers to *Dharmes* are not offered to ward off misfortune or for benefit; it is to establish a closer relationship and communion with him. It is significant that among all the old deities only *Dharmes* or

Bhagwan has been retained as the creator of human beings and animals who is omnipresent, omniscient and who uses his powers only for the good of the people. Since ceremonial purity is at a premium, the Tana Bhagat must not eat food cooked by others.

The other taboos are on killing, the worship of traditional gods, socio-religious practices and rituals, liquor, dances of any kind, and even the free mixing between the sexes in the youth dormitory is deprecated so that this institution has disappeared. None of the old marriage rules are to be observed, nor should one put any faith in wizards, witches and sorcerers. Old festivals like Karma, Jitiya, Sohrai, Deothan and Dussehra are prohibited. Dance forms like Jadura, Phagua and Khaddi, the visit of dance parties to villages, the playing of musical instruments like the Mandar, the Nagara and songs during marriages are forbidden. As well as wearing of ornaments on fingers, hands, noses, ears, etc., the wearing of embroidered cloth, tatooing on the body, the application of vermillion ceremonial hunts, worship at the sacred grove or the *Sarna*, sprinkling of water as a token of respect for ancestors, and even children collecting cow dung, fish, and crab or catching mice. Besides these taboos, there are certain rules of conduct which have to be followed: the keeping of pigtailed, not to be quarrelsome, not to steal or covet goods, to give up ceremonial friendship, to throw away earthen ware cooking pots and drinking vessels as they become polluted by contact with such defiling animals as dogs, fowls and pigs and on account of birth or death in a family, and *Sag* (edible leafy plants) is not to be eaten because it is red in colour thereby resembling blood. And, so on.

Today, the Tana Bhagats do not observe the ban on celebrating some festivals like Karma, Sohrai and Dussehra. Their main festivals are Phagu, Diwali Sarhul, and Karma. They change their sacred thread and flags on Phagu and Ram Dutia. On Phagu day, the head of the family offers worship with incense, ghee, molasses, flowers, sweets conch shells and the gong, to *Dharmes*. The earth, the sun and the moon are mentioned. The Sohrai festival coincides with Diwali, when an earthen lamp is lit in the cattle shed and cattle are anointed with fresh karanj oil and fed with sweets. The head

of the household fasts for the whole day and in the evening offers worship, to make the jungle safe for the cattle to graze. Sarhul is not celebrated in an elaborate way, but is a simple affair, when milk and sweets are offered to ancestors. They even observe the Republic day, the Independence day and Gandhiji's birthday. On the 26th of January and the 15th of August the national flag is hoisted in the village square, and the tricolour at the Dham has the spinning wheel on it.

As it is laid down that the Tana Bhagats must help each other and not to abuse anyone not even a stranger, all disputes and quarrels have to be settled by the Mandali or congregation. If a Tana does not abide by the decision of the Mandali, he may be excommunicated. Thursday is a day of rest, since it is considered to be sacred for Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and especially for all the cattle which is Lakshmi to the agriculturists. On every Thursday the Tana Bhagats congregate to sing their hymns, to offer familywise oblations of *ghee* into the fire in the name of *Dharmes* and it is only after this ritual is performed that members of the family take their bath and cook food. In the evening the Tana Bhagats again sing sacred hymns. All fellowmen, young or old, are addressed as Baba, a term applied to the gods as well. They believe that men and animals have the same kind of life and that they should not do any harm to any living being. God or the divine spirit is believed to reside within every living person.

The Tana Bhagats insistence on ceremonial purity and abstinence from non-vegetarian food and drinks, music and dance have led to a simplification of Oraon ritual connected with important occasions like birth, marriage and death. After delivery, the mother has to remain in seclusion in a part of the hut and is not allowed to touch cooking vessels or drinking water to be used by others. The entire house is supposed to be polluted. On the sixth day near relatives come together and along with the members of family, in which the birth has taken place, their nails are paired, the floor of the hut and the court yard are swept clean and besmeared with a thin coat of cow dung diluted in water. Water is sanctified by dipping into it a few leaves of the Tulsi plant and a bit of gold or copper, if available. This water is sprinkled on all members of the family including the baby and mother as well as

the assembled relatives and guests. It is supposed to purify all of them. The members of the family also drink a few drops of this liquid. On this occasion relatives bring presents of rice, pulses and molasses in place of rice beer, which they used to bring before. Instead of liquor with which the guests were treated earlier, they are served with cold drinks, which is made by diluting molasses in water. Milk is included in the menu of the feast. The Tana Bhagats have given up the rituals connected with name giving, ear piercing and eating the first rice.

The Tana Bhagats have prohibited the *Dhuku* or intrusion marriage. In this marriage a woman could force herself into the house of her lover, even against his consent. They did not, however, ban widow remarriage. The old practice of sending an *Agua* or the go-between has been given up. A person wishing to marry his boy or girl signifies his desire to the Tana Mandali of his neighbourhood. At one of its Thursday meetings they talk about the possible match and if the parents of the two parties agree the marriage is settled. The traditional Oraon custom of exchanging two or three ceremonial visits between the bride and the bridegroom's families is still retained but the Tana Bhagats do not look for any omen before starting on such journeys. During these visits liquor is not served to guests. They still retain the practice of the bride-price, although its amount has been reduced. It is now optional to supply a dress for the bride's mother and brother. Such presents may be made later when one of the parties can afford it. No musical instruments made of animal hide are to be played during marriages but metal instruments such as *ghantas*, bugles, blow-pipes and conches may be used. Before the wedding ceremony the bride and the bridegroom are seated on Sal (*Shorea robusta*) leaves. They anoint each other's forehead with sandal paste or with earth instead of vermilion. After this simple ritual the couple finally offer oblations of water to Bhawan.

The Tana Bhagats do not burn the dead body as they consider the smell and the fumes of cremation to amount to tasting and eating human flesh. The corpse is sprinkled with water in which *tulsi* leaves have been put, and then buried. On the tenth day after death, the same purifying water is

sprinkled all over the house. This completes the ritual of ceremonial purification of the house from pollution caused by the death. Those who can afford it, also burn an earthen lamp with *ghee* and offer pure water in the name of Bhagwan. In the end, a feast is arranged for fellow brethren.

A candidate who wants to join the Kurukh Dharam or the Tana faith has to undergo a process of purification by taking the sanctified liquid, mention of which has been made earlier. He is put on probation for a period of three to twelve months. During this period the elders watch how strictly he has observed the injunctions of the new faith. If at the end of the period, they are satisfied, he qualifies for full membership. This is accompanied by a feast which the new member has to provide for his friends and relatives belonging to the new faith. It is this fact of their eating with him that signifies his entry into the new fold. If however, the elders do not feel satisfied with his behaviour, the period of apprenticeship may be extended up to a maximum of three years. On being admitted to the new faith, the Tana Bhagat, both male and female, have to wear the sacred thread. At the time of wearing it, they have to invoke Bhagwan.

The sacred thread is said to be a distinctive feature of the Tana Bhagat. The sacred thread is generally of seven strands, but may also be of 3, 5, or 9 strands. One can tell a Tana Bhagats house from that of the others by a white flag which is set up outside the house. In Mandar, Ghaghra and Bishnupur the tricolour flag is seen in front of each Tana house. In Gumls and Sisai, there are two or three flags at the place of worship, a tricolour for Independence, a white flag for God and a red one for Lakshmi. Around the flag pole there is a raised platform (Dham), which is daily smeared with cowdung. The *tulsi* plant and a few flower plants are planted around it.

The Tana Bhagats do not take food cooked by any person outside their own faith. When they go out they take with them cooking utensils and food grains. Those who live in cities and eat with non-Tanas are not allowed to enter the kitchen and eat with other members of the family. When they are back home, they have to cook separately for themselves. In some cases they accept food only from persons who belong

to their own section of the Tana Bhagats. They generally do not enter into marital relationship with non-Tanas. But if a boy or a girl is keen to be married outside, the marriage takes place on the same conditions as between a Nemba Bhagat or a Kabirpanthi Bhagat with a traditional Oraon. A non-Tana girl marrying a Tana boy is incorporated into their fold. Efforts are made to convert a non-Tana boy marrying a Tana girl but failing that, the girl is not given food from the same hearth as her parents. An extreme section of the Tana Bhagats do not allow widow remarriage.

With the passage of time the Tana Bhagats have split into many sections though their main customs, ideas and principles have remained the same. For example, the puritan Tanas are the Sada Bhagats, while the more Hinduised sections are the Bachhidan Bhagats who have taken the vows of Bhakti Dharma by touching the cow's tail and sometimes by making gifts of calves to the brahman. They have not given up the use of jewellery or embroidered or bordered cloth and propitiate such Hindu deities as Devi or Durga. The extreme section of Tana Bhagats have given up cultivation of land, partly on the ground of cruelty to cattle, while the moderate sections consider their duty to their cattle to be over by allowing them to rest on Thursdays and not overworking them on other days.

The Tanas, extremist followers of Sibū Bhagat, set free all their cattle and threw away their store of rice in the autumn of 1920. It is said that a few days after his death Sibū was resurrected by God and broke open his grave. People embraced him as he is said to have met God, who had charged him to spread the Tana faith. In course of time, Sibū retraced his steps and instructed his followers to take food cooked by anybody and even allowed them to take meat and drinks. After letting loose their cattle, they proceeded to Sat Pahari hill in the neighbouring district of Hazaribagh, expecting that a prophet or a saviour would appear and bring back the good old days of prosperity for the Oraon. After long waiting since no such messiah appeared, and since they had no money to buy their food, Sibū sacrificed a black goat on the banks of the river Damodar and distributed the sacrificial meat among his followers. Those who took

this meat were known as Julaha Bhagats. Those who did not eat rice and meat but only rice are known as Arwa Bhagats. It was at that time that Sibū declared that *Dharmes* desired that they should no longer observe the restrictions on food, drink and conduct and that they might freely enjoy *Sorho Singar and Batiso Ahar*. There was no prohibition against the enjoyment of the sixteen kinds of carnal desires and thirty-two kinds of delicious food. Sibū asserted that the Europeans were strong because they took flesh and liquor. He said: "You need no longer cultivate your fields, for we have fed our landlords for thirty-two generations and supported them by our labours; it is now their turn to feed us and support us for the next thirty-two generations". It is thus clear that Sibū swung from one extreme to the other.

Among other *gurus* of the Tana Bhagats mention may be made of Karma Bhagat of Belenda, Lodro Bhagat of Belagara, Bhuka Bhagat of Karkata, Naba Bhagat of Murma, Narayan Bhagat of Danda, Antu Bhagat of Donisanagar and Nathu Bhagat of Jaira. Each of these spiritual leaders have a small group of followers, but there is no central authority to guide, coordinate and control them. For quite some time after the early 'twenties, the religious fervour of the Tana Bhagats had diminished considerably. They saw that by giving up their old beliefs, practices and rituals and adopting the new faith they had not been able to improve their economic status. They had to face enormous difficulties due to the rise in prices, and their agrarian grievances had not been redressed. From then on it was their economic grievances which came to the fore and they adopted secular and political methods to secure their redress and to register their protest against the prevailing state of affairs.

V

Thus it was from 1919 onwards that the Tana Bhagat movement developed political overtones. It was in that year, under the leadership of Sibū and Maya that this movement wanted to crush to prove to the people that their leaders were not infallible. The government acted swiftly, and Sibū, Maya

and other leaders like Sukra, Singia and Deviya were arrested. Their arrest, however, did not extinguish the fire they had started. At the end of the year about 400 Tanas assembled at Tiko Tanr, a place which is hallowed by its association with the Kol insurrection of 1831. It was there that the Munda leader, Budhu Bhagat, had fought against the British arms and lost his life. The new leaders of the Tana Bhagats were Turiya and Jitu. They decided at a meeting that they would neither pay the Chaukidari tax to the government nor any rent to the landlords. In the Sisai area Jura Bhagat started the no-rent campaign which was funded by gifts. In the Bishunpur area Bhikhu Bhagat, a Vishnu Bhagat was also anti-British. When arrested he pleaded that he was not a Tana Bhagat and had nothing to do with the latter. Then the movement went underground to gain importance when the Congress also advocated a similar programme of Non-Cooperation Civil Disobedience in 1921. Both of them were fighting against injustices and misrule, and their aspirations, therefore, were the same. The Tana Bhagats thus felt a strange affinity between their own aims and the programmes of the Congress. They began to wear the Gandhi cap and always carried the Congress tricolour with them as a symbol of their affiliation with the party. They even started plying the charkha and wearing khadi. They were as rebellious against the government as any one in the Non-Cooperation movement at that time. From then on the Tana Bhagat movement, which began as a religious movement with economic undertones, became a political movement of a great force to be reckoned with in Chotanagpur.

The liaison between the Tana Bhagats and the Gandhian movement was established by band of devoted workers both Hindu and Muslim who were operating from Ranchi.⁵ Such workers as Gulab Tiwary, Maulvi Usman, Ramtabal Brahmachari, Ramchandra Prasad and Nagarmal Modi had organized a number of public processions and demonstrations towards the end of 1920, often with an audience of six thousand people, including tribals. Their speeches advocated abstinence from drink and invited people to join the Non-Cooperation movement. By the beginning of January 1921 these leaders and workers had reached the interior spreading the message of Gandhiji.

Tribal leaders were told by these workers that they were the real rulers of Chotanagpur. Meetings were held in Ghoghra, Lohardaga, Senha, Ghaghra, Tamar and Bundu. At one meeting, in February 1921 at Kuru which was a centre of Tana Bhagat influence, eight thousand tribals were present. Later Ramtahal Brahmachari held another meeting of the Tana Bhagats at Soropa. It was here that he was served with a prohibitory order. At that time in the course of thirteen days eighteen meetings were held. The result was that the superintendent of police of Ranchi was greatly perturbed. He wanted to ban meetings in those areas where the Tana Bhagats constituted a substantial number. This leads us to the conclusion that the Tana Bhagats were more susceptible to the impact of the Non-Cooperation movement than the other Adivasis and it is they who responded to the call in huge numbers. On the 16th of March, 1921, there was a complete strike as a protest against the settlement of excise shops. The Tana Bhagats picketed wine shops. In one of his communications to the Commissioner of Chotanagpur Division, the Deputy Commissioner, Ranchi, admitted that the Tana Bhagat movement continued to give trouble and that the Non-Cooperation movement had revitalized the Tana Bhagat movement. It was mainly on account of the response of the Tana Bhagats that the Non-Cooperation movement spread to the other parts of Chotanagpur.

It was then that the government took stern measures to crush the movement. The chief secretary to the government of Bihar and Orissa, Mr. G Rainy, issued a circular to all the magistrates and collectors to use every means in their power to suppress the movement. This was the famous Rainy circular against which there was great resentment in those days. In July, 1921, The All India Congress Committee at its meeting in Bombay decided to discard the use of foreign cloth. This produced an immediate impact on the Tana Bhagats. They not only boycotted foreign cloth and mill made cloth but also started the use of *khadi* and the Gandhi cap. They actively participated in the Gaya Congress session and had the opportunity of listening to the speeches of such famous leaders as Pandit Motilal Nehru, J M Sen Gupta, Sarojini Naidu, C Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, etc. About 400 tribal

men and women went from Ranchi to Gaya on foot to attend the Gaya Congress, but many Tana Bhagats were also taken there in a bus under the leadership of Shri Gulab Tiwary. Their participation for the first time in the Gaya Congress was an eye opener to the changes taking place in the world outside as a part of the national freedom movement. Returning from Gaya they held several meetings to draw up programmes for national work. In early 1923 a long drawn *satyagrah* was taking place at Nagpur to defend the honour of the Congress flag which was at that time a symbol of national aspirations. Thousands of people flocked to Nagpur to defend the honour of the national flag and courted imprisonment. The Tana Bhagats also went from Ranchi, for by May 1923 the *satyagrah* had assumed an all-India character. Several of them were beaten up in jail. But from then on every year a batch of Tana Bhagats used to attend the annual session of the Congress held at Belgam, Kakinanda and other places.

The old craft of cotton spinning and weaving was revived as a result of the Tana Bhagats taking an active part in the constructive programmes of the Congress. From time to time they also participated in charkha demonstrations. In October 1926 a big khadi exhibition was opened in Ranchi by Dr Rajendra Prasad, attended by large numbers of Tana Bhagats. Mahatma Gandhi, during his visit to Ranchi in the year 1925 came across 400 Tanas who regularly plied the charkha and habitually wore khadi. They carried the charkha on their shoulders for long distances. During the visit of the Simon Commission the Tana Bhagats took part in a black flag demonstration. On January 29, 1930, there was a huge procession of the Tana Bhagats in Ranchi. Later in the year, according to a police report, almost two thousand Tana Bhagats had enlisted themselves as members of the Congress and under the leadership of Bhuka Bhagat were fully prepared to take part in the impending Civil Disobedience movement. The Tana Bhagats inspired by the Bardoli *satyagrah* in Gujarat led by Vallabhbhai Patel refused to pay rent to the government with the result that their lands were auctioned and they were reduced to penury.

The Quit India movement in 1942 once again ignited the flame of revolt among the Tana Bhagats. In August 1942 a

batch of Tana Bhagats belonging to the Chainpur and the Bishunpur areas had set fire to the Bishunpur police station. The police dispersed the Tana Bhagats by the use of force and mass arrests were made. The struggle became even more intensified and incidents were reported from Latehar and other places. At about the same time they took out a long procession in Ranchi which led to widespread arrests. Soon after that, they occupied the Sonchipi Ashram which was under the control of the Mandar police station. They also harrassed the government authorities in the Burmu Block.

VI

Thus we see that between 1920 and 1942 the Tana Bhagat movement underwent a metamorphosis. It no longer emphasized socio-religious matters but enthusiastically participated in all the various agitations for Independence. In the process, like other freedom fighters they had been beaten and sent to jail, suffering the loss of property when their lands were sold to others and thereby being reduced to the status of share croppers and labourers. When India became independent they had great hopes from the government, firmly believing that they had brought Independence by their suffering and faith. One of them said, "when they construct a well, the stones laid at the bottom are the real support. Similarly we are the pillars of the Congress Party".⁶ The Congress government had also a soft corner for them as they had fought valiantly during the freedom struggle. Being largely uneducated they felt that the government in free India would not charge any rent from them as during the freedom struggle the Congress leaders themselves had given a call not to pay rent. Their level of aspirations had risen. They were no longer content with a bare subsistence but wanted a better standard of life. This longing is expressed in the following prayer⁷ to *Dharmes* translated as follows :—

It was due to God's grace wisdom,
dawned on us, brothers.
Unite the Oraons and Mundas,
together, unite them brothers.

If you become one, you will read,
and write, brothers.
If you read and write you will,
have wisdom, brothers.
When you become wise then you will,
help the Oraons in getting rid of their troubles.
When the troubles vanish, your children,
will prosper.
When they prosper you'll live a happy life.
Brothers, with folded hands you pray, to God.
If you'll pray He will be kind to you.
And by his grace your children will be happy.

They also felt that being a small community the government should take up the entire responsibility of putting them on a sound economic footing. In fact, their's was a psychological case in as much as they expected the government to satisfy all their aspirations as a reward for their past sacrifices. The State government moved speedily in this direction and enacted the Ranchi District Tana Bhagat Agricultural Land Restoration Act in 1947 which would restore to them such agricultural lands as had been sold for arrears of rent. The area of operation of the Act has been recently expanded to include Hazaribagh and Palamau. A Special Officer was appointed to oversee the implementation of the Act. Thus, until March 1976, 3639.81 acres of land have been restored to 311 households. But the process involved in the restoration of land is rather lengthy, because the land has to be located and the real claimants have to be identified because in the course of time the land may have changed owners many times. Also, compensation has to be given to the present owners for giving up the land in favour of a particular Tana Bhagat household. More than twelve lakh rupees have already been spent over the payment of compensation, though the cases take a long time to be settled because of the usual legal process. The restoration of land to the Tana Bhagats may now be hastened with the passage of the Chotanagpur Tenancy (Amendment) Act 1969 and the Bihar Schedule Areas Regulation 1969, because simpler processes have been provided for the restoration of land to all tribals including the Tana Bhagats.

An inquiry made in 1972 revealed that out of 2653 Tana Bhagat families, 1719 families hold more than five acres of land, 818 families hold lands between one to five acres and twenty-five families have less than one acre of land. Instructions have been issued to local officers to ensure that such cases where the Tana Bhagat families have less than five acres of land should be settled. Until the time of the survey, 267 such Tana Bhagat families had received government land. A number of other schemes have been taken up for the welfare of the Tana Bhagats; twenty-thousand rupees have been earmarked for providing improved seeds, implements and livestock; instructions exist to start centres for applied nutrition programmes, and in 1972 thirty-three drinking water wells and ninety-five irrigation wells were sanctioned. The government has also taken steps for educational development; three residential schools, situated at Sonchipi, Noadih and Chapatoli have been started, two for boys and one for girls. About 35 Tana Bhagats also get the freedom fighters' pension.

Today, inspite of the various steps taken by the government for all round development, the Tana Bhagats, are greatly dissatisfied. They still do not want to pay rent and usually travel without a ticket. A group of disgruntled Tana Bhagats, perhaps those whose claims for land restoration were not considered for lack of adequate evidence, have formed an organization under the leadership of Govinda Bhagat of village Sakra in the Mandar Block of Ranchi district. They had cut crops from government farms, even going up to the Sisai Block, took out processions at Ranchi and gheraoed the Tana Welfare office. Sometime back they laid siege to the Khadi Bhandar at Ranchi and demanded free distribution of blankets. For this some of their leaders have been put into prison.

VII

Analysing the nature of the Tana Bhagat movement in the perspective of dissent, protest and reform, it is apparent that the Tana Bhagat movement was a spirited protest against the prevailing social order. It had borrowed heavily from the

Hindu and Christian ideas of simplicity and piety. This simplicity became a value all the more because of the impact of the social movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Its leaders tried to demolish such features as did not fit in with their image of an ideal society where there was to be no oppression. This kind of thinking necessitated a reorientation of their belief and practices not only in regard to the relationship between man and the supernatural but also at the level of mundane life.

Conceptually, the movement may be viewed within the framework put forward by Wallace, Linton⁸ and Jay⁹ in the context of a nativistic or revitalization movement taking place in tribal India.¹⁰ Revitalization movements are defined as "a deliberate, organized and conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture."¹¹ Wallace states that it is when a culture fails to meet the challenges of the situation generally arising when acculturation takes place, at a particular point of time, that it produces tensions leading to a tendency towards disorganization. The period of increased individual stress leads to the stage of cultural distortion in which he tries to alter his position in the structure. This is followed by a period of revitalization. The ideal condition for the emergence of a movement involves a time when two societies of different statuses meet, i.e., one dominant and the other subordinate. In Chotanagpur the non-tribals had the advantage of economic power and high prestige while the role of the tribals was economically inferior. Linton does not stress the borrowing of elements from the dominant status culture. In the Bhagat movement the new ideology was a product of ideas from the Hindu culture. They believed that by this process they would raise their status in the eyes of the Hindu society as a whole. As a matter of fact, through this movement the process of Sanskritization was at work. It was an effort to bring their societies upto the same level as the Hindu and thus reduce the hardships of subjugation which they suffered. Sometimes in the Bhagat movement we also find an effort to return to something puritanical or original which was claimed to be the Kurukh Dharma.

The Tana Bhagat movement may be viewed as a resistance, and also as an emulative movement. Conditions for resistance

already existed in the excessive exploitation and social degradation of the Oraon. There was also the absence of social integration between the Oraon and the non-tribals. There were at times some barriers to the successful emulation of the values of the dominant culture. The acculturative process had been at work for a long time and subordination implied lower prestige. But if an Oraon wanted, he could adopt Hindu norms and practices without much hindrance as it did not involve any sudden break with the past. The Tana Bhagat movement emerged at a time when conditions were ripe for resistance as well as for an emulative movement.

Linton speaks about the four varieties of nativistic movements whereby any conscious organized attempt may be made on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture. These four are: revivalistic magical, revivalistic rational, perpetuative magical and perpetuative rational. In the Tana Bhagat movement we do not see any effort to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of their culture, except for the reference to *Dharmes*, the Oraon Chief God, who fitted in with the new scheme as he could be identified with Bhagwan or the supreme God of the Hindus. This movement drew heavily from the dominant culture, which militated against many aspects of the ancient social order. We could, therefore, regard the movement not as nativistic but as reformatory to a large degree. The process of reformation has been defined as "a relatively conscious attempt on the part of a subordinated group to attain a personal and a social reintegration through selective rejection, modification, and synthesis of both traditional and alien (dominant) cultural components."¹²

The Bhagat movement borrowed in a large measure from Hinduism and to some extent from Christianity. Both Hinduism and Christianity may be regarded as dominant status cultures. The status of Hinduism in the eyes of the Oraon was drawn from the vast numbers of its followers, but the status of Christianity may be attributed to its being the religion of the rulers. Naturally, association with one or both systems was prestigious to the Oraon. So both of them were at the same time dominant as well as alien. Christianity was also associated with European technology which brought with it the steam

boat, the motor car, the cycle, etc. The spirit of the Bhagat movement was essentially reformatory. It is noteworthy that the splits in the movement were often over pure vs. diluted. Even alien ceremonies and practices became deep-rooted, forming a part of their rituals. Another characteristic typical of the reformatory movement which is seen among the Tana Bhagat was for the healing of sick and the ailing as has been mentioned by S C Roy. There is also emphasis on character and morality, revelation, proselytization and concern with social status which are all important features of any reformatory movement suggested by Voget. Edward Jay is of the opinion that the kind of processes involved in the Bhagat movement indicate stability and that the Bhagat cult is more than a passing resistive movement; it is a long term mechanism of transformation. He also regards movements like this as mediators between the great and the little tradition. In their attempt to raise their status, the tribal people tend to adopt more and more the Hindu ethos. Thus, the entire process may be comprehended as the general transformation of tribal society under the impact of Hinduism.

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ARYA SAMAJ MOVEMENT

PUSHPA SURI

THE ARYA Samaj movement which began in the nineteenth century was a reflection of the rising aspirations of certain middle classes, in response to the colonial brand of industrialization. Mainly, these classes comprised of mercantile groups, clerks and writers (especially those who had been working for the Mughal and Sikh regimes), well-to-do peasants (who wanted to avoid the exacting demands of priests), and individuals who wanted to improve their status through education by specializing in law, medicine, etc.

The Arya Samaj ideology, imparted dignity to labour, encouraging its members to put in hard work. This created conflict-tension situations, whereby the followers of the Arya Samaj developed an aggressive and at times obdurate character. In fact, they perpetuated the uncompromising attitude introduced into Hinduism by Swami Dayanand (1824-1883), the founder of the movement. Because of this, some people thought that it was a reactionary body. However, the Arya Samaj had to take recourse to drastic remedies to cleanse Hinduism of undesirable customs, practices and social evils.

In the early nineteenth century, the feudal and hierarchical nature of Hindu society was full of social injustices in the garb of religion perpetuated by the priests. The caste system denied human rights to large sections of society, by advocating untouchability, equating women with the shudras and denying them the right to education, encouraging child-marriage, and prohibiting widow-remarriage. While the need to eradicate these social evils had been felt earlier, in this period the awareness was felt more urgently due to the work of Christian missionaries. It was feared that not only were the Hindus increasingly coming under Christian influence, but also that the missionaries were hand-in-glove with British imperialism in an apparent attempt to annihilate Hindu society. If this was to be

prevented, radical changes and reforms in the socio-cultural belief systems of Hindus by themselves was imperative. It was also felt that in order to be able to face contemporary challenges, Hinduism had to adopt empirical, scientific, and egalitarian attitudes. Obviously, this line of thinking was the result of Western education and the growth of nationalism. Movements like the Brahmo Samaj, for instance, were the direct outcome of such a Westernization. But the Arya Samaj movement was inspired more by exploring the remote past of India, although the general atmosphere of contemporary enquiry and approach also nourished it to some extent.

The transformation of a society through a radical movement often becomes possible through a charismatic personality who is able to mobilize public opinion against deep-rooted practices and customs. For the Arya Samaj, Dayanand was such a man, although he was born a brahmin of the first order, in a family which strictly adhered to the observation of prescribed rituals. The first incident that shook his faith occurred on Shivaratri, when he found the image of the Shivalinga (Almighty God) unable to keep off the mice crawling over it. Dayanand was then 14 years old. He realized now that the image was not God and so followed his dissent and protest against idolatry. But the formulation of ideas, naturally took time when some other incidents strengthened his convictions. Finally, he left his house in search of truth and salvation. He was then 21 years old.

It was only in 1860 that he found his guru Swami Virjanand of Mathura. Swami Virjanand firmly believed that it was Puranic literature which was responsible for the degeneration of Hindu dharma. According to him, the only way to revive and revitalize Hinduism was by going back to the Vedas. He accepted Dayanand as his disciple, only after Dayanand had rejected the un-Arsha literature and had thrown into the Jamuna all his modern Sanskrit works. For two-and-a-half years Dayanand studied the Arsha texts and works of the great rishis of the Vedic period. When he was about to leave, the guru asked him for *dakshina*¹, i.e. to go and teach the Vedas and true Shastras and to dispel the darkness created by false creeds.² Dayanand endeavoured throughout his life to abide by the word he had given his guru. He travelled far and wide,

and held Shastrarths (discussions and debates) with orthodox scholars of Hinduism. At Hardwar, where he went to attend the Kumbh³ Mela in April 1867, he named his camp as Pakhand Khandini or the 'denounce of show and imposture'.⁴ He told people, for instance, that bathing at Hardwar was spiritually entirely useless, because salvation could be attained only through the worship of God as given in the Upanishads.⁵

His Shastrarths reached a high watermark in Kashi, the stronghold of the orthodoxy, during a debate, on whether or not the idol-worship was enjoined in the Vedas. While the whole thing ended in utter confusion, Dayanand became famous as the attention of other social reformers was drawn towards him. He was invited to Calcutta in 1872, but it was difficult for a man of his temperament and calibre, to come to terms or join issue with any one. Even so, Calcutta and its environment, drew his attention towards the importance of addressing and speaking to the people in the language which they spoke and understood easily. In the case of Northern India, it could only be Hindi. In 1874, Raja Jai Kishen Dass of Aligarh, suggested to him that he should compile his lectures and publish them in the form of a book. Dayanand understood its relevance and in 1875 published his *Satyarth Prakash* in Hindi.⁶

Dayanand was acutely aware that the success of any socio-religious movement, requires efficient organization and institution. Hence, he established the Arya Samaj in Bombay on April, 10th, 1875, with a proper, well thought out constitution. But the precision in the socio-religious tenets, came only later, with the Lahore creed in 1877.⁷ 'There shall be a principal Arya Samaj in each province, and the other Samajes shall be its branches, all connected with one another', and 'the branch Samajes shall conform to and follow, as model, the principal Samaj'.⁸ His desire to preach to the people through the press, a technique, which he learnt from the Christian missionaries, was reflected in the publication of a weekly paper, by the principal samaj, called the *Arya Prakash*.⁹ He realized the value of congregational prayers, when he said, 'on every eighth day, there shall be a prayer meeting, and the religious lectures in the Samaj must be attended by the President, the Secretary and other members'.¹⁰

To initiate organized work in a big way, he thought of two avenues. One, that 'members should earnestly devote their spare time to the services of the Samaj'¹¹ and two, that 'the Samaj shall send learned men, of approved character, everywhere to preach the truth'¹², after they have received training in the criticism of existing socio-religious tenets and practices. Dayanand's basic objective was to spread the message of the glorious traditions of the Vedic age, and to revitalize a spineless, suppressed and subjugated society by inculcating in it, a pride in its own heritage.

The institutionalization of preachers brought a new element of proselytization in Hinduism. Opposition stimulated their energies and they set out on their mission with unprecedented zeal. Their success or failure depended, on the number of Arya Samajis that they could enlist. Since full time workers had to be paid, the aspect of raising money could not be neglected. All members were to donate a hundredth part of their income to the Samaj, and each Samaj was to contribute one tenth of the amount collected to the Central Organization.¹³ Again, a share of all charities and contributions on social occasions was to be donated to the Samaj.¹⁴ In this and in many other ways, the Samaj acquired an egalitarian outlook and a democratic character. 'All amendments to these rules' Dayanand said, 'shall invariably be through deliberations by the leading members of the Samaj.'¹⁵

The *Satyarth Prakash* of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, provided the Arya Samaj movement with its social, as well as philosophical ideology. While maintaining the *varna* theory, he attacked the social disparities created by the concept of the caste system. His assertion that caste-status should be determined by merit and not by birth, was at that time, a revolutionary idea. He seemed to have clearly understood the economic dimensions of the social structure; that in the rural and predominantly agricultural economy of India, caste was essentially the controller and regulator of the productive system.

Dayanand's propagation, of caste-status by merit, was removing the society of its very prop. It struck at the roots of casteism, by not only cutting into the educational monopoly of the brahmins, but also promising amelioration to the depressed

classes, and the removal of the stigma attached if they became Arya Samajists. They could achieve equality in socio-economic terms by vertical mobility, through education by increased money earnings buying of land and so on. Since the aim was to eradicate all social distinctions, the idea proved to be revolutionary for many. The opportunity of following this up was availed by classes, which were neither privileged nor depressed. Until almost the first quarter of the twentieth century, the lower classes were too benumbed by centuries of economic and socio-religious subjugation, and were perhaps even lethargic in grabbing of these opportunities. The deep-rooted belief, in the inexorable and immutable law of destiny, cannot easily give way to the idea of bringing structural changes in any given setup. It could well be asserted that this very belief, constituted the strength of the orthodox section. But political exigencies forced them to bow down partly to the Arya Samaj ideology.

The appeal of Arya Samaj was restricted to parts of Northern India, being strongest in the United Provinces (71%) and Punjab (27%), and only 2% from rest of India.¹⁶ From 1891 to 1901, membership to the Arya Samaj increased from 39, 952 to 92, 419—a 131 % increase. The increase within was 300 % in the U.P. and 55 % in the Punjab.¹⁷ This movement was practically confined to the educated classes and only a few of the artisan and menial castes were attracted to it.¹⁸ In Punjab, Khatris, Aroras, Rajputs, Baniyas, Jats and a small number of brahmans¹⁹ have figured in a separate tabulation, provided for Arya Samajists in the census of 1901.²⁰ In the United Provinces, four to five per cent of Arya Samajists belonged to the twice-born castes, and 96% were from the upper-middle groups.²¹ Another report shows that Rajputs, Kayasths and Baniyas, comprised 26% of the total population, but constituted 79% of the Arya Samajists in the United Provinces.

The above facts indicate that the Arya Samaj was basically for a long time, an "elitist" movement, confined to the classes which had no need for upward social mobility.²² The change came only when the composition of its membership underwent a radical change, due to certain political factors which fostered the cohesive tendencies of Hinduism. Perhaps, the same political factors also contributed towards establishing a more

congenial relationship between the Arya Samaj and the orthodox sections. Pandit Hari Kishen Kaul wrote in his article in the Punjab Census report : 'Owing to the lapse of time, the opposition of the Sanatanists (the orthodox section of Hindu community) to the Arya Samaj has become feeble, and with the marked change in the ideas of majority of the educated Hindus, much of Arya Samaj propaganda has been accepted by the Hindu community. While on the other hand, the Arya Samaj has moderated its tone, of criticism and begun to show more respect for some of the orthodox Hindu institutions' and as a result of this harmony, he continues, 'the two communities work together in several lines such as the revival of ancient festivals, the promotion of the study of Sanskrit and Hindi, the spread of female education and introduction of social reforms'.²³ Incidentally, the Census figures returned in the report of 1921 bring out another interesting fact. While Punjab had reported 100,846 followers of the Arya Samaj in 1911, it returned 223,151 in 1921.²⁴ Similarly, United Provinces reported 205,570 in 1921, against 131,154 in 1911.²⁵ The point which emerges is that in 1921, Punjab took away the lead from the United Provinces, to become the centre of all Arya Samaj activity. This was due to the quality of leadership, provided in Punjab, by personalities like Mahatma Hans Raj, Swami Shraddhanand and Lala Lajpat Rai.

The Arya Samaj tried only to reorganize the social system and failed to restructure it, as Dayanand would have liked to. It was because, in the philosophical field, he could not offer any alternative to the concept of karma. But in spite of wanting to raise the status of shudras through education, he was unable to take any concrete steps towards this end. Perhaps, this was because he did not want to alienate the support of his followers.²⁶ The Arya Samaj within itself did not modify its caste divisions, nor did it evolve a general brotherhood of its followers. In 1889, when Munshi Ram (later to be known as Swami Shraddhanand), the leader of the radical wing of Arya Samaj, spoke at Jullunder, about establishing matrimonial relationships on the basis of *gun*, *karma*, and *swabhav*, the leaders of Lahore Arya Samaj, Sain Dass, Hans Raj and Mulk Raj considered this proposal as outrageous and started calling him an extremist.²⁷ The *Arya Patrika* explains

it thus : 'The Aryas have at present no intention to upset the existing social order. . . it would be fatal to the best interests of the Samaj. It would be hated as Brahmo Samaj is, and the process of reform would be halted. . . . The Arya Samaj should not alienate itself from the sympathies of the nation'.²⁸ However, in 1895, the Arya Bhratri Sabha was organized in order to achieve the objectives of inter-dining and inter-marriage. But the net result was that the orthodoxy started excommunicating the Arya Samajists, and forbade the water carriers and barbers to serve them.²⁹ Therefore, the Bhratri Sabha met with failure as the 'Arya Samaj was not prepared to advocate promiscuous eating'.³⁰ Nevertheless, it succeeded in its efforts to establish the *gurukul* system; a realization of Dayanand's dream, where children of all the castes could live and grow up together on equal terms. Yet, caste-status was assigned, according to pure merit, to these children, only after they completed their education.

In 1922, a Jat Pat Todak Mandal was organized to promote inter-dining and inter-marriage and to protest against the failure of Arya Samaj to oppose the caste-system. Apart from educating and organizing public opinion against the caste system, the Mandal tried to inculcate a feeling of dignity of labour, and encouraged the adoption of any honest profession. The Mandal also mobilized public opinion against the filing of caste groups in educational, legal and other documents including the Census.³¹ This is borne out by an extract from one of the Census reports of 1931 which declares : 'The outgoing decennium has witnessed a fiery crusade against the institution of caste from press and platform. The Jat Pat Todak Mandal, founded with the set purpose of demolishing the caste-system has been most active and has carried its campaign into the enemy's country, so far as, to compel the Census authorities to lend their consent to a return of "no caste" in the Census schedule. Nineteen lakh Hindus returned "nil" in the column of caste . . .'.³² But little headway seems to have been made in eradicating casteism, for during the Centenary celebrations of the Arya Samaj, the then Union Agriculture Minister Jagjivan Ram said that history would not forgive the Arya Samajists, if they did not abjure casteism against which Dayanand had launched a crusade.³³

Closely linked with the problem of caste is the question of *shuddhi*, the purification ceremony introduced by Arya Samaj in its programme of social reform. The primary motive of Arya Samaj was to stem the tide of conversions to Christianity, but within a very short period a metamorphosis of these goals seems to have taken place. The only *shuddhi* performed by Swami Dayanand in his life was that of a woman who had become a Christian.³⁴ In 1884, 39 and in 1886, 55 people were reconverted from Christianity.³⁵ In its earlier days, the relationship of the Arya Samaj with Islam was quite amicable, but later changed because of *shuddhi*. In fact, it has come into existence that Dayanand stayed in the kotli of Dr Rahim Khan at Lahore, after he had been expelled from the house of Diwan Chand who was pressurized by the Sanatan Dharm Rakshini Sabha. He even stayed in Amritsar in the house of Mian Muhammed Jan. The Arya Samaj's reconversions became more or less, confined to the Muslims, who also reacted. This created tensions and led to the emergence of communalism. There are several reasons for the change in relationships. One may presume, that Muslims were not prepared to accept the claims of the Arya Samaj in the field of proselytization. But it was also the changing political situation, which made people increasingly particular about the numerical strength of their respective faiths in the Census reports.

One may ask, if the Arya Samaj professed to be a world religion and anybody could be its member irrespective of their racial or religious denominations, why did it try to convert through *shuddhi*? Moreover, what did purification mean to the purified ones, as they came in groups and sub-castes which retained their old groupings of touchables and untouchables; just the granting of the right to use the village well enough?³⁶ Why did the Samaj prescribe such an elaborate ritual for purification, as to make the repentant go through the ceremony of *yajnopavit*, tonsure and *hom*? Not only this, the purified were sent to Hardwar with a letter called *shuddhi-patra*, to have a dip in the Ganga³⁷ and be qualified enough to be accepted by caste Hindus. Strangely enough, moral change was being demanded from persons nor was it achieved.³⁸ But significantly the *shuddhi* ceremony became simple with the passage of time; it was considered enough to take the convert to the well, recite the

gayatri mantram, give him *yajnopavit*, ask him to cook *khichdi* and distribute it among the leading men of the village. Did these changes take place because the orthodox were getting convinced about the dire necessity of conversions to Hinduism?

At the organizational level, apart from publishing tracts (a technique which they learnt from the Christian missionaries), every group had at least one newspaper or journal for publishing their views, in order to attack and counter-attack rival parties. Communication between distant regions was in this way made easier. But minor matters were also often magnified leading to communal riots.³⁹ Public opinion was inflamed by personalities like Lekh Ram, on the one hand and Mirza Ghulam Ahmed of Qadian on the other. (Lekh Ram was a brahman, born in Sayedpur, a village in Jhelum district,⁴⁰ while Mirza Ghulam Ahmed was the founder of a heterodox sect in Islam.) Lekh Ram had nursed animosity against Islam, since his school days and he often got into arguments with his fanatic maulvi teachers. The *shuddhi* movement prompted him to air his feelings. In 1880, he published *Jehad* criticizing Islam in derogatory terms and calling back the Hindus, who had earlier been converted to Islam.⁴¹ On the other hand, the *Paisa Akhbar*, owned by the Muslims stated in its issue of July 11, 1892, that *Jehad* was responsible for creating tensions between Hindus and Muslims. The Christian paper *Nur-i-Afshan*, also supported the Muslim view point.⁴² When Lekh Ram was assassinated by a Muslim, the statement that Mirza Ghulam Ahmed published deserves attention. 'As humanitarians we regret the death of Lekh Ram . . . but, on the other hand, we thank the Almighty that our prophecy has now been fulfilled'.⁴³ The *Sada-i-Hind* of April 12, 1897, said that one thousand Muslims would be poisoned to vindicate the death of Lekh Ram, while the *Paisa Akhbar*, of April 19, warned them against eating food prepared by Hindus, and urging Muslims to have no socio-religious contact with them.

Here, some facts may be given about the *shuddhi* programme of the Arya Samaj. Only 35 Muslims were purified at Rawalpindi in the beginning.⁴⁴ By 1896 Swami Shraddhanand and Lekh Ram had converted hundreds of Rahatias of Jullundur at Lahore.⁴⁵ Purification of Meghs, Odes and Domes in hilly areas was also carried out.⁴⁶ Swami Shraddhanand's

biographer pays tribute to him, when he says that about one lakh people had joined their fraternities or the Arya Samaj, through his efforts before the actual movement for *shuddhi* was launched.⁴⁷ The Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha, Lahore, reconverted 3,000 persons who had been converted to Islam, in Malabar by the Moplahs provoked by the Khilafat movement.⁴⁸ The difficulties encountered, by those who were committed to the *shuddhi* programme of Arya Samaj, may be gauged by the instance of the reconversion of Malkana Rajputs. The Malkana Rajputs who had been converted *en mass* to Islam had retained all the customs and practices of Hinduism, including those of their sub-tribal organization, and still carried the label of their pre-conversion sub-castes. Some Rajputs had even been readmitted into Hinduism at the turn of the century in Etawah. In 1922, a meeting of the Rajput Upkarini Mahasabha, held under the chairmanship of Sir Nahar Singh of Shahpura, decided to take them back in their original Rajput sub-castes. The resolution was endorsed by the the All-India Rajput Sabha.⁴⁹ Muslim missionaries flocked to the United Province to stop this reconversion, but when they failed to convince the Malkanas, who were distributed in 418 villages, they reversed their tactics. They donned the garb of Hindu preachers and succeeded in creating an atmosphere of refusal to be taken into their fold among the Hindus.⁵⁰ The Bharatiya Hindu Shuddhi Sabha was established, at Agra, under the presidentship of Swami Shraddhanand. Both the wings of Arya Samaj, concerted their efforts, to raise funds and fight the additional opposition of Congress leaders who thought that *shuddhi* would constitute a major danger to Hindu-Muslim unity. Arya Samaj leaders consented to withdraw their demands, only if the Muslims agreed to do the same. But no agreement was possible. Therefore, the Arya Samaj, continued its work and against innumerable odds and ends eventually completed it.⁵¹

Swami Dayanand stressed the importance of education especially true Vedic knowledge, in dispelling ignorance. As according to him, the root cause of suffering and exploitation was ignorance, which ultimately led to dishonesty, idolatry, etc.⁵² Every human being, according to him, had the right to acquire knowledge through education. He sup-

ported this by quoting the second verse of the 26th chapter of Yajurveda,⁵³ where the Lord himself says, 'We have revealed the Vedas for the brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas, shudras, and our servants, women and very low castes... who should read and teach the Vedas, listen to and read them to others, so as to improve their knowledge, to adopt the virtuous course of conduct, to eschew vicious habits, to get rid of distress and to obtain happiness'.⁵⁴ Dayanand states at one point: 'The Popish priests think that if they teach the people and allow them to travel in foreign countries, they will become wise (through contact with men of independent minds) and so will not fall into the trap of their pious frauds, which will take away their honour and livelihood. They have raised difficulties in eating, drinking and living, so that they may not venture to go to foreign countries'.⁵⁵ It thus seems that Dayanand ascribed the loss of political liberty to the dwindling resources of the country, because overseas trading rights were given away to men of alien faiths due to the restrictions placed by the priests. 'There can never be any progress in a country, unless it rules in and trades with foreign countries and archipelagos. There can be nothing but poverty and misery, when the people do not go for trade beyond the bounds of their country, to places where foreigners trade and rule'.⁵⁶ He says that the tax on a ship going to sea, mentioned in the Code of Manu, shows that voyages to foreign lands from the Aryavarta were often made in ancient times.⁵⁷

Education, thus, formed the basis of the edifice built by the Arya Samaj. Thus, no memorial more appropriate could be erected for Swami Dayanand, who died in 1883, than establishing efficient Anglo-Vedic institutions, which included schools, colleges, boarding houses, and so on. The objectives of these institutions were: (a) to encourage, improve and enforce the study of Hindu literature; (b) to encourage the study of classical Sanskrit and Vedas; (c) to encourage and enforce the study of English literature and science, both theoretical and applied; (d) to provide means for giving technical education, in cooperation with Anglo-Vedic institutions, as far as, it was not inconsistent with the accomplishment of the first objective'.⁵⁸

Membership, to the first such institution, was open to persons who donated Rs 100 or more, or were the members of the Arya Samaj that had contributed Rs 1000 or more. The first managing committee, was empowered to decide the locality of the institution,⁵⁹ and on March 20, 1866, the proposal that the school and a boarding house of this institution be opened at once, and be located at Lahore, was carried unanimously.⁶⁰ In order to create and maintain an atmosphere of freedom and liberty, it was decided to run this institution independently, without Government aid. Significantly, this momentous decision was taken by men of moderate means. There were slight differences in the social status of Khatris, Aroras, Banias and Jats, but economically they stood on the same footing. Most of them were clerks or "pen-pushers" who could contribute only small amounts.⁶¹

The Arya Samaj did not make much headway with the princely states; in Punjab, for example, only two out of 34 had opted for the Samaj. They avoided any association with the Arya Samaj, for fear of incurring the wrath of the British government. The reason is not far to seek. Dayanand's *Satyartha Prakash* contained his ideas about Swarajya and Swadeshi, in the chapter on 'Duties of Royalty' with its implicit, if not obvious implications.⁶² Also, the ruling classes and aristocracy must have found the Arya Samaj way of living too austere, dull,... and prohibitive.⁶³ But, despite setbacks and opposition to the opening of the first Anglo-Vedic institution, the Samaj's leaders and followers displayed an indomitable spirit. For example, Mahatma Hans Raj who had recently passed his B.A. then, agreed to work as a honorary principal of the institution, while his brother Mulk Raj offered to share half of his meagre salary of Rs 80/- with him, to meet the family expenditure.⁶⁴ It was only in 1888, that the managing committee resolved unanimously, and requested Lala Hans Raj to accept an honorarium of Rs 50/- per month.⁶⁵ The value of this dedication is evident in the Education reports of 1881 and 1891, which show that the number of remunerative posts demanding knowledge of English, exceeded the output of matriculates. As for a graduate, a decent government service could be offered and secured just by asking for it. The Arya Samaj started work in earnest, by launching a drive to build

the capital required for the institution. Great ingenuity and imagination was shown in the collection of funds; names of the donors were published in the *Tribune* to encourage donations, money was collected during the anniversary celebrations of the Lahore Arya Samaj and other local groups, and charities and gifts were also invited. No amount was considered too insignificant for contributions. "Dharma pots" were used for the collection of flour⁶⁶ and rags, which were later sold and the money was utilized for educative purposes. For example, certain amounts from the "rag fund", were allocated for the founding and maintenance of the Arya Samaj library and reading room.⁶⁷ Some other events in these educational developments are given below.

In 1888, a first year college class was opened.⁶⁸ In 1889, Gurudatt, Munshi Ram and a few others sponsored a proposal to collect Rs 5,000 by opening a separate class for Vedic studies, for a Sanskrit library on Vedic lore. But the managing committee felt that this may not be in the interest of the college. Perhaps, the registration of the Society and the Trust might even be cancelled on these grounds.⁶⁹ But Munshi Ram and Gurudatt were not convinced, for they attached great significance to Vedic studies, ancient history, and the training of the preachers.⁷⁰ The managing committee, however, argued that at a time when neither the college nor the school (or the two boarding houses) had any building of their own, it was almost impossible to set apart so much money for a Sanskrit library. A university degree could not be delinked from employment opportunities. Further, this would neither help in solving economic problems of the people, nor enable the Arya Samaj to meet the challenge posed by the Christian missionaries. The committee did not want to pursue ideals without pragmatism.⁷¹ As if this was not enough, another non-academic issue was raised; whether or not, a non-vegetarian could become a member of the Arya Samaj.⁷² The inevitable came in 1893, when the Arya Samaj split into two sections; the college and the *gurukul* groups,⁷³ but this remained confined to the Punjab, where almost every town had two Samajes, one belonging to the college section and the other to the *gurukul* section. The Samajes of the *gurukul* section have as their provincial representative body, the Punjab Arya Pratinidhi Sabha while

the college section body is named the Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha of Punjab, Baluchistan and Sind.⁷⁴ The *gurukul* group wanted in its institutions, the building up of 'a strong religious character. . . on the basis of pure Vedic instruction',⁷⁵ as envisaged by Swami Dayanand. In 1898, the Pratinidhi Sabha, voted to open a *gurukul* with resident teachers who would look after the education and moral training of the pupils, especially on brahmacharya or sexual continence.⁷⁶ Swami Shraddhanand remained the guiding spirit of the *gurukul*. It was due to his continuous and strenuous effort that the concept of the *gurukul* became a reality. Since finances were the major problem, he took a vow that he would not return to his home until he had collected Rs. 30,000 for the *gurukul* fund. 'He spent days of toil and nights of vigil to realize the dream of his guru. Money came, and children came. A suitable site, between the Nilgiris and the Nildhara, with Himalayas on one side and Ganges on the other'⁷⁷ was offered to him as a free gift for the *gurukul*, and in 1902 land was acquired near Hardwar. In 1902 Gurukul Kangri was established strictly in accordance with the precepts laid down by Swami Dayanand.

Swami Shraddhanand also took up the cause of the education of girls. He along with Lala Dev Raj set up the Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, a premier institution of its kind at Jullundur in 1891.⁷⁸ There was considerable opposition, and Swami Shraddhanand even had to fight against other wings of the Arya Samaj. He wrote innumerable articles, with the title "Adhura Insaf" and published them in his paper, *Satdharm Pracharak*, to propagate the education of girls⁷⁹ which, he was convinced, would pave the way for their emancipation. Thus, in the face of his tenacity all resistance disappeared. The benefits of the cause were soon realized, by all sections of the Arya Samaj, and everyone joined enthusiastically in the opening of girls' schools. They even competed with each other, so that practically all the leading cities and towns of Uttar Pradesh had girls' schools in the Arya Samaj premises.⁸⁰ The Bombay and Calcutta Arya Samaj organizations also established big spacious schools.⁸¹ In the wake of education, came the demand for the participation of educated women in the celebrations of Arya Samaj.⁸² The result was that an Arya Dharma Sabha was founded at Lahore for the eradication of parda.⁸³

The Arya Samaj was especially concerned with the plight of widows. Swami Dayanand had permitted widows, who had never lived with their husbands, to remarry. But it appears, he showed little understanding when he denied the right of matrimony to all men and women of the sacerdotal order;⁸⁴ expecting everyone to rise up to his standards of brahmacharya. He even prescribed niyoga, for the purposes of procreation. In fact, it is stated in the *Satyarth Prakash*, that if a man and a woman wished to be united by niyoga, they should make a solemn declaration before the members of their families that they make a mutual covenant of niyoga for the specific purpose of raising issues and that they will separate on the accomplishment of the object. If they broke this vow they would be considered sinners and liable to punishment by the classmen and government.⁸⁵ By niyoga, he grants women their right to motherhood, and solves the problem of the continuation of family line, for the men. But the desire for companionship, the feeling of stability of life, which ordinarily can be granted by the process of procreation, was not favoured by him. Perhaps, niyoga was alright in the Vedic times, but when taken out of that context, it certainly looks ridiculous. It seems to have created problems for the Arya Samaj, because their newspapers used the word niyoga, for some of the earlier widow-remarriages that took place in Uttar Pradesh. Thus, the Arya Samaj was faced with a serious problem over the advisability of moving away from Dayanand's standpoint.

At any rate, the Arya Samaj was committed to the cause of widow-marriage. Swami Dayanand had laid down, in his *Satyarth Prakash*, that the minimum marriageable age should be 16 years for the girls and 25 years for the boys. This was a radical idea, in those days, when the belief was that the ideal bride should not be more than five years old.⁸⁶ It had become a primary tenet of social reform and was also linked with the problem of child marriages which had reached alarming numbers. Efforts were made to force the British government to raise the marriageable age of consent by legislation. Society also needed to be jolted. Therefore, practically all the social reformers joined in fighting the arguments of the Sanatanists. The Arya Samaj was a late starter, but once it adopted this mission, it revolutionized the

whole movement. In 1915, Sir Ganga Ram opened a Vidhva Vivah Sahayak Sabha and in a very short period its branches covered the whole country. The Sarda Act, could be passed only because of the relentless efforts of Harbilas Sarda, a leading Arya Samajist. And yet, legislation was not enough to check child-marriages. The Arya Samaj fought against the tendency of the people, to evade the Act, by moving into the princely states which were not governed by British legislation. It even provided refuge to the widows, who ran the risk of being exploited in any number of ways. It established widow homes, and in 1924, founded the Dayanand Salvation Mission at Hoshiarpur with the specific purpose of protecting widows and orphan girls. In a short time, such missions were established all over the country.

The Arya Samaj was, perhaps, the only organization apart from the missionaries to establish orphanages, and give famine relief. The first orphanage established by Swami Dayanand, in 1877, at Ferozpur, gained strength and importance because of the famines of 1896-1897. The miseries wrought by the famines and the snags in the Hindu social system, provided excellent opportunities to the Christian missionaries for conversion. The Christian paper, *Nur-i-Afshan*, had commented on this by saying that the Hindu could save only a few orphans, for they died of plague more than of famine. It stated that the Hindu community, was so factionalized that any effort to save the orphans on their part would be futile.⁸⁷ Lajpat Rai, the leader of the movement wrote too, that one-fourth of the Christian converts had been orphans who had fallen into the hands of Christian missionaries, while the other three-fourth were Hindus who got no help from their own fellowmen.⁸⁸ The Arya Samaj enlisted volunteers, considered plans for medical relief, and helped to rehabilitate the victims of calamities like earthquakes and floods.⁸⁹

The question, that inevitably arises, is how could the Arya Samaj venture to take up all these projects without any official government grants, and without being backed by older aristocracies like Jagirdars and rajas. It raised funds primarily, by appealing to the public, through newspapers and strenuous physical preaching tours by its leaders, that enthused the masses to participate in the ever expanding social reform pro-

grammes of the Samaj. Inevitably, the money collected barely sufficed. An adequate reserve could never be built up, to give a suitable and stable economic basis to the Samaj, and to enable it to offer careers for its volunteers or organize its activities, in such a way, that would allow it to compete with the Christian missionaries. The Arya Samaj continued its activities as long as it could generate enthusiasm. But once their cause was taken up by other agencies, on political as well as social levels, its militant ideology became more or less irrelevant. Mahatma Hans Raj, one of the strongest pillars of the Arya Samaj seems to have been rather shaky and despondent at this stage. In January 1923 he wrote in his diary: 'I no longer feel like fighting. Of course, if others would take up the quarrel, I would certainly help them, otherwise, I would remain silent.'⁹⁰ Even earlier, in 1921, he had observed: 'The Arya Samaj which had so far been displaying a great spirit of self-sacrifice is no longer occupying the first rank... enthusiasm and sacrifice are now on the wane'.⁹¹ The despondency of Mahatma Hans Raj, probably one of the most balanced and cool-headed leaders, sounds rather inopportune, at a time, when the Arya Samaj was considered to be very effective body in the field of *shuddhi*, especially when Swami Shraddhanand was talking about creating the links of "roti" and "beti": inter-dining and inter-marriage with the ameliorated classes.⁹²

It did not take very long for people to realize, that the day of the Arya Samaj, if not already done, was almost over. Yet, the Samaj in its quarter, half or full centenary celebration has been trying to prove, that the movement is still alive.⁹³ It continues to rake up old issues for its programmes of reform, like the eradication of the pernicious dowry system and drinking, etc. But it passes resolutions without paying any regard to changed socio-economic conditions of society, in general, and of its followers in particular. Generally speaking, a reform programme, as understood by reform movements, can be considered to be suitable for all times and conditions because human failings and problems basically remain unchanged. But, along with this concept of continuity, there is almost always a desire for some change. Therefore, if this requisite change, or even moderation to say the least, is not taken into account 'the movement degenerates into

dogmas and dies a natural death. For example, during its centenary celebrations, the Samaj called for ending the public school system and returning to the Gandhian ideal of basic education.⁶⁴ Perhaps, a positive approach would have been to think of opening and maintaining more competent and better equipped schools, to train the children along international standards, because basic education has been tried and it has failed. It may be suitable for certain sections of the society, but it cannot be made the general rule.

Can the Samaj, not be true to the Vedic traditions, without being static? It need not give up its ideal of catering to the progressive classes. In Delhi, at Ramlila grounds in December 1975, a call was given for adopting Hindi as the only media of instruction. Objections, and really valid ones, were raised by a representative from Mauritius. The Samaj did not take any notice of it, and yet the assertion that Arya Samaj can become a world-religion never abated even for a moment. The convention at Delhi, adopted an eleven-point programme of action for reforming society, and passed a resolution, for the establishment of a university to conduct and promote research on the teachings and philosophy of Swami Dayanand.⁶⁵ The representatives of the Punjab Pratinidhi Sabhas, from Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, and West Uttar Pradesh participated in the celebrations at Rohtak. During the celebrations the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, announced a target of enrolling at least 5000 scholars, who would propagate the ideals of the Arya Samaj throughout the country. They also resolved to raise ten crores of rupees for this purpose, through donations.⁶⁶ During similar celebrations, at Varanasi, the Arya Samaj professed to have created a five lakh rupee Dayanand Seva Trust, to help disabled Arya Samaj sanyasis, scholars and pracharaks.⁶⁷ These ideas are good, but it still remains to be seen, how, and in what way, the Arya Samaj implements its decisions. The fear is that they might end up, only as popular slogans in order to win seats on various representative bodies.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Dakshina* is a traditional offering made by the disciple, to the preceptor, at the end of his study.
2. Bawa Chhaju Singh; *The life and Teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati*, 1903, Lahore, Pratinidhi Sabha Punjab. p. 76.
3. Kumbh Mela is held every twelve years at Hardwar, when Jupiter enters the zodiac sign of the Kumbh or pot.
4. Bawa Chhaju Singh, op. cit., pp. 94-95.
5. Ibid. p. 95. In 1879, Dayanand went again to the Kumbh Mela after 12 years; pitched his Pakhand Khandini banners or 'denouncers expositors of show and imposture', against the orthodox, to defeat Swami Vishuddhanand of Kashi. It thus became a practice for his followers to go to Hardwar and preach Dayanand's doctrines at every Kumbh Mela.
6. *Satyarth Prakash*, with fourteen chapters, touches almost every aspect of man's life and convictions. Its language is not polished, but the message is conveyed in unambiguous terms. The chapters which deal with the condemnation of other beliefs, sects and religions, can be considered to be full of cheap satire and ridicule. But before passing a verdict, on his style or erudition, the reader should take into account the level of intelligence of the masses who came to hear him. If Dayanand was to carry them with him, he had to be on the same level as them. See : *The Light of Truth—An English translation of Satyarth Prakash* of Maharishi Swami Dayanand Saraswati, *The Luther of India*, by Durga Prasad, 1972, New Delhi, Jan Gyan Prakash; here after referred to as *Satyarth Prakash*.
7. The Lahore creed consisted of ten precise simple and straightforward rules. Their emphasis was on the attributes of God and the inculcation of a feeling of brotherhood amongst mankind. It formed the basis for the acceptance of Arya Samaj as a world religion, which spread as far as Africa, South America, Canada, Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana, Singapore, Bangkok etc. These ten Niyams are: (i) God is the primary cause of all true knowledge and of every thing known by its name; (ii) God is All-Truth, All-knowledge, All-Beatitude, Incorporeal, Almighty, Just, Merciful, Unbegotten, Infinite, Unchangeable, without a Beginning, Incomparable the Support and Lord of all, All-Pervading, Omniscient, Imperishable, Immortal, exempt from fear, Eternal, Holy and the maker of the universe, To Him is worship due; (iii) The Vedas are the books of all true knowledge. It is the paramount duty of all Aryans to read them, to hear them read, and to recite them to others; (iv) All persons should remain ever ready to accept the truth and to renounce untruth; (v) All actions ought to be performed in conformity with virtue, i.e., after due consideration of right and wrong; (vi) The primary aim of the Arya Samaj is to do good to mankind, i.e., to ameliorate the physical, spiritual and social condition

of all men; (vii) All ought to be treated with love, justice and due regard to their merits; (viii) Ignorance ought to be dispelled and knowledge diffused; (ix) No one ought to remain satisfied with his own welfare. The welfare of the individual should be regarded as inclusive of the welfare of all; and (x) In matters which affect the well being of all, the individual should subordinate his personal likings, while in matters that affect him alone, he is to enjoy freedom of action.

8. Rule 3 and 4 of the constitution of the Arya Samaj at Bombay.

9. Rule 5.

10. Rule 11.

11. Rule 9.

12. Rule 19.

13. The composition of Ārya Pratinidhi Sabhā, Delhi, established in 1908. Proceedings are available in Sarvadeshik Bhawan, Asaf Ali Road, Delhi.

14. Rule 27.

15. Rule 28.

16. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. II, Part I, p. 30.

17. *The Census of India*, 1901, General Report, Subsidiary Table No. 1, p. 395.

18. *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. XVII, Punjab and N.W.F.P. H.A. Rose, pp. 116-17.

19. These brahmins belonged to non-priestly professions.

20. *The Census of India*, 1901, Vol. XXVII, Punjab and N.W.F.P., H.A. Rose, p. 116-17.

21. *The Census of India*, 1901, Vol. I, General Report, p. 393.

22. *The Census of India*, 1901, Vol. XVI, Part I, N.W.F.P. and Oudh. R. Burn, p. 243.

23. *Punjab Census Report*, 1911, Vol. XIV, Pt. Hari Kishan Kaul, p. 134.

24. *The Census of India*, 1921, Punjab and Delhi, Vol. XV, Part I, p. 181.

25. *The Census of India*, 1921, United Provinces, Vol. XVI, Part I, pp. 59-50.

26. *Arya Patrika*, May 7, 1889, Lahore Arya Samaj, p. 1.

27. A resolution to this effect was passed during the half century celebrations of Shri Dayanand's nirvana. Shrimad Dayanand Nirvān Ardh Shatābdi Mahōtsava, Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Delhi, p. 41.

28. *Arya Patrika*, Dec. 31, 1889, p. 2.

29. *Arya Patrika*, Oct. 19, 1895. Also May 9, 1896.

30. *Arya Patrika*, Dec. 31, 1889, p. 2. This opened the way for caste Hindus to take to professions hitherto considered below their

prestige. One example of the Bhallas (Khatris) taking to the shoe trade might suffice here. It is well known that working in leather was so far the profession of chamars.

31. *Jat Pat Todak Mandal, General Review*, 1939, Lahore pp. 1-2.

32. 'Caste Must Go', a word about the Jat Pat Todak Mandal, Lahore, quoted by Grahm Reid in his *Arya Samaj and Caste Reform. Micro-film Thesis* No. 46, Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi, p. 543.

33. *Hindustan Times*, Dec. 27, 1975, p. 1, Col. 1. The excerpts from his speech in the Centenary Celebration held in Ramlila ground, Delhi.

34. Kenneth W Jones, *Arya Samaj in the Punjab : A Study of Social Reform and Revivalism, 1877-1902. Micro-film Thesis* No. 1, Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi, pp. 139-40.

35. *Arya Magazine*, August 1884, p. 131.

36. *Punjab Census Report*, 1911, Vol. XIV, *Art of Shuddhi* by Pt. Hari Kishen Kaul, p. 151.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-51.

38. Grahm Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

39. Records of the Home Department, Public A., December 1893, Nos. 210-13.

40. Ram Chandra Javed, *Arya Samaj Ke Mahapurush*. Jullundur University Publishers, 1954. pp. 60-1.

41. Lekh Ram, *Jehad or the Basis of Muhammeden Religion, (Risala-i-Jihad ya'ri Din-i-Muhammad* 1892, Lahore, Aror Bans Press, p. 64.

42. Govt. of India, *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers*, published in the Punjab, received upto the January, 7, 1893, Vol. VI, p. 219.

43. Govt. of India, *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers*; Vol XI, pp. 180-81. Mirza Ghulam Ahmed had first prophesied the death of Lekh Ram on Feb. 20, 1886. He stated the prophecy again on Feb. 20, 1893-Bharat Sudhar, March 13, 1897.

44. Bhimsen Vidyalkar, *Arya Pratinidhi Sabha Punjab ka Itihas*, Chaitra 1922, Arya Pratinidhi Sabha Punjab, Lahore, Ch. V, pp. 311-12.

45. *Arya Directory*, Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Delhi, v.s. 1898, p. 191. Rahatiyas were the untouchable community among the Sikhs, and were considered to be on par with the chamars.

46. *The Punjab Census Report*, 1911, Vol. XIV, p. 150 Meghoddhar Sabha was established at Sialkot on March 3, 1903.

47. Satyadev Vidyalkar *Swami Shraddhanand*, Delhi, October 1933, Delhi, Vijay Pustak Bhandar, p. 595.

48. Sri Ram Sharma, *Mahatma Hans Raj, Maker of the Modern Punjab*, Lahore, Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha, 1941, pp. 192-201.

49. Satyadev Vidyalkar, op. cit., October 1933, p. 592. Also Sri Ram Sharma, op. cit., pp., 202-3.

50. Sri Ram Sharma, op. cit., p. 204.

51. Ibid., pp. 210-21,

52. Durga Prasad, *The Light of Truth*, an English translation of *Satyartha Prakash* of Maharishi Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Delhi, Jan Gyan Prakashan, 1972, p. 311.

53. Ibid. p. 72.

54. Ibid. p. 73.

55. Ibid. p. 258.

56. Ibid. p. 259.

57. Ibid. p. 257.

58. Records of D.A.V. College Managing Committee, 1886-87, Rule

II provided that the society was to be designated as the D.A.V. College Trust and Managing Society. It was registered under Act-XXI of 1860. The entire record of this society is available at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti House, New Delhi.

59. Ibid., Rule 19.

60. Proceedings of the Managing Committee held on March 20, 1886.

61. *The Tribune*, Sept. 15, 1888, p. 2.

62. Durga Prasad, op. cit., pp. 136-71.

63. *The Tribune*, Sept. 15, 1888, p. 2.

64. N B Sen, Ed. *Punjab's Eminent Hindus*, Lahore, New Book Society, n.d., p. 49.

65. Proceedings of the special meeting of the Managing Committee of D.A.V. College, held at Amritsar on January 28, 1888, Clause VI, p. 131.

66. The collection of flour attracted the attention of government authorities. It felt that it was one of the means devised by religious societies trying to bring together members of the community into monolithic organizations. The rules framed by these societies were cited in the report on the causes of riots between Muhammadans and Hindus in various parts of India during the year 1893. It says that the contributions were made compulsory on all Hindus under penalty of exclusion from caste. Each household was directed to set apart at each meal one chutki (equal in weight or value to one paisa) of foodstuff for each member of the family. The eating of food without setting apart the chutki was declared to be an offence equal to that of eating cow's flesh. Agents called Sabhasads were appointed for the collection of these contributions. Their duty was to sell them and to pay over the proceeds to the Sabhapati, who was incharge of the funds. Home Department Public A, December 1893, Numbers 210-13.

67. Jambunathan, *Swami Shradhdhanand*, Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1961, p. 79.

68. Proceedings of a special meeting of the Managing Committee of the D.A.V. College held at Lucknow on April 28, 1888.

69. Satyadev Vidyalkar, op. cit., pp. 217-18.

70. Ibid. p. 218.

71. Ibid. p. 218.

72. Ibid. p. 220.

73. Sri Ram Sharma, op. cit. pp. 57-65.

74. Prasad, G, *Origin, Scope and Mission of the Arya Samaj*, Allahabad, Arya Samaj Chowk, 1940, p. 92.

75. Jambunathan, op. cit., p. 139.

76. Govt. of India, *Selections from the Vernacular Newspaper*, Satdharm Pracharak December 9, 1898. Out of the four ashramas prescribed by the Vedic dharma, two were connected with leaving the house, and two with procuring a family. During the brahmacharya and vanprastha, a man had to leave the family in order to acquire or impart education. An ideal situation was created by the *gurukul* in which a grand father could be found teaching and instructing his grandson. Here they could come close to each other inspite of the generation gap. The other two ashramas, the grihastha and the sannynas were to be devoted to the family. In the case of the former, a family connoted only the ties of blood and kinship, whereas it comprised the whole world in the case of the latter. It was for the welfare of the universe that man was to exert himself in the last phase of his life, and it may be added, that he quite logically became the responsibility of the society at large. This theory of the four ashramas was expounded in a personal interview by Shri Acharya Krishna, now known as Swami Deekshanand.. He has taken sannynas and is for the time being residing in the Arya Samaj Diwan Hall, Chandni Chowk, Delhi.

77. N B Sen, op. cit., p. 138.

78. Satyadev Vidyalkar, op. cit., p. 204.

79. Ibid. p. 204.

80. Vidya Vachaspati, Inder, *Arya Samaj ka Itihas*, Delhi, Sarvedshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1957, pp. 226-27.

81. Ibid. p. 227.

82. Ibid. p. 228.

83. Ibid. p. 228.

84. Durga Prasad, op. cit. p. 109.

85. Ibid. p. 111.

86. *Panchvarsha Bhaved Gauri*.

87. Govt. of India, *Sections from the Vernacular Newspaper*, Vol. XI, p. 764. Also *Nur-i-Afshan*, Aug. 13, 1897.

88. Govt. of India, *Selections from the Vernacular Newspaper*, Vol. XI, p. 521, Also *Arya Gazette*, June 17, 1897.

89. Lajpat Rai, *Arya Samaj*, 1915, London, Orient Longmans, p. 195.
90. Sri Ram Sharma, op. cit. p. 276.
91. Ibid. pp. 276-77
92. Satyadev Vidyalkar op. cit. p. 628.
93. The resolutions passed by the Arya Samaj, in the quarter and half centenary celebrations, are available in their proceeding volumes in the Arya Sarvedeshik Sabha Library, Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi.
94. *The Statesman*, March 1, 1976, p. 1 col. 2.
95. *The Hindustan Times*, Dec., 27th 1975, p. 12, col. 6.
96. *The Statesman*, March 1, 1976, p. 3, col. 2.
97. Ibid., p. 3, col. 1.

LOKAHITWADI : PIONEER OF RATIONALISM* IN MAHARASHTRA

Y M PATHAN

GOPALRAO Hari Deshmukh, popularly known by his nom de plume Lokahitwadi, was born on February 18, 1823 in Poona. His father Haripant was a phadnis (secretary) to Senapati Bapu Gokhale. Haripant and his parents were staying in Konkan as 'vatandars' (holders of any hereditary estate, office, right or due) before they shifted to Poona. The struggle between the Marathas and the English ended with the surrender of Peshwa Bajirao II to Sir John Malcom on June 3, 1818. The Peshwa was pensioned off and rendered incapable of further political activity. It was under these circumstances that the Deshmukhs went to Poona. Haripant was hereafter to be the vakil or representative of the Peshwas and his interests were in the former capital of the Peshwas.

In the year 1830, at the age of seven, Gopalrao was married to Gopikabai who was four years old. In 1836 when Haripant died, Gopalrao was only thirteen years old, the British Government abolished his jagir in Konkan. But Gopalrao and his three brothers received an annual pension in lieu of their hereditary rights to the jagir. In 1841, Gopalrao completed his vernacular education and in the next three years acquired proficiency in English. In 1844, he worked in the office of the Agent for the Sardars in the Deccan, and in 1846 passed the examination of the *munsib* (*munsiff*). He was appointed a judge in 1851, and promoted as an Assistant Inam Commissioner in 1855; two years

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later he became the Inam Commissioner. In 1860, a year after the Inam Commission was abolished, Gopalrao was appointed an Assistant Judge—a position he held until his retirement in 1879. During his service in the judiciary he was posted to different places in the Bombay Presidency such as Wai, Poona, Satara, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Surat, Ahmednagar, Thana and Nasik. He was appointed a Fellow of the Bombay University in 1874, and in 1877 he became Justice of the Peace. The same year he was awarded the title of 'Raobahadur'. From 1880 to 1882 he was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council, and was also honoured as a 'First class Sardar' of the Deccan.

After retiring from judicial service, Gopalrao Deshmukh stayed in Poona. For a year he worked as a Diwan of Ratlam state (1884). But the decade that followed his retirement was one of bereavement and sorrow. He lost his wife, elder brother, three sons, two daughters and son-in-law. All this left him wholly dejected and broken hearted. His end came soon after. He died on October 9, 1892.

His Writings

Lokahitwadi started writing from 1848 on various subjects such as religion, sociology, history, political science, and economics. A bibliography of his works is given in the Appendix. Often he wrote essays in the form of letters which were first published in the journal *Prabhakar* and later in his book *Nibandh Sangrah*. The different critical editions of his *Hundred Letters Shatpatre* have been very popular amongst the Marathi readers. To illustrate, an extract from his letter no. hundred is very important from the point of view of understanding his attitude and outlook towards life. He says here :

For last two years, I have been, in a very outspoken manner, explaining to the people of our country, the way of life they are living. In doing so, I might have hurt somebody (or some section of the society), for which I may be excused. I am confident that who-so-ever reads these letters and thinks over their content will realise that every word, written in these letters, is true. Lokahitwadi has not been a slave of anybody. He has not expected anything from anybody or written anything by order of any person. Nothing is artificial

or untrue in these letters. Nothing is written for the sake of money or fame or favour.

I have worked against all odds and have taken all pains with a specific view in my mind. The people should understand their real condition, they should try to improve; they should be happy in this (Material) world and should also achieve the goal of spiritual salvation. They should get rid of their wrong notions and foolish beliefs, which they have cherished in their minds for a long period.

This is the object of my writing. It is done to satisfy my own desire. This 'Labour' has been undertaken by me without any remuneration, without a single farthing from anybody. And whatever I have written is written after profound thinking. Every word of these letters is true.

I offer these writings to the people of the Nation.¹

This letter makes it clear that he was not against Hinduism as such but only against misguided and foolish beliefs. He disapproved of the selfish priests who exploited their age-old religious status; their domination was to be thrown off. Since knowledge and thought were important, he advised people to read English books for enlightenment and for widening their horizons of knowledge.

Lokahitwadi believed in the religion of humanism and wanted that the people should not only profess but practise ethical and moral values. Pointing out that the British were enlightened rulers, he advised the people to understand them and to achieve the goal of all round development during their regime, for this would lead to the unity and progress of the nation. He concludes his letter No. hundred by saying:

Whatever I have written is written only for the good of the people. Please ponder over what you read. I have pointed out your errors and, while doing so, I have not thought, whether you would like this or dislike this. I sincerely desire that all of you should improve. I have done the service very sincerely and without any prejudice. I hope, (you will not misunderstand me and) you will not be offended when you read these letters. Kindly think deeply and try to understand what I mean to say. I am very happy to note that for last two years, (through the medium of these letters) we were meeting each other off and on. I shall cherish for long the happy memories of the period.²

Acquisition and Spread of Knowledge

While Lokahitwadi had studied the *Shastras* and other literature written in Sanskrit and knew the importance of its language and literature, he felt that it was not useful during his own times. Since the common people did not understand Sanskrit, the priests exploited it for selfish motives. Lokahitwadi compared knowledge in English and Sanskrit literature and found that the content of English language literature was far superior to that found in Sanskrit language. In letter no. sixty-nine, he satirically says, "Even if we collect all books written in Sanskrit and compare them with a single book on Geography, written in English, the English book on Geography will be superior to all these Sanskrit books".³

Lokahitwadi sincerely believed that since knowledge of the sciences was far advanced in the European countries, English language was the key to this rich treasure. This is why he did not want the Indians to study Sanskrit but wanted them to concentrate on English language and literature, stating in letter no. eighty-four, "the knowledge in the Sanskrit books was useful only in ancient times. It does not have any relevance to the present times".⁴ With a touch of satire, he criticizes the Sanskrit pandits.⁵

A Sanskrit Pandit who goes through the bulky volumes of *Nibandhs* practically lives in the ancient times. He cannot think of the present times but he can only think of the period which is far away from our time i.e., three or four thousand years behind the present world. If we tell him that Colombo is a city which is situated in Ceylon, he may convince us that Shrilanka can not be discovered or approached by any person because Sudarshana Chakra is revolving around Shrilanka ! If we give him information about the Tapti river, he may say that, this river is the sister of Yama.

Thus, the Sanskrit language is not very useful to us during the present times. It creates confusion, does not serve any practical purpose, and drags us into unproductive efforts, which is worthless in the present day context.⁶ For Lokahitwadi ignorance was the root cause of backwardness, especially since outdated knowledge of Sanskrit *granthas* was being pursued. This is why he prescribed the ways of the West and the

knowledge of English language and literature. This did not imply a blind and wholesale condemnation of Sanskrit language and Sanskrit literature. He was unsparing in his criticism only when he found that they were an impediment to progress and enlightenment.

Women's Liberation

Lokahitwadi had very carefully studied the different aspects of the problem of Indian womanhood. Rejecting the view of the Hindu shastras of giving the Indian women a subordinate and a humiliating position in society, he attacked it vehemently as he opposed all forms of inequality. The reasons for this male domination he found once again among the 'protectors' of religion, who under its garb exploited women, in three ways :

(a) Hindu women had no access to education. It may be recalled that as early as the thirteenth century Maharashtrian women were not entitled to do sadhana and achieve moksha. This attitude then was opposed by Sant Jnaneshvar and Swami Chakradhar, that remitted in the 'Warkari Sampradaya'. This was a popular religious cult of Maharashtra which allowed women the freedom of worship. Some religious cults like the Nath and 'Mahanubhav Sampradayas' even went to the extent of allowing women to take sanyas for this purpose.

Lokahitwadi was well aware of the fact that Hindu religion in the beginning, did not forbid the education of women or allow them the path of spiritual salvation. It was only later that they were reduced to an inferior position. In his letter no. fifteen on 'Information of Religion' he quotes certain *shlokas* to elaborate his views as follows :

1. In *manusmriti* (5-147) it is stated that women should not do anything in the home according to her own will, whatever may be her age.
2. A good woman should tender all services to her husband. This will give her the reward of Heaven (*manusmriti*, 5. 154-5).
3. That housewife who observes fasts and *vratas* during the life time of her husband shall lessen the life of her husband

and, as a sort of punishment, she will be sent to *naraka* (*Laghu-parashar*).

4. The woman, who departs from her husband because of his being poor, sick or foolish will take birth as a dog or as a pig (*Parashar*).

Moreover, the priests for their selfish motives, had imposed on these poor women unproductive and worthless customs.

Lokahitwadi goes on, in his letter no. forty-three to criticize these customs :

In some *purana* it is stated that woman should count one lakh grains of wheat and offer the same to the God. By this act of 'piousness' the God is pleased with the lady and he blesses her! What is the use of such worthless customs? Such a labour is really unproductive. If a woman spends this time in educating herself, she will be really benefited.

Because such worthless customs and traditions had ruined the life of the Indian women, Lokahitwadi protested against this injustice.

This is why education was necessary for women if they were to regain their own status and equality with men.

(b) Child-marriage was a burning problem of the day; it had reached a stage when marriages were fixed even before the girl and the boy were in the cradle. In his letter no. two, Lokahitwadi protests and says satirically :

Nowadays the parents are worried for the marriage of their son even when he is only five years old. The anxiety is twofold; firstly, they are worried over the early marriage of their son and secondly, they are worried over the dowry, which they would get after celebrating this marriage. After some years, they experience the ill-effects of such marriages and it is no use repenting at that stage.⁷

(c) During the early British period, widows were not allowed to remarry, and sati was being practised. But the British Government was to prohibit such practices and customs through legislation since a widow was humiliated in all possible ways. Lokahitwadi was extremely moved by this suffering and at least ten letters are devoted to the cause of widow-remarriage (vide

Letter nos. 10, 15, 16, 70, 99, 102, 104, 105, 107 and 108). e.g., in letter no. ten he say :

It is great injustice that after the death of her husband, a woman is not allowed to remarry, The Almighty has created men and women and both have got equal rights and privileges. It is really paradoxical that a widower is allowed to remarry but not a widow. . . . In fact, you are slaughtering your own daughters in this manner.

In those days, there was also the practice of tonsuring a widow, or *keshvapan* which was an obligatory religious rite. In his letter no. sixteen he opposed this brutal practice, and questions (in letter no. fifteen), "Why should we blame the lady whose husband has expired? Is she responsible for that"? But he further states in his letter no. sixteen :

If the Shastras have prohibited the widows from remarriages, we may amend them. The Shastras are prepared for well being of the people. If the mandates of the Shastras are doing harm to the cause, they may be set aside and new rules may be prepared. . . . Widow remarriage is very useful social reform. We should not hesitate to support it. This reform will definitely benefit the Hindus and will remove the agony of the widows.

Though the shastris and the pandits are opposed to it, those who are in favour of such reform should hold a convention and in that convention they may resolve in favour of such amendment in the Shastras. They should advocate and carry out remarriages, inspite of the opposition of the priests and the pandits. If people do this, nobody would bother for the opposition of the orthodox shastris and pandits.⁸

Thus, Lokahitwadi's views on women's liberation are based on his rational outlook and his thoughts on the same were based on reality and reason. He advocated a rational outlook on life, and wanted outmoded customs, superstitions and obsolete laws to be amended or rejected, because all laws and observances should be for the general good and for the welfare of society. He says in letter no. seventy :

It may be a mandate of Manu, Yajnyavalkya, Brahmadev or anybody else. (If it is harmful to the society, it need not be accepted.) If it overlooks the reality and is not based on rational foundations, it may be set aside. With your own eyes, you see the agony of the

widows and you do not allow them to remarry only because you do not find any base for the same in your religious books (Shastras). It is a pity. You should think logically and rationally and keep such Shastras aside for the cause of the social good. Don't you feel ashamed when you see your sister and daughters, who are widows, in such a precarious condition? Is it not your duty to see that they are settled happily? In fact, you do possess the strength to perform this holy act. It will be foolish not to help them and keep them in the same situation, struggling against the hardships for ever.

Chaturvarnya

In most of his writings, Lokahitwadi attacked the brahmins, and this may be seen in his letter nos. 11, 17, 20, 21, 33, 48, 61, 62, 63, 71, 72, 73, 75, 86, 96, 103 and 107. Not believing in the superiority of one caste or varna over the other, he stated that this division of labour was once necessary. Later on these principles of *guna* and *karma* were overlooked by certain castes for their selfish motives and ends, and the idea of heredity and superiority was introduced. He had carefully studied the points in favour and against the *chaturvarnya-vyavastha* but had declared his disbelief in it as is evident in his letter nos. 22, 23 and 39. The principles of equality and fraternity were the foundation-stones on which his thinking rested.

The Brahmins

Though he was a brahmin, Lokahitwadi had severely criticized brahmins not because of their caste but because of the selfish activities of the priests that perpetuated exploitation. If owing to the *chaturvarnya* system brahmins were originally to impart knowledge and educate other varnas for showing the right path of religion, later on in order to preserve and safeguard their superiority they used religion for selfish measures. Lokahitwadi dealt with this problem very elaborately, taking into consideration all its aspects. In letter no. seventy-five he writes :

The brahmins are very greedy. They are neither worried about the religion nor about justice. They are just concerned with the preser-

vation of their religious status and their *dakshinas*. If a host in a marriage or a religious ceremony, invites two thousand brahmins for meals, they praise him to the skies and they declare that the host is a very pious man. If one is not able to do so, he is condemned as a sinner.

If somebody constructs a house, brahmins must be invited for worship or *pufa*. In so many other common, petty matters also, they have made provision for themselves. No act can be performed without the help of a brahmin priest. Even before you start learning to write, you require a brahmin priest. For such petty things in life, you have to feed thousands of brahmins. These meals are called *sahastrabhojanas*. Thus, these brahmin priests squeeze people.

Again, in letter no. seventeen, he dwells on the ignorance of the brahmins:

The brahmins do not understand the meaning of the Sanskrit mantras which they have learnt by heart. Mere learning by heart has become a source of their maintenance. Nobody would call such persons scholars or intelligent persons.⁹

In letter no. eleven, Lokahitwadi has stated that in ancient times, the behaviour of brahmins might have been pious but the same was not seen during his own time.¹⁰ They pretended to be saints but in reality were not so. In fact, the priests were responsible for the fall of the Maratha empire.¹¹

The brahmin Peshwas lost the empire because they concentrated on the outward religious rituals like *snan-sandhya*, *dakshinas* and *sahastra bhojanas* and neglected their duty as administrators. The brahmins consider themselves superior to other castes and hence they expect that the other castes should serve them. The people of other castes exert and earn money while the brahmins deprive them of this hard-earned money. People of other castes exert themselves from morning to evening in their fields but after harvest, they have to perform religious rituals and brahmins are to be fed in the *anna-chhatras* and *dakshinas* to be paid to them.

People of other castes build houses with their hard-earned money and after completion of their houses, *vastu-shantia* religious ceremony is to be performed. In performing this ceremony meals are served to the brahmins and they are also paid *dakshinas*.¹²

Lokahitwadi further says in letter no. twenty-one; "Uptil now, these brahmins have deceived and exploited the ignorant

people but now they are exposed and, henceforth, they cannot deceive the common man".¹³ He continued in his letter no. sixty-one :

The brahmins have given unnecessary emphasis on the *vratas* and fasts. Some brahmins say that we should observe fast on monday, some says that fast on tuesday would be more beneficial while some are in favour of fasting on saturday. Every day fasting and that day has been glorified with a legend and this is true of all the 360 days of the year! should the people earn their livelihood or should they observe fasts for all these days of the year? The brahmins have, thus, kept the society engaged in unproductive activities".¹⁴

N R Pathak, in his paper on Lokahitwadi has rightly observed :

The writings of Lokahitwadi, being a powerful attack on the old order, show clearly and unmistakably all these features. He challenged the traditional superiority of the brahmins over all the other varnas and exposed the utter hollowness of its foundations, which lay in birth rather than in merit or quality. He emphasised the incalculable harm done to the nation by this idea of hereditary superiority. The brahmins had been considered superior, he argued, as the guardians of the shastras. But the knowledge of the shastras itself has now lost its significance. The study of *nyaya*, *vyakarana*, *vedanta* is now a sheer waste of energy. The rituals prescribed by religion are simply for the benefit of the priestly class and their performance is of no use either in this world or elsewhere. None of them has ever promoted the wellbeing or the prosperity of the people".¹⁵

Economic Conditions

Lokahitwadi published two books and several letters (no. 44, 51, 57 and 68) in which he expressed his views on the economic conditions and development for the country. His book *Laxmi-jñan* was based on Clifts's *Treatise on Political Economy*, and his other book *Hindustanas daridrata yenyachi karane* was based on an essay *Poverty in India* written by Dadabhai Naoroji. He analysed the Indian economic situation observing the poverty of the country. In *Laxmi-jñan* he has stated the following reasons for poverty :

(1) India is not considered as one of the developed countries of the world. Its people were not keen about the economic progress of the country and they had queer notions about national development.

(2) Indians have neglected the development of industries when they had ample capital with them. At present, the nation's economy is dependent on agriculture only.

(3) In ancient India, science (including economics) had developed. Later, Indians neglected these sciences also. Different branches of knowledge could not develop. Thus, India lagged behind in different fields of knowledge and this also contributed to its economic backwardness.

(4) Hindu thought was engrossed with religious rites and rituals. It lacked realism and the urge for progress, well-being and uplift of the nation. . . .

It is the keynote of the progress of the nation. Other countries of the world developed their industries throughout the world and those nations amassed riches. This helped the well-being of the people. They had made remarkable progress in different fields of life. India lagged behind due to the above reasons. In the wave of spiritualism, they forgot the importance of economic development. They could not develop their industries and the country had suffered.

The country was very rich in ancient times. The people of the country became lazy and they did not find any new avenues in the field of industrial development. The Muslims and the Englishmen invaded the country and they amassed riches. The country became poorer and poorer day by day. Indian industries rapidly disappeared and the Englishmen developed their own industries with the help of Indian raw material and capital. In India they sold the finished products 'made in England'. Hence, Indians had to face problems like unemployment and poverty.¹⁷

Lokahitwadi's criticism was not intended to create an inferiority complex. It was to stimulate the will for progress and material well-being. While he was critical of the cultural impediments to material advancement, he also offered eminently constructive suggestions for the regeneration of the economic life of the country. In 1849, he vehemently attacked the tendency to purchase foreign goods, and believed :

The lack of industrial development was the root-cause of the poverty of the country and hence the people should develop their own industries. Indians should buy Indian goods only. They should avoid purchasing foreign goods—especially the goods 'made in

England'. They should determine that they shall wear Indian cloth and use Indian products only. The Indian merchants should sell cloth produced by India, but they should not sell cotton produced by India to the English traders. The Indian farmer toils for the whole year and he is not able to make both ends meet. He is underfed and becomes poorer and poorer while the stream of the wealth goes to the west.

In 1876 in his book *Hindustanas daridrata yenyachi karane* he describes the after-effects of British rule and suggests that the yoke of economic slavery should be overthrown. In his book *gramrachana* Lokahitwadi depicts a vivid picture of the poverty of the Indian farmer and rightly points out that the Indian outlook based on spiritualism came in the way of the material development of the country. Thus, his thoughts were a combination of political economy as well as Indian aspirations of nationalism. It may be noted that this was long before the swadeshi movement, and he had rightly foreseen the importance of this weapon.¹⁸

Political Views

Lokahitwadi was born in 1823, soon after the decline of the Maratha Empire. While he welcomed the British rule, he also criticized the Peshwas for their inability to save the Maratha Empire. He tried to analyse the political situation to find out reasons as to why the Peshwas had to face such a historical crisis, and why the British succeeded. In letter no. forty-five he gives the following eight reasons :

1. In Sanskrit some books were written on different sciences. But later on since this knowledge was not translated in *prakrit*, people became ignorant.
2. Since it was presumed that Sanskrit language was of *devas* (*geervan vani*), only *devas* (gods) could write in Sanskrit and not *manawas*, there was no development in different fields of knowledge.
3. The *chaturvarnya* system gave a privileged position to the brahmins who were not conversant with current trends in the different fields of knowledge. But this continued to have a superior position on the basis of rituals.

4. The shastras had laid down a mandate that one should not leave his country. They were always unprepared to meet foreigners that led to the invasion by Muslims and British.
5. Indians believed that this age being 'kaliyug' the decline and fall of the people was inevitable. Owing to this attitude, they could not analyse the political situation properly or defend themselves.
6. Fatalism also played its vicious role, such as that even the loss of their freedom was foreordained.
7. Indians believed that their ancestors were gods and *shishis*, who should be followed faithfully in word and deed. Hence, they did not develop a modern outlook.
8. Indians believed that all customs and traditions were part of their religion and hence political consciousness could hardly develop.

After analysing these causes, Lokahitwadi welcomed the British rulers, for he sincerely felt that they were enlightened rulers. In his letter no. forty-six he remarks satirically :

As the Hindus became foolish, God had sent these *gurus* (i.e. the Englishmen) from a distant land to set them! Due to these 'gurus', there was awakening amongst the Hindus. They could understand what was going on in different places in the world.

Formerly, those who knew the geographical details from Konkan to Poona, were considered to be very intelligent persons! Now, people have come to know that there do exist countries like England and U.S.A. This change occurred due to the British rule only.¹⁹ It is due to the wish of the Almighty that the Englishmen have come over here and are ruling our country. They would improve our conditions, abolish our brutal and orthodox, social customs and traditions like 'Sati', spread western knowledge in our country through their (English) language and, thus, they will help us to stand on our own legs.²⁰

Some critics like Vishnushastri Chiplunkar criticized Lokahitwadi for this attitude and charged him with creating an inferiority complex. Some said that he was wholly under the English and even derisively referred to Lokahitwadi as 'ingrajalele'—a thoroughbred Anglophile.

Irrespective of such criticism, he continued to assert that the British rule would really bring a renaissance. However, he never meant that British rule should continue in India for ever.

He believed in the principle of democracy, and said that owing to the spread of :

English education his countrymen would understand the importance of freedom, assert it and realise it in due time. They would be conversant with different branches of knowledge, start their own industries, totally reject foreign goods and become politically conscious. Then they would demand their political rights and press for freedom and national independence. They would demand for a parliament for their country and would ask the rulers to quit. . . . This is bound to happen. It may take 200 years but the Indians would definitely make a demand for their independence.

History was to bear out Lokahitwadi's vision of the future. Thirty-six years after this letter no. fifty-four was written, the Indian National Congress was founded and in less than a hundred years, since the publication of the letter, the country attained its freedom. This is because his political views were based on realistic, rational and liberal foundations. He was not a blind admirer of the British rulers, and was also keenly conscious of the disadvantages of the British rule as letter nos. one and nine show. Lokahitwadi had a strong belief in the principles of democracy. That is why he had suggested in his letter no. twenty-five and sixty that people should demand parliamentary democracy and such a demand would be definitely accepted by the foreign rulers in the coming years.²¹ Being a staunch nationalist, he did not want to sacrifice the liberty of the nation at any cost. His letters *svadeshpriti* letter no. sixty-seven and *Hindu Lokani Kay Karave* of letter no. sixty express this profound feeling of nationalism that was the very core of his political thought.

In short, Lokahitwadi, true to the meaning of the Marathi term, really struggled for the betterment of the people by carefully observing the Indian scene and analysing the roots of social, economic, and political problems. Suggesting appropriate remedies, his was a very progressive and rational mind which was eager to uproot ignorance, educate the people and make them conversant with different branches of knowledge. He protested strongly against psychological and religious barriers in the way of the renaissance of Maharashtra, and fought against injustice, ignorance, orthodoxy, slavery and

inequality fearlessly and uncompromisingly. He was the first rational thinker of Maharashtra during the early British period who emphasized the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity and expressed strong concern for India's progress, enlightenment, freedom, and welfare.

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BACKWARD CLASSES MOVEMENTS

MS A RAO

THE BACKWARD Classes comprise roughly one-third of India's total population. They have been responsible for organizing many protest movements during the nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. It is the aim of this paper to discuss diverse types of movements that emerged among them in terms of the factors responsible for their emergence, ideology, organization, leadership, and their implications in the wider context for Indian society. We shall begin with the question :

Who are these Backward Classes?

The Backward Classes as a general category emerged in the post-Independence period, in the course of identifying the deprived sections of India's population for preferential treatment. Three different 'Classes' are included under the term Backward Classes : Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. Of these, the Scheduled Castes have a distinct history of preferential treatment under the British raj. During the latter half of the nineteenth century many voluntary associations and the British administration took interest in the amelioration of the Depressed Classes—mostly consisting of the untouchables—in regard to their education, employment and political representation. In 1917, the Indian National Congress adopted the policy of removing various types of disabilities of the Depressed Classes. In 1919, the Depressed classes were given the right of proportionate representation in political bodies at different levels. The term 'Scheduled Caste' was first used in the Government of India Act, 1935, for drawing a list of castes which suffered from social, economic, and religious disabilities for statutory safeguards and benefits. The term 'Scheduled Caste' became a part of the Constitution of the Republic of India in 1950.

Tribes did not explicitly form a part of the statutory safeguards and benefits during British raj, as they followed a policy of isolation in regard to them. However, the Constitution of free India treated the tribes on par with the Scheduled Castes and listed them for providing various safeguards and benefits. In 1971 the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes constituted 14.6 per cent and 6.9 per cent of the total population respectively. They are entitled to diverse forms of preferential treatment. In the field of education the privileges include the award of scholarships and stipends, exemption from tuition and examination fee, free provision of educational equipment and midday meals, setting up of residential type of schools and hostel buildings, giving of scholarships for studies abroad, reservation of 20 per cent of seat in all technical institutions, and provision of special coaching and pre-examination training facilities. The economic development programmes include allotment of cultivable land and house plots, financial aid and marketing facilities for the development of cottage industries, provision of credit facilities, formation of cooperative societies, setting up of finance corporations, and the reservation of 15 per cent of jobs in public services. In the sphere of politics, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes have the right of representation in the Parliament, State Legislatures, and such local bodies as village panchayats, panchayat samitis, and zilla parishads. Besides these privileges in the spheres of education, employment and politics, they are entitled to such other welfare benefits, as subsidies for the construction of houses, provision for house sites, drinking water facilities, electricity, special nutrition schemes, legal aid, and improvement in the working and living conditions of those engaged in scavenging and other unclean occupations.

The third component of the general category of Backward Classes is the Other Backward Classes. It includes castes which are socially and economically backward, but are not scheduled in the Constitution. It is left to the State Government to draw up the list for providing reservation in government jobs, and seats in educational institutions. They are not, however, entitled, as is the case with the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, to reservations on various political bodies. Until 1962, the Other Backward Classes consisted of named castes who

were entitled to educational and employment privileges. In each State they constituted a majority of the population. In 1962 the Central Government issued a directive whereby the economic criteria rather than caste criteria became the basis of determining the Other Backward Classes status. Nevertheless, since each State has adopted a combination of caste and income criteria it has given rise to a wide range of different interpretations. The category of the Other Backward Classes has become more or less a residual category excluding the Scheduled Castes and Tribes on the one hand, and the forward castes such as the Brahmans, Rajputs, Vaishyas, Kayasths, Vaidys, Khatri and the Aroras, on the other.

For example, in Kerala the percentage distribution (in 1971) of the three categories of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Classes is 8.3, 1.3 and about 60.0 respectively. The only sections of the population which are excluded from preferential treatment in education and service are brahmans, kshatriyas, Ambalavasis, Syrian and other Christians (excluding Scheduled Caste converts and Latin Catholics), Jews, Parsis, Anglo-Indians, and Vellalas and Chettis. All these forward castes form about 30 per cent of the total population of Kerala, (*Report of the Backward Classes Reservation Commission*, 1970). The Other Backward Classes, which constitute about 60.0 per cent of Kerala's population, comprise the backward sections of such castes and Izhavas, Muslims, Nadar, Kammalars, Latin Catholics, Ambatta, Yadava, Ezhutheden and Naidu. The economic criterion adopted is the annual income of Rs 8,000 and below. Both economic and caste criteria are used in determining the status of the Other Backward Classes. Thus, broadly, this category consists of the middle range and the lower non-twice-born castes which are above the pollution line.

These three categories of the Backward Classes are not, however, more administrative categories. They were the foci of conflicting relationships which came into the open in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, giving rise to several protest movements. Let us discuss the interplay of factors which led to these movements before considering the Backward Classes Movements themselves.

Factors in the Emergence of Social Movements

Although it is difficult to pinpoint which of the factors were the first to create an awakening among the deprived sections, it may be said that Christian Missionaries were one of the first to have created conditions of self-awareness. Missionaries of different denominations came from the West, and established their stations at various places in India. Many of them started working with the lower castes and tribes and succeeded in converting large groups. Thus by 1803 more than 5000 Nadars (toddy-tappers) were converted to Christianity in the Madras Presidency (Hardgrave, 1969 : 42). The Danish Mission, the London Mission, and the Church Mission societies received active support of the East India Company, Governors, and Residents in Princely States (Pillai, 1938 : 726). With the active support of the British raj, the Missionaries were not only able to expand their evangelical, educational, medical and welfare activities, but they were also successful in securing for their converts basic civic rights and employment in public services. For instance, in Travancore the European Missionaries encouraged lowcaste women converts to assert their right of wearing blouses; because, according to local custom, lowcaste women were not allowed to cover the breasts. This led to violent clashes between lowcaste Christian converts and caste Hindus. Colonel Munro, then Resident of Travancore in 1812, permitted these women converted to Christianity to wear blouses as among Christians in other countries (Hardgrave, 1969 : 59).

Thus the nonconverts to Christianity saw their own caste men, who were converted, being able to break tradition to get the benefit of English education and to be able to secure jobs in public service. In many cases the contrast was so glaring that the nonconverts were easily attracted to Christianity. The perception of the contrast in many cases led to a social awakening among many of the deprived classes. It made them think. Could they not do something to ameliorate their own conditions, without necessarily getting converted to Christianity?

The reform movements among the upper-castes/classes also created conditions of self-awareness among the deprived sections. The Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj, that emerged in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, were concerned

with two major programmes—the emancipation of women and the amelioration of the Depressed Classes. While the former concerned itself mainly with the upper classes and castes, the latter related itself mainly to the problem of the untouchables. Under the leadership of Keshab Chandra Sen, the Brahmo Samaj organized educational and welfare programmes for the untouchables. Similarly the Servants of India Society, founded by Gokhale in 1905 had the amelioration of the Depressed Classes as one of its objectives. In Bombay V R Shinde founded the Depressed Classes Mission in 1906, and established educational institutions for the untouchables (Heimsath, 1964 : 238). The Arya Samaj, however, took far greater interest than the Brahmo Samaj in the uplift of the untouchables. It sponsored a programme of *Shuddhi* movement in 1891 to reconvert the lowcaste Christian and Muslim converts to Hinduism (Jones : 202-205). It gave the untouchables the right to wear the sacred thread—the symbol of twice-born status, and also established educational institutions for the benefit of the untouchables. These reform movements were led by Western educated upper class intellectuals who hoped for a renaissance, and formulated a liberal and egalitarian ideology. Hence there was a place for the deprived sections in their programme of activities.

The growth and spread of an egalitarian ideology occurred in the wider political context of democratization and the national movement. The introduction of *Pax Britannica* helped the spread of egalitarian values through educational, legal, and political institutions. With the adoption of the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, minorities and deprived sections acquired a sense of political identity and the right of representation. People belonging to the deprived sections became aware of their basic civic rights including the right of political representation, and felt encouraged to organize themselves. *Pax Britannica* gave them new secular sources of legitimacy based on English education, such as the access to 'caste-free' modern employment opportunities and political power. At the same time it undermined traditional sources of legitimacy, namely, the priest and the king, which upheld the hierarchical values of the caste system and patrimonial authority.

The growth of the national movement was responsible for

awakening the masses regarding their basic civic rights, and in challenging orthodox cultural values. Mahatma Gandhi took up a programme of the uplift of Harijans, and supported them in their temple-entry movement. In 1917 the Indian National Congress began to take active interest in the conditions of the Depressed Classes, and in 1918 it worked for the removal of untouchability.

All these developments in the late nineteenth century and early years of the present century created a social atmosphere in which the Depressed Classes became aware of their basic civic rights and also felt that they could do something to redress their conditions of relative deprivation. This is the reason the emergence of protest movements among the Backward Classes should be seen in this wider social and political contexts.

Non-Brahman Movements

One of the sections of the Backward Classes that began to raise the voice of protest were the non-brahmans in Maharashtra, Madras, and Mysore. Conflicting relationships between brahmins and non-brahmins began to develop in these regions, as brahmins were the first to exploit modern educational and employment opportunities. The latter also took a lead in the Indian National Congress. A majority of brahmins were graduates; they became lawyers, doctors and engineers, and many of them became gazetted officers. In contrast, non-brahmins occupied an insignificant position. This, coupled with many forms of exploitation in the ritual and secular spheres, led to increasing frustrations among non-brahmins who began to organize themselves into movements in the late nineteenth century.

Jyotirao Phule of Poona was one of the first to have revolted against the tyranny of caste in general and of the brahmins in particular. In 1873 he organized an association called the Satyashodhak Samaj (Truth Seekers' Association) and asked his followers not to engage any brahmin priest. He started schools for the children of non-Brahman castes (Ghurye, 1969 : 287; Omvedt, 1971).

While Phule started the non-brahman movement in Maharashtra and mobilized the *Malis* (gardener caste), it was the Maharaja of Kohlapur who injected new life into the movement by advocating the right of communal representation. He was the chief architect of an anti-brahman ideology and took a number of steps in order to dethrone the ritual supremacy of brahmins and asserted the place of pride of the Marathas (Lathe, 1924).

The non-brahman movements, however, came to be systematically organized in the Madras Presidency in the second decade of the present century. The South Indian Liberal Federation popularly called the Justice Party was formed in 1916. It issued the *Non-Brahmins Manifesto* which was directed against the dominance of brahmins in the fields of education, public service and politics. The brahmins had assumed leadership positions both in the Indian National Congress and the Home Rule Movement founded by Annie Besant. Between 1892 and 1904 brahmins had secured 94 per cent of the positions in the Provincial Civil Service (Madras). In 1904, 77 out of the 140 deputy collectors were brahmins, and in 1913, 93 out of the 128 permanent district munsiffs were brahmins. In 1914, 450 out of the 650 registered graduates of the Madras University were brahmins (Irschick, 1969; 359-61). The Manifesto raised the voice of the non-brahmins. The Justice Party contested the elections in 1920 and formed its own ministry. With the support of the British Government, non-brahmins were able to attack the monopoly of the brahmins in the political, administrative, and educational machinery in Madras.

The success of the Justice Party had its own logic in the development of movements among the lower Backward Classes, which we shall consider a little later. It is important to note here that the upper-non-brahman castes such as the Vellalars Naidus, Nayars, Mudaliars, took a lead in building up an anti-brahman ideology and organization to subvert brahman dominance. They attacked the *varnashrama dharma* policy of Mahatma Gandhi as it preserved the dominance of brahmins. The non-brahman intelligentsia was highly impressed with the work of Caldwell and Nallaswami Pillai on the origin and nature of Dravidian civilization. This gave the non-brahmins of Madras a new identity with the necessary self-confidence to

meet the Aryan, and therefore, brahman domination. As we shall see later, Dravidian cultural prestige became the rallying motive force behind the Dravida Kazhagam movement among the lower non-brahman Backward Classes.

The non-Brahman movement of Madras spread to the princely State of Mysore. By 1918, brahmans who formed only 3.6 per cent of the population had gained 70 percent of government posts. They were also monopolizing positions in the field of education and politics. The major ethnic groups of Mysore, namely, the Lingayats, the Vokkaligas, and the Muslims had realized their position of deprivation vis-a-vis the position of the brahmans. The Vokkaligas founded their caste association in 1906, and the Lingayats started theirs in 1909. By 1917 the different ethnic groups formed a loose alliance called the Praja Mithra Mandali. In 1918 the Mandali called on the Maharaja of Mysore and presented a petition for communal representation in the legislature, reservation of public service, and educational institutions. The Maharaja appointed Sir Leslie Miller, the Chief Judge, to examine the demands, and the Miller Committee recommendations which conceded all the demands were adopted in 1921 (Dushkin, 1974). Since then both the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats have made larger and larger gains in the increasing opportunities in the fields of education, employment and politics. They have been able to oust the brahmans from their position of command and control over diverse modern opportunities.

The non-brahman movement in Mysore differs from its counterpart in Madras in two respects. First, the movement in Mysore did not alienate the lower caste Backward Classes and the Muslims as it happened in the Madras Presidency. Second, the anti-Brahman ideology among the Backward Classes in Mysore did not assume the form of a pro-Dravidian and anti-Aryan image. Instead, the non-brahman movement in Mysore was characterized by the ideology of religious parallelism of the Virasaivas. The Virasaiva movement which arose in the twelfth century, adopted the ideology of withdrawal and self-organization, and established a parallel 'government' in Hinduism with its own sources of legitimacy. Thus, the Virasaivas were able to achieve self-respect and honour by having their own complete set of religious beliefs and institu-

tions, thereby challenging the supremacy of brahmans.

The orientation of the non-brahman movement in Kerala was different from those in Bombay, Madras, and Mysore. It was oriented towards the immigrant non-Malayali brahmans. The Tamil brahmans in particular were the target of attack of the upper non-brahman castes, namely, the Nairs. The Nambudiri or the Malayali brahmans, unlike the immigrant Tamil brahmans, were not the first to take advantage of modern educational and economic opportunities, and they also did not care to enter the modern political process, whereas the immigrant Tamil brahmans made their presence more than felt by occupying dominant positions in the field of modern education, public services, and state administration. They were larger in numbers in the State of Travancore, where Nairs organized themselves against non-Malayali brahmans. The Nairs formed the Malayali Sabha in 1884, and in 1891. They submitted a *Malayali Memorandum* to the Maharajah stating their grievances against the non-Malayali brahmans who had monopolized the gains of modern educational and employment opportunities (Jeffrey, 1976: Ch. 5; Rao, forthcoming). Through this movement Nairs were able to check the commanding position of non-Malayali brahmans in education and public services. However, in this process, they alienated the other deprived groups, such as the Christians, the Muslims and the Izhavas (toddy-tappers) who formed slightly more than one fourth of Kerala's population.

Although chronologically the non-brahman movement in Kerala arose at the same time as it did in Maharashtra, it lacked the general anti-brahman ideology. It was confined to Travancore and parts of Malabar where there were large numbers of immigrant Tamil brahmans. It was not directed against all the brahmans as such, as it was in Bombay, Madras and Mysore.

While there have been well-organized anti-brahman movements in Maharashtra, Madras, Mysore, and to some extent, in Kerala, there were no significant anti-brahman movements in the North. In the absence of specific studies one may only attempt a guess to explain this. In many parts of Northern India, the new gains of English education, public services and politics went to the brahmans as well as to some well-known non-brahman castes,

such as the Kayasths, the Vaid the Vaishyas, the Khatris and the Aroras who formed a part of the traditional *Itterati* under both the Hindu and the Mughal rulers. Members of these castes were the first, along with the brahmans, to use the advantages of English education. They became qualified to enter new occupations. Hence there was no contrast between the brahman and the non-brahman castes in respect of access to new sources of education and employment. The non-brahmans also took part in a greater measure in the Indian National Congress movement and new structures of power that were created by the introduction of democratic processes.

Movements among the Other Backward Classes

While the conflict between brahmans and the upper caste non-brahmans became the centre of anti-brahman movements, the conflict between the upper non-brahman castes and the lower non-brahman but non-untouchable castes gave birth to a number of social movements in different parts of India. We will discuss four such movements with different ideological overtones: the Yadava Movement, the Vanhikula Kshatriya Movement, the Nadar Movement, and the Self-Respect and DMK movement.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there arose a number of social movements among the lower non-brahman castes challenging the supremacy of the upper castes including the brahmans. This spirit of protest took two shapes. One, many castes claimed a higher ritual status by developing appropriate myths of Kshatriya or brahman origin. The language of these myths was not an imitation but one of protest, asserting their higher status in a bid to acquire self-respect, esteem, and honour; attacking the monopoly of the upper castes in the use of ritual, economic, educational goods and services on the other. Two, those types of movements among the upper castes which idealized indigenous cultures and upheld its superiority over the culture of the opposition reference groups. While the Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu, which later developed into the Dravida Kazhagam Movement, belonged to this category many movements such as

the all-India Yadava movement, the Vanhikula—Kshatriya and Nadar Movements in Tamil Nadu belonged to the first type of protest movements, which we shall discuss first.

The Yadavas constitute a category of cognate castes called by various names in different regions. In U.P., Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan they were known as Ahirs. They are called Goalas and Sadgop in Bengal and Orissa; Gavali and Gopala in Maharashtra; Golla in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, Idayan in Kerala and Konar in Tamil Nadu. They follow such diverse occupations as cultivation, selling of milk and milk products and cattle herding.

At the beginning of the present century, the different cognate castes developed a new Yadava identity. They claimed to be the descendants of Yadu, a famous kshatriya dynasty (Yadava) to which Lord Krishna belonged. The Krishna mythology also gave legitimacy to pastoral occupations, as Krishna himself was a cowherd. In addition to the Krishna mythology which enabled the Yadava castes to raise their self-respect and honour, they evoked semi-historical and historical evidence equating Ahirs, Gopas, and Gollas with Abhiras, all of whom had at one time or the other exercised political suzerainty at different periods of history in many parts of India, such as Khandesh, Konkan, Gujarat, and the areas of Saugar, Jabalpur and Mirzapur. The Abhira equation gave the Yadava castes a sense of real pride of having been kings and chieftains. Thus both Yadava and Abhira ideology not only established common links binding different Yadava castes but legitimized their claims to a higher kshatriya status in order to gain self-respect.

While the Yadavas established a claim for a high status in the past, their present status was low. Many of them were economically poor being cowherds, agricultural labourers, and palanquin-bearers. They were also worshipping lesser deities. Realizing the need for a spiritual reformation, several Yadava castes came under the influence of the Arya Samaj in various parts of U.P., Bihar, M.P., Rajasthan and Delhi. As Aryas the Ahirs and other Yadava castes participated in Vedic Hinduism gaining self-respect, but not without violent encounter with the Thakurs, Bhumihaar brahmans (in Bihar) and

brahmans. When groups of Ahirs started wearing the sacred thread in public, the Thakurs and the Bhumihar brahmans resorted to violence to dissuade them from encroaching on their prerogatives. Instead of being suppressed, the Ahirs in Bihar mobilized widespread public opinion and started a regular movement called the *Jenevu* (sacred thread) Movement, around 1901. The movement spread to U.P. and Punjab. This was the first social awakening among the Yadavas, in order to assert their equal ritual rights, with the twice-born castes. Many regional Yadava Caste associations came into being in different parts of India such as U.P., Bihar, Punjab, Rajasthan, M.P., Bengal, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.

The national identity of the Yadavas emerged in 1923, with the establishment of the All-India Yadava Mahasabha (AIYM). The leadership came from Western-educated professional and intellectual Yadava elite. Dr Khedekar of Bombay took active interest in the movement. He headed a deputation of the Backward Classes to represent their caste for political rights before the Joint Select Committee of Parliament in London. He was one of the founders of the AIYM. The Mahasabha started a whole programme of social reforms. It pleaded for vegetarianism, teetotalism, and for the removal of dowry and untouchability. It encouraged the establishment of educational institutions and led deputations to seek recruitment in the army and police. Regional associations took up specific issues concerning facilities of pasturage and dairy farming, and also established schools and colleges.

Regional associations in different parts of India were affiliated to the AIYM, and the federal character of the all-India association manifested itself at the time of the annual conferences. Delegates from each state pitched a tent, displaying their banner, and the executive committee of the Mahasabha elected members from different parts of India.

The AIYM picked up two important issues in the 1960s, which gave the Yadava movement a distinctive character. First, it agitated for the creation of a separate Yadava regiment in the Indian Army, as the Yadavas had shown exemplary valour in several wars. Since there were regiments based on ethnic lines, the Yadavas pressed the Government of India for a separate regiment in recognition of their military identity.

Second, the Yadavas, had assumed the leadership of the Backward Classes fighting for the revival of caste criterion as the basis for preferential treatment in education and employment. The latter issue had gained importance in the different states, and the Yadavas were to be in the forefront of the All-India Backward Classes Federation.

The Yadava movement, over a period of sixty years, has been able to achieve significant results. First, it brought about a high degree of social awakening regarding their status of relative deprivation, formulated an ideology on the basis of mythological and historical sources, and established an identity against the opposition reference groups. This ideology reflected protest and conflict situations. A specific consequence of the movement was the emergence of Yadavas as an ethnic category submerging regional caste and sub-caste differences.

Second, as a result of a series of agitations for recruitment to the army and the police and efforts in building up educational institutions, there has come into being a differentiated elite occupying positions of influence and prestige. They have promoted the interests of the objectives of the movement, e.g., the business elite helped in starting educational institutions.

Third, the emergence of a political elite has not only carried the movement ahead but has upset the traditional balance of power in Bihar where the Yadava political elite is significant, the Yadavas share the political power with other ethnic groups, whereas earlier they were politically subservient to the Bhumi-har brahmins, kayasths, and brahmins.

The foregoing account of the Yadava movement points to the various dimensions of the Backward Classes movements—a protest ideology in the form of claiming higher ritual status, processes of social mobilization and the establishment of identity, organizations at different territorial levels, leadership and social consequences in terms of changes in the traditional power structure (Rao, forthcoming).

The ideology of protest in terms of asserting higher ritual status by challenging the monopoly of the twice-born castes, was a common one adopted by many caste movements in different parts of India. Mention may be made of a few such attempts.

William Rowe (1968) has described the effort made by the

Noniyas, a caste of earth-workers in U.P., M.P., and Bihar who claimed the status of Chauhan Rajputs (Kshatriyas). A number of Noniyas made money through brick-making and earth-working contracts, and they formulated an ideology which legitimized their higher ritual status. They also joined the Arya Samaj, like the Yadavas, in great numbers. As Aryas they wore the sacred thread and participated in Vedic rituals that were closed to them for centuries. Thus the kshatriya myth of origin and the convention to Arya Samaj enabled the Noniyas to gain self-respect and honour; they attacked the monopoly of the twice-born caste in the use of higher ritual goods and services. Backed by the ideology of protest, Noniyas organized themselves into sabhas in various regions. In 1935 they founded an All-India Noniya Sabha in Katni (M.P.), and fought for educational and employment benefits, and political power. Thus, as we see, they adopted various strategies to move up, both in ritual and secular levels simultaneously in the social hierarchy.

Among the other caste movements which claimed kshatriya status to gain self-respect, mention may be made of the Nadar and the Vanhikula-Kshatriya movements in Tamil Nadu. Hardgrave (1969) has given an extensive account of the history of the Nadar movement. He shows that the Nadars, traditionally toddy-tappers, claimed kshatriya status in 1871. They also donned the sacred thread and got brahman priests to conduct the sacred thread ceremony. In 1874, they asserted their higher ritual status by attempting to gain an entry into the Meenakshi temple of Madurai. This move resulted in a violent conflict between the Nadars and the Maravars while at the same time it heightened the process of internal solidarity, so that with the growth of a strong commercial elite the Nadars formed the Nadar Kshatriya Mahajana Sangham at Madurai in 1895. They established such associations in different parts of Tamil Nadu and Ceylon, and Malaya. In 1921, the Nadars represented to the census authorities that their caste be registered as kshatriya. They built a network of educational institutions and made head way in commerce, industry and other professions.

In its ideological orientation, the Nadar movement remained a part of the anti-brahman movement. One section came under the spell of the Self-Respect movement and another under the charismatic leadership of Kamaraj Nadar (Congress). Conse-

quently, while the Nadars adopted the kshatriya model and donned the sacred thread, they remained staunch supporters of the anti-brahman movement in Tamil Nadu. This is why the adoption of the kshatriya status has to be seen as a protest ideology, which attacked the monopoly of the upper castes.

A similar situation may be seen in the case of the Vanhikula kshatriya movement, among the Pallis, an agricultural caste. The Pallis became aware of their status of relative deprivation and organized themselves as early as 1833. Claiming descent from the Pallava dynasty of the kshatriyas, they petitioned the census authorities that they be entered as kshatriyas (Rudolphs; 1960). They also supported the anti-brahman movement and the Self-Respect movement.

While the movements described above adopted the kshatriya model, there were others which adopted the Brahminical model, as a form of protest. The Jogis, a caste of weavers of West Bengal, became conscious of their status of relative deprivation in the late nineteenth century. They began to wear the sacred thread in order to assert their pure status, set up the Jogi Hitaishini Sabha in 1901 and started a journal, *Jogisaka*. With the aim of submerging internal subcaste distinctions and fighting for educational and employment opportunities, they expressed anti-brahman sentiments in no uncertain terms. In protest against the brahmins, the Jogis themselves claimed the status of brahmins (Bose, 1975: 153-57). Similarly the Namashudras, a caste of agriculturists, claimed brahman status (Bose, 1975: 158). Thus, whether caste movements adopted the kshatriya model or the Brahminical one, they were essentially ideologies of protest against the supremacy of the upper castes. It is necessary to stress here that the claim of gaining higher ritual status is not a process of imitation but a form of protest.

We shall now consider another ideology of protest that was developed and adopted by the leaders of the Self-Respect movement which was the forerunner of the DK and DMK movements. The ideology of the Self-Respect movement, which arose in 1925, was more populist than that of the Justice Party of the non-brahman movement. It had a cultural connotation which ran counter to Brahminical Hinduism. The leader of the Self-Respect movement, Ramaswamy Naicker,

protested against the accident of birth as the one and only criterion of personal worth. Seeking a basic change in the traditional social system, he wanted a new system of values in which all people irrespective of caste or creed could enjoy equal self-respect. By directly attacking brahmins and the mythology of puranic Hinduism, he derived support from the wider system of Tamil or Dravidian culture which he considered superior to the Brahminical Aryan culture. Since this formulation of the Dravidian ideology, as opposed to Aryan ideology, is basic to the Self-Respect movement, it becomes necessary to note its main features.

Professor P Sundaram Pillai (1855-97) was one of the earliest to propagate the antiquity and glory of Dravidian culture. He even extolled the virtues of Ravana as against Rama, the Aryan God. Researchers and British Indologists also revealed that the Dravidian language and culture had originated independently of Sanskrit, and that it was more ancient than Sanskrit. Caldwell (1875) maintained that Tamil Dravidian culture was not only independent of Sanskrit but its antiquity goes far before the time of Christ. He suggested that Sanskrit was brought to South India originally by the Aryan brahman colonists. Pope, who was another missionary working in Tamil Nadu, also elevated the status of Tamil studies and Tamil religion (Irschick, 1969 : 279-80). Even the British officers held the Dravidian culture of the non-brahmins in high esteem.

Thus, since the late nineteenth century the intellectual foundations and superiority of Tamil Dravidian culture over Sanskrit Aryan culture were established, and Ramaswamy Naicker made political capital by raising the self-respect of low caste Hindus and untouchables; the support for the movement came from uneducated masses, since Tamil instead of English was the means of communication; the movement also spread to women and rural youth; their own newspapers and journals reflected a new type of radical literature that highlighted anti-Brahminical, anti-Aryan, anti-Sanskrit and later anti-Northern sentiments. The leaders were also able to develop new styles in drama and other art forms.

In the late 1920s the Self-Respect movement took a violent turn when a copy of the *manusmriti* (symbol of Aryan

Sanskrit culture) was burnt. The first conference of the movement was held in 1929 which passed resolutions boycotting brahman priests, condemning the *varnashrama dharma*, advocating removal of suffixes of names having caste connotations, and promoting an easy termination of marriage.

In time, the Self-Respect movement not only grew more radical in its aims but also violent in its activities. Ramaswamy Naicker claiming Dravidisthan on the same lines as Pakistan, also led a crusade against Hindi which was a derivative of Aryan language and culture. In 1944 the Dravida Kazhagam (DK) came into being, explicitly demanding a separate non-brahman Dravidian nation. Hence, the Self-Respect movement which arose as a protest against Aryan culture, turned into an explicit political movement with the formation of DK under the leadership of C N Annadurai. As the latter had differences of opinion with Ramaswamy Naicker, he broke away from DK and established Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in 1949, with the major objective of establishing Dravida Nad.

It is necessary to highlight the overtones of the Self-Respect, DK and DMK movements. First, the leaders sought to extol the virtues of Dravidian gods and culture, in protest against Aryan gods and culture. They adopted a secessionist strategy to achieve their independence and self-respect. The leaders combined Dravidian religious ideology with political separation. It is wrong to characterize this ideology as secular because it was only emphasizing a different set of religious ideas which were opposed to those of Aryan Brahminical Hinduism. Second, the movements had an appeal to the lower middle classes and castes and untouchables. The lower sections of the Backward Classes protested against the upper sections of the Backward Classes who were led by the English educated and the westernized elite. In contrast, the leaders of the Self-Respect, DK and DMK movements were mostly Tamil educated, and used local idioms to reach the masses.

Backward Classes Movements : Scheduled Castes

We have so far considered Backward Classes movements centring around two kinds of cleavages; the cleavage between

brahmans and upper caste non-brahmans, and the opposition between brahmans and upper caste non-brahmans, and lower caste Hindus. We may now consider those protest movements that originated among the Scheduled Castes. Here, one may distinguish between two kinds of protest ideology, one which emphasizes withdrawal, self-organization, and establishes a parallel source of legitimacy, and the other which abandons Brahminical Hinduism and embraces another religion to raise its self-respect and worth. The first ideology was the basis of Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana movement (SNDP movement) and the second was the basis of Mahar movement led by Dr Ambedkar. We shall discuss the SNDP movement first.

The SNDP movement originated among the Izhavas (toddy-tappers) of Kerala in the late nineteenth century. Izhavas were considered unapproachables in the traditional caste hierarchy. For instance, they had to stay away thirty-four feet from the Nambudiri brahmans. They suffered from many disabilities, both civic and ritual, and were not allowed to worship in the temples of caste Hindus or to bath in the tanks of caste Hindus. Toddy-tapping was considered to be a defiling occupation, their women were not required to cover their breasts and they could neither wear any footwear nor build *pukka* houses.

During the middle of nineteenth century many untouchable castes in Kerala and Tamil Nadu were converted to Christianity. These converts enjoyed such benefits as access to English education and jobs. They lived in good houses and their women could wear blouses. This contrast made the Izhavas aware of their acute state of relative deprivation, and it was even more apparent in regard to the converts from Nadars and Shanar castes in South Travancore, who were the counter-part castes of Izhavas. While some of the Izhavas got themselves converted to Christianity, the bulk of them decided to remain within the fold of Hinduism and fight for their basic rights. This was possible mainly due to the efforts of Sri Narayana Guru Swamy, a charismatic leader.

Sri Narayana Guru Swamy was born in 1855 in a poor Izhava family in South Travancore. As from childhood he had a philosophical bent of mind, he acquired mastery over

the Vedas, Vedanta, Ayurveda and Yoga by staying in forests. On his return to society he preached his new philosophy of one God, one religion and one caste. He wrote many books in Sanskrit and Malayalam, and showed that by proper training any one, irrespective of caste, could attain mastery over the Vedas and Vedanta. He built many temples, installed deities of Siva, Narayana, and Sarada and trained an order of monks, priests, and householder-disciples—all of whom would propagate his new religion. He also pulled down the temples of Izhavas which were devoted to the worship of lesser deities and spirits, and asked his followers to abstain from eating meat and drinking liquor. He evolved simple wedding rites and abandoned many expensive and meaningless rites.

In this way Swamy was responsible for a thorough transformation of the style of life involving new religious beliefs, rituals and outlook. He provided an ideology of withdrawal and self-organization that raised the self-respect, honour and worth of individuals. It was an ideology of protest against the Brahminical value system of hierarchy and pollution. Swamy established a parallel source of legitimacy with his institutions of temples, priests, monks and monasteries. All these upheld his new universalistic philosophy. He encouraged his followers to found an Association (SND) Yogam to organize the people. He gave the slogan : 'Education that you may be free ; organize that you may to strong'. The secular leaders of the SNDP movement concentrated on fighting for basic civic rights that were denied to them for centuries. In 1903 the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam was established with Kumaran Asan, the revolutionary poet, as the first secretary. Under his leadership the Yogam fought for the rights of admission of Izhavas and other untouchable castes to government schools. Although this was highly resented by the Nayers and other upper castes, and led to riots, the Yogam was successful in getting the Izhava and other untouchable caste children the right of admission to schools.

T V Madhavan led the Vaikom temple-road-entry-movement in 1927, under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. After two years of sustained satyagraha the Izhavas and the other untouchable castes were granted the right to use the road that ran near the Vaikom temple which was owned by the upper

castes. This was a historic fight against orthodox ideas of pollution.

The Yogam turned its attention to press for political representation in the State Legislature in the 1930s. The leadership of this agitation was in the hands of C Keshavan who joined hands with the Syrian Christians and the Muslims in spearheading the political struggle against hostile opposition from the government and the Nayars. In the end (in 1936) the Yogam was able to secure the right of political representation for the Izhavas, and also succeeded in getting reservation for Izhavas in government jobs. The movement then concentrated on creating facilities of higher education for the Izhavas and other low castes. Under the leadership of R Shankar, there came into being a separate trust (SN Trust) for establishing colleges and promoting higher education.

Thus the leaders of the movement imbued with the spirit of challenge through the ideology of Sri Narayana Guru Swamy, were able to achieve for their followers all the basic rights in the fields of religion, education, employment, and politics. The SNDP movement represents one of the most successful attempts of the untouchable castes to alter the traditional balance of power, besides improving their own position. It also demonstrated that it was possible to remain within the fold of Hinduism and yet achieve commendable results (Rao: forthcoming).

In contrast to the SNDP movement, the Mahar movement under the leadership of Dr Ambedkar represented an ideology of protest in the form of abandoning Hinduism and embracing Buddhism which is considered to be more egalitarian than Hinduism. The Mahars are a numerically significant caste-group of Maharashtra who were considered untouchables, and employed in such different types of menial work as cutting firewood, running errands, sweeping and digging graves. They were hereditary servants to village officials, played music, and removed carcasses of dead animals. Consequently, they were denied access to wells, schools and to the services of barbers and washermen.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Mahars started organizing themselves to improve their status and fight against several kinds of discriminations. They held a con-

ference in 1902 and insisted on recruitment to military and police services. The Mahars, along with the other untouchable castes of Maharashtra were helped by the leaders of the non-brahman movement and especially by the Depressed Classes Mission (1906) established by V R Shinde. The Mission started separate schools and hostels for the Mahars. Besides these, the efforts made by Mahatma Gandhi for the abolition of untouchability had an impact on their social awakening.

However, with the entry of Ambedkar in the 1920s, the Mahar movement took a more radical and rather than reformative turn adopting a new strategy of aggression and protest against the attitudes of caste Hindus towards the untouchables. Ambedkar detested the feeling of patronage of caste Hindu reformers and also the attitude of Mahatma Gandhi regarding the change of heart of caste Hindus. He, on the contrary, adopted an ideology of anti-caste Hinduism and relied on the political machinery to achieve the basic civic rights. During the late 'twenties and the early' thirties, there were several satyagrahas for gaining entry into caste Hindu temples and the burning of the *manusmriti* to show their indignation against orthodox Hinduism.

Ambedkar was able to win political representation for the untouchables, and as the architect of India's Constitution, he introduced many constitutional safeguards in favour of the Scheduled Castes. He decided to abandon Hinduism altogether, and on October 14, 1956, he along with five lakh Mahars embraced Buddhism (Patwardhan, 1973 : 126). This was an act of great significance for the Mahar movement as it signalled the ideology of abandoning Hinduism and embracing a religion which was considered to be egalitarian. Ambedkar was firmly convinced that Hinduism was hierarchical to the core, and as long as the Mahars remained within the fold of Hinduism there was no hope of improving their status, worth, and honour. Thus, in addition to active politics for achieving basic educational, economic, and political rights, Ambedkar adopted the egalitarian religious ideology of Buddhism as a part of the Mahar movement. This was a form of protest against orthodox Hinduism of the caste Hindus. Since Buddhism conveys the message of new identity, the Mahars now belong to a religion which stands for egalitarian values and

hence is superior to that of the caste Hindus. This is another strategy to gain self-respect and esteem on the one hand and to negate or protest against the religion of the upper castes on the other.

While all these ideologies of protest considered so far among the Backward Classes have in one way or the other used religious beliefs in the formation of ideologies, a combination of anti-caste Hindu theme and the new leftist revolutionary philosophy has been used by the Dalit Panthers. They fashioned their ideology after the Black Panthers and organized themselves in 1972 in the cities of Bombay and Poona. Their spokesmen were Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale and J V Pawar—all eminent literary men. The Dalit Panthers cashed on the frustrations of the urban youth about the diverse forms of discrimination against the untouchables and the oppressed. According to its manifesto, the Dalit Panthers include all the revolutionary parties seeking to destroy the Hindu *varna* system; all of the real leftist parties being its friends and its declared enemies being landlords, capitalists, and money lenders. With the aim of an all-round revolution, the Panthers are gaining ground in many urban and rural areas although they are still largely supported by the Mahars.

It is significant to note that the Panther's ideology is akin to Fanon's view (1973) that colonialism cannot be separated from race. In the ideology of the Dalit Panthers, class struggle cannot be separated from anti-caste Hindu or *varna* element. Secular ideology based on class struggle is also reflected in various peasant movements.

In sum, the Backward Classes movements reveal five kinds of protest ideologies: (1) withdrawal and self-organization, (2) claiming a higher *varna* status, (3) extolling the virtues of the non-Aryan (Dravidian) culture, (4) abandoning Hinduism altogether and embracing Buddhism, and (5) Marxian ideology combined with an anti-caste Hindu theme.

Except in the case of the Dalit Panthers, religious themes form an essential part of the protest ideology because it provides the chief mechanism for the improvement of the self-image and self-respect which enable groups to establish an identity. The religious aspect is as important as the economic, educational and political ones. All of these aspects form

a part of the same protest ideology. For instance, whether the Yadavas are claiming higher caste status through appropriate mythology, or equal employment opportunities, they are attacking the monopoly of the upper castes in the fields of religion and economics.

Thus, dissent and protest form a part of that ideology which as a symbolic system of beliefs provides the motivating force, and gives the programme of action its legitimacy. The ideologies of protest movements among the Backward Classes are characterized by relative deprivation in the religious, economic, political, civic, and educational areas of social life. These are pivoted around conflict and opposition at different structural levels. Ideologies of the Backward Classes movements are double-edged, expressing the feeling of dissatisfaction, dissent, and protest with the existing situation (with an awareness of relative deprivation) and working out a positive programme for removing the malady. The former typifies protest or conflict and the latter social transformation and change.

Backward Classes Movements and Social Change

The three categories of Backward Classes movements, considered so far, relate to three kinds of cleavages at different levels of caste/class systems. That is, the non-brahman movements center around the conflict between brahmans and upper class non-brahmans. The movements among the low non-brahman castes are focussed on the opposition and conflict between upper non-brahman castes, and lower non-brahman castes. The third category of movements among untouchable castes is based on the conflict between caste Hindus and untouchables. It is necessary to note that there is a 'hierarchical' relationship at the three levels of conflict, in the sense that the third one subsumes the second and the first, and the second, subsumes the first level of conflict. This means that the Mahar and the SNDP movements were against caste Hindus including brahmans, and the Yadava and the Self-Respect movements were also anti-brahman and anti-upper non-brahman castes. Similarly, social movements among upper non-brahman castes include directly an anti-brahman ideology.

We may now consider the question: *What have been the social consequences of these movements?* Broadly speaking one may distinguish three levels of structural changes—reformatory, transformative and revolutionary, in a hierarchical manner. Reformatory changes occurring in certain areas of life, are mostly confined to religious ideas and outlook. Transformative changes refer to changes in the balance of power. Revolutionary changes pertain to wholesale changes in all the structures of relationship and the value system. Such changes are rapid and often as violent as the type which occurred in Russia and China. In this way the Backward Classes movements have been responsible for bringing about transformative changes with their strong protest ideologies.

The non-brahman movements attacked the monopoly of the Brahmans in the sphere of English education and public employment in the first two decades of the present century. They also attacked their ritual supremacy and their political influence in the national movement. As a result, in Maharashtra, Madras, and the princely state of Mysore the traditional balance of power changed. The non-brahmans successfully ousted the brahmans out of their monopolistic position in education, public employment, and politics. Influence and power structure changed with the non-brahmans at the top instead of the brahmans. Many of the brahmans migrated from villages and small towns to metropolitan cities all over India and abroad. They lost control over their land in villages where they were zamindars, jagirdars and mirasdars, to the peasant castes.

The protest movements among the lower non-brahman castes were responsible for altering the superordination-subordination relationships between the upper non-brahman castes and the lower non-brahman castes. In Madras, the DK and DMK and the Nadar movements having their locus among the lower non-brahman castes, attacked the monopoly of the upper non-brahman castes. The Yadavas in different parts of India challenged the superior position of the upper non-brahman castes.

The social movements among the ex-untouchables further challenged the monopolistic positions of the upper non-brahman castes. The S NDP movements was to a great extent

responsible for the decline of Nayar dominance in the economic, educational, and political fields. Similarly, the Mahar movement in Maharashtra checked the rise of the Marathas and of the other upper castes.

Besides changing the balance of power, the Backward Classes movements were responsible for the transformation of caste groups into large ethnic blocs. As a result of the new ideologies and the process of political mobilization, different cognate castes established new identities which transcended local limitations and projected a wider regional, often all-India images. Thus, the Ahirs and other cognate castes established an all-India ethnic identity as Yadavas. Similarly, the Mahars and Chamars became Neo-Buddhists.

It is, however, necessary to point out that the Backward Classes movements have their limitations in acting as agents of change on a continuing basis. After major objectives are achieved they tend to get routinized, losing their initiative to spearhead changes in different directions. In course of time there develops a rift between the elite and the masses, and the former tends to treat the latter in the same way that the former were treated by the upper castes. In fact, such a process of routinization and internal differentiation has occurred among all of the Backward Classes movements that have been discussed in this paper.

Often, internal conflicts themselves act as foci for the emergence of new protest ideologies and social movements based on them. Here lies the future of the Backward Classes movements to develop new identities based on fresh areas of contradictions to carry on in a cumulative way their fight for greater and greater share in educational benefits, economic advantage, and political power, in a bid to equalize with the forward classes.

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DISSENT AND PROTEST IN MODERN HINDI LITERATURE

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THE evaluation of the role of dissent and protest in modern Hindi literature requires a proper definition of these concepts and terms, in order to know precisely their meanings, inter-relationship, and subtle differences. Dissent and protest, as we know them today, may not have existed earlier, but the idea represented by these terms was known to the people and poets even in ancient times. We do know that their expressions are against unjust, social, economic, and religious situations. Perhaps it is inherent in human nature to rebel, protest, and dissent. If this is so, then we know that with the passage of time such non-conformist expressions have assumed the dimensions of a philosophy which is a quest for freedom, liberty, and justice in any given society throughout human history.

In a society, dissent and protest provide human alternatives for safeguarding not only one's natural rights but also to ensure social changes. Often, the protest of an individual is reflected in a society as well. However, "protest and dissent must remain courts of last resort, if they are to have any impact and if society is not to slip into a state of anarchy".¹ Nevertheless, the mere negation of a situation does not constitute protest, which is an attitude far ahead of negation or even identical with resentment and refusal. Protest transcends the primary impulse to refuse and transfuses it into an activity of turmoil.

Protest is thus primarily the result of intense human consciousness which inevitably involves values. It is both a manifestation of human concern and an endeavour to add meaning to human existence by strengthening the concept of social justice, equality, and liberty. Protest has the quality of identifying itself with the downtrodden and the oppressed. Not being a destructive process, it is therefore a process of upholding

values especially because values cannot be taken as eternal and unchanging. "Most frequently we make rearrangements in our value hierarchy; values once considered crucial become less relevant and therefore less important while others, once relatively lower in our estimation take on new importance. Values do not have to be eternal and unchanging in order to be values".² Thus, protest as a value and as an effective medium serves its purpose only if it is used with relevance to real situations obtained in actual life processes. "In each case the values are not given—that is the illusionist trick played by religion or by philosophy, they have to be deduced from the condition of living".³ An example of this is the artist or the writer, who while struggling and confronting the condition of his times and society, earns values in a new and fresh way and explores them in relation to life in reality. It goes without saying that new values emerge when new consciousness comes into prevailing social norms. Consequently, dissent and protest are not abstract concepts. They are always cast in social, cultural, economic, and political contexts, and hence have no fixed and rigid meanings. A brief discussion of definitions and historical development may be useful here, before dealing with the Hindi literature.

Dissent : It is a pre-requisite for protest, as it is an awareness of fundamental rights. But its scope is limited because a dissenter is "one who dissents or disagrees in matters of opinion, belief, etc".⁴ Therefore, it precludes any active participation in a protest and reform movement. In a closed society, a dissenting voice is of special significance because it may lead to an organized protest and reform at some later stage. Differences of degree or emphasis apart, dissent is the very basis of protest and reform.

Protest : The awareness of protest arises when man confronts an unjust and inhuman situation, and decides to get rid of the slavish mentality. A consciousness regarding fundamental rights a tendency to struggle, and a sense of independence and liberty are the basic ingredients of protest, which naturally come into conflict with the establishment. Thus, protest occupies a central position between dissent and reform. In other words, it is the

continuation of dissent and is linked with reform. Minor differences of meanings, roles, approaches, and strategies apart, there are vital links which bind them together. Dissent, protest and reform are therefore all parts of the same process.

Western Context, Protest and Modernity

Western philosophers and thinkers have contributed a great deal to the formulation of these concepts. Charles Darwin (1809-1882) who propounded the theory of evolution; Auguste Comte (1798-1857) who formulated and explained three stages of intellectual development—progress from the theological mode of thought through a metaphysical mode of thought to the positive mode of thought; Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) who, influenced by Charles Darwin, propounded the theory of social evolution; Karl Marx (1818-1883) who based his social theory on class conflict connecting it to the development of technology on the one hand, and the resultant changes in the production of goods and services and the relation among social classes on the other; all these persons gave significant dimensions to the concepts of dissent and protest that revolutionized the ancient and the medieval thinking-patterns. These developments in understanding the socio-cultural-political contexts have undoubtedly given new meanings to these concepts whereby we enter the modern age. But what is modernity? The concept of modernity is elusive, and it is difficult to define it in any precise sense. Once again, it is an ever-changing and an ever-evolving concept. However, historically, modernity is a new mental state or a new awareness which begins with the dawn of the scientific age, i.e. this sense of inquiry and questioning about natural, human, and social conditions. This is what makes a qualitative difference between the medieval and the modern age.

We can, therefore, say that dissent and protest are both parts of the attitude inherent in the very processes of modernization, i.e., with modernity have arisen new specific behavioural attitudes because of such new problems as unemployment, leisure, alienation of the individual's primordial qualities and his withdrawal from performing the major social roles that are

manifested in suicide, and mental illness.⁵ Such attitudes and problems have rendered traditional mechanisms of social control much less effective. "The pressures of kin and local groups or of local religious or secular leaders, became relatively ineffective in the more differentiated and changing circumstances attendant on the processes of modernization".⁶ Dissent and protest emerged out of these modern situations because they have generated processes of disorganization and dislocations. But unlike before they were not threatening the social order but were found useful "to develop an institutional structure which is capable of continuously absorbing the various social changes".⁷ This was in sharp contrast to the role of protest in the ancient and medieval times. Of course, this depends on the approach to the problem, that is if it is based on political radicalism, liberalism or non-political radicalism. Political radicals could claim that "such relation could be achieved only by overthrowing such order and establishing a new one whose institutional arrangements will entirely coalesce with non-alienated relations. Other, more 'non-political', radicals could claim that such relations could be attained only outside of both traditional and any modern, formalized power order".⁸ Thus, if modernity is viewed as an ever-evolving process, 'breakdowns' and 'sustained growth' are a part of it whereby basic reforms and necessary changes are brought about. "The root of this basic tendency to change, to improvement, to continuous system transformation lies in the very nature of modernity, not only as a structural characteristic of a society, but also as a cultural ideal or value. . .".⁹ If social change is to be viewed as a social process, and not as an ideology, then dissent and protest are its basic features. These are the features which have been given different meanings in various contexts. This is what we shall survey in the creative expressions of modern Hindi literature.

Hindi Literature and Tradition of Protest

Literary protest and dissent is multi-dimensional, in the sense that it upholds certain values in a specific environment and is concerned with the ironies, contradictions and paradoxes. A

protest writer does not necessarily seek inspiration from religion, philosophy, or the socio-political system. For any creative writer a closed value system is meaningless. "The point is, art is something subversive. It is something that should not be free. Art and liberty, like the fire of Prometheus are things one must steel, to be used against the established order. Once art becomes official and open to everyone, then it becomes the new academicism".¹⁰

India has had a long tradition of literary protest, that has changed considerably with time, i.e. as man's relation with his surroundings have changed, simultaneously the very spirit of literary protest and dissent has also changed. The example of medieval Hindi poetry with its two forms of protest may be given here. One, non-conformist poets like Kabir, Guru Nanak and Chaitanya who, in their search for self-realization and salvation, chose to unsparingly attack religious bigotry, and the social system. Two, protest poetry which was dominated by poets like Tulsidas who, though rooted in their pursuit for bhakti, wanted a synthesis of '*bhakti*', '*gyan*' and '*karma*' in order to balance the different conflicting systems, faiths, and orders for creating such a harmonious blend that might alleviate human suffering and anguish. In contrast to the first one, this is a conformist's stand. While the two are qualitatively different from each other, yet they share the common pursuit of self-realization by means of a common source of religious and philosophical thinking which forms the core of '*sadhana*' or '*bhakti*'. However, in both cases, protest is a minor and not a fundamental aspect of medieval poetry because it is primarily guided by belief, '*bhakti*' and knowledge based on metaphysical form and order, rather than on direct removal of social evils.

Dissent and protest in the modern context are different from the medieval one, basically because religious and philosophical beliefs are not at its centre. Instead, the modern concept includes scientific consciousness, social philosophy, class struggle, and political vision. As a consequence, Marx, Freud, Sartre, and Camus have greatly influenced the spirit of Modern Hindi Literature, which is basically protestant in nature. Before Independence it had largely identified itself with the national movement and other social reform movements. The poetry, fiction, and drama of Bharatendu and Dwivedi periods and of

Chhayavad, responded to the environment of the times. One major reason being the processes of modern communications media. These have not only influenced literary writings but the latter themselves have assumed the role of the trend-setters.

Modern Hindi Poetry

The first phase of modern Hindi poetry is the Bharatendu period. This is of course a transitional one where the medieval and the modern themes co-exist. The trend towards modern idioms was quite evident, owing to the emergence of khari-boli as a poetic language that allowed the poets to conceive new themes related to social and national importance. While the new medium encouraged new themes, the old themes also persisted. Themes already manifest in the socio-cultural spheres, emerged in different forms in poetry but their nature and form of protest was at a preliminary level. 'Sati', 'purdah', 'early marriage', 'untouchability' etc., were vehemently opposed at the literary level. Bharatendu Harishchandra, the satirist, was well aware of the socio-economic problems and this is evident from his works which give us an insight into his deep understanding of both the cultural heritage and the political situation that he had grasped and expressed in so many styles. One of his poetic stanzas illustrates this well :

Brethren, get ready all of you
Gird up your loins and see that
you do everything possible to
stop India's wealth from being
drained out of the country.

The second phase is the Dwivedi period. When the range and span of the poet widens, we notice that the sense of social reforms is creatively cast in a cultural perspective, or cultural heritage in its contemporary setting through the medium of old mythical characters. Maithilisaran Gupt and Ayodhya Singh Upadhyay 'Harioudh' comment through the traditional mythical medium. The stress is on synthesis and integration, and poetry now achieves epic dimensions. While this poetry is

problem-oriented, protest is expressed in classical language, terms, modes, and forms. If, for this reason poetry is not rated high artistically, yet it does reflect a renaissance. The poetically enunciated idealism and attitudes of cultural revival by the works of Maithilisanar Gupt and Ayodhya Singh Upadhyay do not invoke the reader to challenge the conditions in which they are put. These end in synthesis and conformism. On the other hand, the idealism and cultural insight of Balkrishan Sharma 'Naveen' and Makhan Lal Chaturvedi provokes the reader into an indignation against the British Raj.

Chhayavad or romantic poetry is poetry of romantic renaissance in content as well as in form and language that provides symbolic and suggestive expression to the spirit of national struggle. This is evident in almost all the major poets of Chhayavad, such as Suryakanta Tripathi 'Nirala', Jayshanker Prasad, Sumitranandan Pant and Mahadevi, But 'Nirala' is unique in expressing dissent and protest in its pristine glory that is creatively weaved into the fabric of his poetry. This protest is not only against foreign domination but also against the accepted, stereotyped modes of thought and experience including the classical forms, meter and rhythm patterns. In life as well as in literature he was the first Hindi poet who showed an awareness of contemporary reality and a progressive sensibility linked with protest. He staked everything, revolted against the accepted modes of life and literary forms and upheld human values. In his poem *The Beggar*, protest is vividly embodied in the realistic description ;

He quenches his thirst with tears
standing in the road he licks the leavings
of feasts off leaf plates lying on garbage heaps
contending with dogs who snatch the food away
Wait, oh wait, I shall bring you nourishment
Wringing the waters of life from my heart
As strong as Abhimanyu you shall be
I shall take upon myself your suffering.

Undoubtedly, he was a non-conformist in principles and practice, and his longer poem *Ram ki Shakti Puja* is a proof of his creative protest.

Prayogvad and Pragativad

If the poets of 'Prayogvad' (experimentalism) expressed their protest against the human situation in individualistic terms, the poets of Pragativad (progressivism) primarily related their protest to social conditions. The experimentalists' concern is with the problem of identity in an existential sense, while the progressives take up the problem in the Marxist sense. However, it was Muktibodh who tried to break the dichotomy between the individual and the social, and weave them into a total protest. Muktibodh's longer poems, especially *Andhere Men* is a poem of search for human identity in the socio-political context, e.g. ;

I shudder as I see his lit, glowing forehead
 white, his eyes shine but his face does not terrify.
 A strange perplexity haunts my mind
 who is this that reminds me of someone dimly loved ?
 This mysterious being is perhaps my expression
 which still eludes me,
 The culmination of my potentialities,
 Innermost influences, intrinsic images.
 The emergence of my completeness
 The tension of all knowledge that springs within me
 The reflection of my soul.

Despite his sympathies with the common man and for a collective cause Agyeya's protest is mainly at the individual and the artistic level. He envisages protest in boldly delineating sex symbols and sex relations, and also by breaking old poetic forms, modes, and patterns. Girija Kumar Mathur, a progressive, conceives protest in the social context, and has a rare poetic adaptability. However, his approach and language continues to be romantic.

Nai-Kavita

Around the year 1951, a new poetic movement emerged under the name of Nai-Kavita. Initially, 'newness' was in content and

technique. But later on it was the poetic vision, unique moulding of poetic experience, social and existential reality, and a concern for values that made this poetry significant. Protest in Nai-Kavita is therefore, more at the level of values rather than in a social context. When Nai-Kavita poets employed the term 'authenticity of experience' (it meant, in most cases, the absoluteness of experience) where emotion got the upper hand and thought processes were relegated into the background. The element of protest in this poetry therefore became feeble, and ultimately drifted into simple humanitarianism. But a few poets who deserve mention since they conceived and formulated protest in social and political contexts are, Bhawani Prasad Mishra, Dharamvir Bharti, Vijay Dev Narain Sahi, and Raghuvir Sahay.

A-Kavita and Contemporary Poetry

The Nai-Kavita movement faded out around the year 1960. It was a period of deep disenchantment and disillusionment. Human values which the poets had cherished for long, lost their appeal and relevance. At this stage, Hindi poetry assumed surrealistic and absurd tones. Srikant Verma, Kailash Vajpeyi, Dudh Nath Singh were the first poets to exhibit such a trend in their poetry.

After this came the poets of A-Kavita group, who denied the existence of values, and were against all morality and sexual code. In short, this attitude was nihilistic and based on negation. These protestations were devoid of social context. Raj Kamal Chaudhary and Saumitra Mohan are the only poets of this movement who could reach surrealistic heights by rising above their personal resentments into creatively formed and deeply felt protest, such as in their longer poems *Mukti Prasang* and *Luckman Ali* respectively.

Hindi poetry witnessed a new phenomenon around the year 1967 when poets showed a keenness and an awareness of social reality and claimed to be 'committed' poets. They tried to explore their own selves, their identity in a socio-political context and were opposed to the poetic formulations and hallucinations of A-Kavita. Mudra Rakshasa and Ramesh Gaur are

deeply conscious of contemporary socio-political conditions and the paradoxes inherent in it. Mudra Rakshasa writes ;

Straying into this clime like a living paradox
I was widely mystified at the establishment
And then the mysticism spiralled on the critics too.
I sat baffled solitarily on the pulpit
of colourful invitations
Endeavouring to recollect a way-lost word
Between the simpering voices.

And Ramesh Gaur writes :

Released from the thirty nine storeyed building
Ought to have cut loose
The tightened nooses around the necks of patriots
in South Africa and Rhodesia
But it so happened
That the very day the peace resolution was passed
The flames of fire leapt higher and wider.

Dhumil has also depicted the social and political reality in ironic and revolutionary modes. His protest is anti-establishment and it is for the purpose of effecting social change. But the tone and language of protest of Kumar Vikal and Venu Gopal perhaps lie somewhere in the tradition of revolutionary romanticism.

Vichar Kavita

In the year 1973, a new trend in Hindi poetry Vichar Kavita (poetry of thought) emerged. The focal and structural unit of this poetry is thought, which tends to reshape experience and give it a specific character. It is not a poetry of absoluteness of experience but one in which experience and dynamic thought are inextricably woven into the poetic structure. Significant poets of Vichar Kavita are, Lila Dhar Jagudi, Chandra Kant Deotale, Baldev Vanshi, Narendra Mohan, Rajeev Saxena, Ritu Raj, Vijendra, Govind Upadaya. In the poem, *Bloodshed*,

the ironies and paradoxes inherent in the situation are stated. The poet writes ;

Should I die lying down or act
 How should I guard against suicidal situation....
 A polished middle-aged friend of mine
 (whom we call Malukdas)
 runs inside panting
 and scratching his pimple cries
 'Bloodshed'
 And forcing the shield into his skin
 He howls
 'Where is bloodshed'?

Baldev Vanshi writes in his poem, *From the Visitor's Gallery* ;

That state of sleeplessness
 is struggling hard in me.
 And you :
 How long would you continue
 Measuring my life, my agony,
 with hollow assurances?

From the above brief analysis it is clear that the spirit of dissent and protest as reflected in Modern Hindi poetry has evolved with the changed circumstances. The quality and nature of protest as manifest in the initial stages takes on new forms, styles, and dimensions as we move on to the next poetic phase. From its one dimensional nature; it has assumed a multi-dimensional character. Today it has almost shed its emotionality, and it is now not merely a question of problem orientation, but also a full-blooded social and political situation to which it addresses itself.

Protest in Modern Hindi Short Story

The element of protest in modern Hindi short story assumed a bit later than in poetry. It was Prem Chand who linked his

stories to life's real situations, taking up new themes connected with social, economic, and political conditions of his times. The characters and plots of his stories are imbued with social and national content, with the freedom-struggle as its dominant note.

The main preoccupation of the Indian short story writer during these years was the freedom struggle. No sensitive writer could remain uninfluenced by the mighty movement sweeping the country. There were various parties and diverse roads but the goal was the same. The short stories written in the Indian languages in the forties reflect the vitality of people devoted to a cause. In the stories reflecting the freedom struggle, we have vivid pictures of exploitation and the arrogance of the foreign rulers and also the determination of an awakened people struggling for their birthright. There are desperate revolutionaries, devoted followers of non-violence and status-quoists toadies. The patriotic note of a number of stories, written in this period is, indeed, inspiring.¹¹

Thus, Prem Chand's stories are representative of this phenomena and the spirit of the age. However, his later works seemed to have realized the futility of idealism and expressed disillusionment and disgust. His later stories like *Kafan* and *Poos Ki Raat* are representative of this changed creative mood. These stories show Prem Chand's unique way of registering protest by closely depicting the social situation and its contradictions.

After Prem Chand, two major trends emerged in Hindi short story. One was concerned with the problems of individual psychology, and the other with the socio-political problems. Aggyeya and Jainendra represent the first, while Yashpal represents the second. If the elements of protest in the stories of the first category are subjective and Freudian in nature, then those of the second category are concerned with the social set-up, social reforms, and the nature of social, political struggle as seen through the Marxist angle; these are progressive writers who protest against social injustices albeit taking a dogmatic stand. That does not bring out the complexities

of the Indian social organism. As in poetry so is the case with short stories. Muktibodh reveals a correct and matured understanding of social problems and weaves a creative world out of them. Its way of depicting the nature of classes and their conflicts and the accompanying inconsistencies, proves beyond doubt that he has a sound knowledge of social and political institutions and their workings vis-a-vis human predicament. His stories screen in depth the nature of modern civilization and the modern man. In his story *Claud Etherli* (the name given to a tormented soul), Claud wants to stick to his conscience and oppose the atomic war. But he finds that he is alone and there is no alternative but the mad house. *Vipatra* is also a story of human suffering, in the context of the social condition in which he is put.

The element of protest in the short stories of the last two decades, i.e., the sixth and seventh decades may be discussed separately. In the *Nai-Kahaniyan* during the sixth decade, characters were such that they were kept in suspense in relation to his values because he was not able to separate himself from his dream world. Not that the story writers were unfamiliar with the realities of circumstances which they did depict though unsuccessfully, but because *Nai Kahaniyan* in trying to break away from the well defined and set pattern of the past failed to demolish it completely. Further, it showed no sign of any alternative structures. It lingers "complacently at the transitional phase. You cannot simply embody change in human condition without understanding the process of change".¹² Soon it began moulding itself into the conventional stereotype pattern of experiences. The short story writers of the seventh decade protested against this development, and liberated the Hindi short story from a false sense of values. It meant a re-investigation and a re-examination of values from a new angle in the context of the ugly, cruel, and terrifying conditions of today. The element of protest as reflected in the short stories of these two decades vividly testifies this.

There are many aspects of protest which have unfolded themselves in the contemporary short stories. The most familiar aspect of protest can be witnessed in the domain of family relations and sexual relations. Take for example the stories of Gyan Ranjan, Maheep Singh, and Ramesh Bakshi. The 'T

in the Gyan Ranjan story *Sambandh* says at one place; "you must see how time affects the human relationship. The woman who has been for a long time only my mother now only occasionally looks like Mother or as an illusion of my Mother? The author has related the family crisis to harsh realities and transformed it into a human problem, may be, I have a sense of pity in all this but the fact is that later for a long time I wished she committed suicide and thus solved a long and protracted cruel problem". This kind of 'crisis' reflecting through human relationship could be seen in Maheep Singh's stories too. In his story entitled *Keel* one observes human relationships in the context of behavioural traits of modern man. Mona's daddy is responsible for the complexity of her character for he is always rating her as extraordinary so that she may feel too superior to choose anyone as her bridegroom. While his complex personality is hidden behind this design, Mona wants to extricate herself from this complex and she protests realizing that there is nothing extraordinary about her. Similarly Ramesh Bakshi's story *Pita-Dar-Pita*, inspite of having a romantic tradition, shows the chasm and the conflict of two generations. Human relationship is expressed not in the academic or intellectual terms but in sympathetic terms. The upheaval of the younger generation gradually evolving as a way of life has been conveyed to the reader. Protest couched in complicated family relationship and against the father—the power symbol of the joint family system—is conveyed by such contemporary writers as Bhisham Sahani, Rajendra Yadev, Ram Darsh Mishra and others. It is a handy medium of protest for those writers who come from the middle classes. Their protest is a pseudo-protest, and the stories of Krishan Baldev Vaid, *Trikon* Mridula Garg, *Kitni Kaade*, express the nature of such a protest.

Protest at the existential level has also been conveyed in the more contemporary short story. "The hero of our time is a victim or a rebel or more precisely rebel-victim or victim-rebel. The human condition of suffering and rebellion constitute the fictional hero's response to the process of alienation and the crisis of identity".¹³ The problem of alienation and identity crisis is no doubt there, but the question is how to counter a state of disaffiliation and facelessness. It is through protest

that this alienated self may be given a meaning. The stories of Kashinath Singh *Apne Loge*, Vijay Mohan Singh *Bheed ke Baad*, and Devendra Issar *Mafrour* express the existential nature of protest. Another aspect represented here is its anti-establishment tone, for it is rebellious in nature against established institutions, norms and idioms, though not always successful in their political assessment. There are flaws in their creative expression for their approach is emotive-sentimental, and at times are swayed by news-media. There are a few stories of Bhisham Sahni's *Mooka Prastha*, Gyan Ranjan's *Ghanta*, Ravendra Kalia's *Kala Registrar*, Badiuzzaman's *Durg*, and Dharmender Gupta's *Apang Sangya* that deserve mentioning.

Protest in Modern Hindi Novel

The Hindi novel also finds its first voice of protest in Prem Chand, who takes up social themes and whose creative attitude is that of a reformist. Most of his novels, except *Godan*, depict his age and social problems from the reformist angle. Problems relating to widow re-marriage, untouchables, and prostitutes are central themes of many of his novels. Prem Chand's idealism is linked with protest. It is a kind of protest that the Indian National Struggle for Independence stood for. "To visualize India as an Idea was a socio-political need during the struggle for Independence".¹⁴ However, Prem Chand's *Godan* is different from his early writings, in its character, approach, and tone for it heralds the spirit of modernity on two counts. One, it makes a shift from adherence to moral concepts and to his commitment to social reality, and two, he bids farewell to the closed ending in place of an open ending. So, the element of protest in *Godan* is in the tradition of realism and is devoid of sentimentality.

Another departure from the standpoint of protest is Agyeya's novel *Shekher Aak Jeevani* (1941-1944). This is the first novel of its kind which effectively employs new techniques, and which expresses the spirit of modernity in a precise sense. Notwithstanding the writer's intention to convey revolt and protest in a wider social context, these terms remain in the individual context.

Phanisavarnath Renu's *Maila Anchal* (1954) is another landmark, for he has dealt with the struggle of the landless Santhals against the landlords. "The Santhals, landless aborigines, feeling themselves outwitted by the conspiring landlords and losing all hopes of acquiring land, rise in revolt".¹⁵ The writer has brought out their agony in such a way that the whole region, in fact the whole of India had been made alive with their agony and protest.

Krishen Baldev Vaid's novel *Us ka Bachpan* (1957) embodies not only modern sensibility but also new structural devices. By focussing on the mental state of the child and the configuration of childhood, the novelist brings out the chaotic and violent situation of a middle class family. It is an intense probing into the social situation and the underlying current of protest. Here, protest is not conceived through an idea or character, but it pervades the whole texture of the novel.

Naresh Mehta's novel *Yeh Path Bandhu Thaa* (1962) is a novel that depicts disillusionment and the degradation of human values vis-a-vis protest. The process of breaking down values is viewed as a gradual one, and is synchronical with actual situations. The central character of this novel Sridhar—feels so completely disillusioned on personal and family levels that he tries to rediscover and reinterpret values. Therefore, suffering and an awareness to protest are both complementary here.

The significance of protest in Sri Lal Shukla's novel *Rag Darbari* (1968), is revealed in its comic and satirical structure. The novelist has been successful in baring the absurdities of the social condition through the satirical pattern. The writer's intention has been to protest against preconceived moral notions and to attack traditional aesthetic tastes. To this end, he does project an absurd picture of the prevailing situation. The language and tone of protest in such a situation is likely to be comical and satirical and the writer has taken full advantage of this pattern and medium.

Ram Darsh Mishra's novel *Jal Toota Hooae* (1969), is mainly concerned with the paradoxes of the social organism that have a rural base, and is reflected in the characters; so that suffering and protest have been given a valued dimension in this novel.

In Bhisham Sahni's *Tamas* (1973), the writer brings out the tragedy of Indian partition. Here the protest is directed against the evil designs of the communalists and the politicians.

Thus, in the present novels, two tendencies in respect of protest may be seen. One is a protest against sex notions and sex symbols and the other is a protest against the horrible human condition, the despicable social condition of man. *Beghar* a novel by Mamta Kalia, *Surajmukhi Andhere ke*, a novel by Krishna Sobti represent the first trend, and *Ek Chuhe Ki Mooth* by Badiauzzma, *Murda Ghar* by Jagdamba Prasad Dixit and *Pratibandh* by Satish Jamali represent the other trend.

Protest and Modern Hindi Drama

The element of protest in Hindi drama is not as profound and multi-dimensional as in Hindi poetry and fiction. The reason for this is not far to seek, for it lies in the dramatic form itself. "Dramatic art is not identical with reality, but rather precedes along a parallel plane; and dramatic revolt, therefore, is always much more total than the programmes of political agitators and social reformers. The modern dramatist is, essentially, a metaphysical rebel, not a practical revolutionary".¹⁶ We have yet to achieve such a dramatic art. From Bharatendu Harishchandra to the present day, Hindi drama has taken long strides, and has in some respects revolutionized itself. But it has yet to find a dramatic correlation with revolt and reality in respect to stage and stagecraft.

Hindi Drama begins well with the satirical and the realistic comedies, *Bharat Durdasha*, *Andher Nagri* and *Vadki Hinsa Hinsa Na Bhavti*, of Bharatendu Harishchandra. It was the beginning of a new consciousness in Hindi Drama. This consciousness could not further be expanded by other playwrights of his time, excepting Radhacharan Goswami (of Bharatendu Circle) who wrote satires in protest against land owners. After Bharatendu, there is manifestly a big gap. It is only with the advent of Jayshanker Prasad that a genuine beginning in playwriting is made. Prasad's plays, *Vishakh*, *Ajata Shatru*, *Janmejaya Ka Nagyagya*, *Skandagupta*, *Chandragupta* and *Dhruvswamini*, are mostly historical plays and have their roots in Indian culture.

It is through historical characters and situations that he projects his age and refers to national aspirations and struggles. A spirit of nationalism, invariably, forms part of the literary protest of the period to which Prasad belongs. Dr Ram Vilas Sharma is correct in his assessing that, "The anti-imperialist struggle of the twenties was a struggle incentive to the growth of Hindi drama. The arrogance of the petty officials of the bureaucracy was ridiculed; the hangers-on of the British were laughed to scorn".¹⁷ Prasad was, no doubt, the first playwright to convey this struggle by realistically portraying the dramatic situation and its conflict. Prasad's dramas, therefore, "stand midway between the romantic poetic drama and the realistic problem play".¹⁸

In the post Prasad period, Hindi drama came nearer to realism through mythical and historical themes. The dramas of Udaya Shankar Bhatt, Hari Krishan 'Premi', Govind Vallabh Pant, deserve to be mentioned in this regard. Upendra Nath Ashk's play *Chhota Beta* and Vishnu Prabhakar's play *Doctor* deal with family crisis as themes of protest.

The dramatic technique and structure of Laxami Narain Mishra's plays is different from Prasad's plays. He has been deeply influenced by the plays of Ibsen and Shaw, and espouses the cause of individual liberty, to protest against the forces that curtail it. He has depicted the social problems analytically in his plays *Sanyasi*, *Mukti Ka Rahasya*, and *Sindur Ki Holi*.

Dharam Vir Bharti has brought out the tragic conflict of values in his work *Andhe Yug* which is based on the *Mahabharata*. The characters of this poetic drama are mythical but the writer has interpreted them in a new way, especially taking into consideration the post-war period. Dhritrashtra, Sanjay, Yuyutsu, Yudhishtir, Krishna, Ashvasthama, Vidur, Gandhari are not just mythical characters, they are in a sense connected with our age and its post-war sensibility. In *Ashvasthama*, Bharati has created a character that brings the agony and predicament of the modern man. Bharati's attempt in this play is to counter the dark forces and to protest against the erosion of human values. He has successfully done it by linking dramatically the eternal human impulses with social values and by weaving a dramatic structure out of them.

Dushyant Kumar has also raised the problem of crisis of

values in his poetic drama *Ek Kanth Vispayey*, through mythical characters, Shanker and Parvati. He thus presents contemporary reality on a value plane and in the context of the horrors of war, i.e., modern man tries to emancipate himself from the worn out traditional and conventional values by challenging their validity but the strength of protest saps away the moment the dramatist attempts to impose a solution. Such is also the case with Agyeya's play *Uttar Priyadarshi* where a traditional 'way out' is mechanically provided. The spirit of protest lies subdued in this drama.

Mohan Rakesh's understanding of the dramatic situation and the dramatic word is very acute and sharp. In his plays *Asad Ka Ek Din*, *Lehron Ke Raj* *Hans* and *Adhe Adhure*, he lays emphasis on the dramatic tension of characters in the context of a family crisis and raises it nearer to the level of existential protest. In the first two plays he projects historical characters to bring out the agony of the present day man-woman relationship. The tone is partly existential. But in *Adhe Adhure*, this tone is further extenuated. Instead of historical characters, the dramatist deals with contemporary middle class family characters and brings out their agony and revolt in the existential sense.

Laxmi Narain Lal's plays are mostly anti-establishment. His protest is directed against social and political institutions. His play *Abdulla Diwana* is a sharp indictment of the socio-political condition of the present time. His approach is a mixture of the absurd and the existential and that makes him *in toto* an absurd romanticist.

Mudra Rakshasa's play *Marjeeva* is a play which expresses protest in an absurd way. The anti-hero of this play is placed in an absurd situation; he is asked to immolate himself to serve the end of a political stunt and he protests. Surendra Verma's play *Draupadi* is also existential in its conception of protest. The playwright raises certain fundamental questions regarding the problem of human identity. The anti-hero of this play has been transformed into an organization man. He loses his identity, and searches for it. He cries in a vacuum. This is a protest in the existential mould.

From the above study and analysis, it is clear that there are various subtler levels of protest as they reflect in modern lite-

rary genres and forms. Sometimes they take the shape of protest against the socio-political organism and institutions, and at others it is existential. Sometimes it is nihilistic and absurd in its approach, while at others it is vitally resurgent and generates activity. If at times it is in the form of a dramatic monologue or in an inner dialogue, at others it assumes the form of a satire or of a direct statement. Nevertheless, protest is the focal point of modern writings that intensely concern itself with the human predicament of our times. This is what has transformed the concept and the nature of modern Hindi literature, which is closely linked with other disciplines of knowledge. It is not just an emotional outburst. If protest and dissent are to be valid literary expressions, they are also weapons of social resurrection. Therefore literature in all its varied forms must not be limited to merely emotional purposes and appeal. Modern Hindi literature, as we understand it, rightly shuns sentimentality and is creatively engaged in weaving an aesthetic structure out of the thought processes generated by the new sensibility. This has made modern Hindi literature valid and robust in its range, temper, and meaning.

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INDEX

- Abhimanyu, 264
 Abhiras, 242
 Abul Fazl, 140
 Acharyas, 57
 Adilshahi, 111
 Adipatta Nayanar (of Nagapattinam) fisherman, 48
 Adivasis, 182
adiyan (slave), 53
 Advaita, 54, 128
 Adyars, 139
 Agamaic ritualism, 54
 Agra, 200
 Agua or the go-between, 177
 Agyea, 29, 265, 269
 novel *Shekher Ek Jeevani*, 272
 play *Uttar Priyadarshi*, 276
 Ahadi (messenger), 149
 Ahirs, 242-43, 256
 Ahmedabad, 216
 Aiyangar, S. Krishnaswami, 35
Ajata Shatru, 274
A-kavita, 27, 266
 Akkana Balagas, 79
 All-India Backward Classes Federation, 244
 All-India Congress Committee, 182
 All-India Noniya Sabha in Katni (MP), 245
 All-India Rajput Sabha, 200
 All-India Virasaiva Maha Sabha, 10, 78-9
 All-India Yadava Maha Sabha (AIYM), 243
 Alla-u-ddin Khilji, 105
 Aligarh, 193
Alvars, 5, 33-5, 37, 43, 46-7, 50, 53, 57, 103, 139
 Amaranidhi (of Tirunallur), 48
 Ambalavasis, 234
 Ambatta, 234
 Ambedkar, B.R., 25, 249, 251-52
 Amritanubhav, 108, 112
 Amritsar, 198
 Anand (devotional cult), 127
Anandalahari, 112
 Andal, 42, 47, 57
Andhe Yug (by Dharam Vir Bharati), 275
Andher Nagri (by Bhartendu), 274
Andhere Men (by Muktibodh), 265
 Anglo-Indians, 234
 Anglo-Vedic, 20, 201-2
Anjumanam (trade guild), 48
 Annadurai, C. N., 248
 Annie Besant, 238
 Annana Balagas, 79
 Antu Bhagat (of Donisanagar), 180
anubhava jnana, 151, 153
 Appar, (Jain saint preacher of Shaivism—author of *Mattavilasa*), 38, 47
 Arjuna, 121
 Aroras, 195, 202, 234, 241
 Arwa Bhagats, 180
 Aryan, 5, 24, 33, 42, 239, 247-48
 Aryavarta, 201
 Arya Bhratri Sabha, 196
 Arya Dharma Sabha, 204
Arya Patrika, 196
 Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha, 200, 203
Arya Prakash, 193

- Arya Samaj, 18-21, 24, 191-208, 235-36, 245
- Arya Samaj Movement, 191 ff
- Upendra Nath Ashk's play *Chhota Beta*, 275
- Ashvasthama, 275
- astavarnas (eight aids), 74
- Asur, 161, 109
- Avadhoot Marga, 110, 112
- Awaraja (account book), 149
- Aualia, Nizamuddin, 110
- Ayurveda, 250
- Babur, 142
- Bachhidan Bhagats, 164-65, 179
- Backward Classes, 123-5, 232, 234, 237, 243-4, 248, 253
- Backward Classes movement, 10, 77, 81-5, 87-8, 93, 232, 248, 254-56
- Badiuzzaman's *Durg*, 272
- Ek Chuhe ki Mooth*, 274
- Bahamani, 110, 111
- Ramesh Bakshi's story *Pita-Dar-Pita*, 271
- Balram Bhagat, 169
- Udaya Shankar Bhatt, 275
- Baluchistan, 204
- Balutedars or service castes, 125
- Banka Mahar, 109, 127
- Banaras (Varanasi), 112
- Bangalore, 78-9
- Banias, 195, 202
- Basava, 75, 79
- Basavanna, S.S., 90
- Basavesvara, 8, 67-9, 71, 73-4, 76
- Beechnahalli Basavaradhya, 78
- Bednur, 67
- begari*, 162
- Beggar* (Nirala's poem), 264
- Belgaum, 67, 78, 82, 183
- Bengal, 103, 242-43, 246
- Bero, 169
- Bhagats, 12, 14, 16, 17, 164 ff
- Bhagat movements, 15, 16, 18, 159, 161, 164, 187-89
- Bhagavat, 12, 40, 112, 117, 120-21, 127, 131
- Bhagavat Dharma, 11, 102-3, 105, 108, 112, 114, 124, 133-34
- Bhagavat Gita, 39-40, 103, 112, 117, 120, 127
- Bhagavat sect, 113
- Bhaj* (to share), 52
- Bhajanam, 126
- Bhajans*, 165
- Bhaktas, 11, 33-4, 48, 50, 52, 54, 72
- Bhakti movement, 5, 7, 8, 33, 39, 48-9, 51, 53, 55, 57, 58, 139
- cult, 6
- and guilds, 48
- ideology, 45
- inscriptions, 43
- literature, 13, 34
- marg, 40
- poets, 12-4
- saints, 14
- tradition, 102, 116, 262
- Bhandarkar, R.G., 35, 133
- Bhanudas, 110-11
- Bharat Durdasha*, 274
- Bharti, Dharam Vir, 266, 275
- Bhonsala (clan), 111
- Prince Maloji Bhosale, 110
- Bhoosnurmath, S.S., 90
- Brahmasvam*, 46
- Bharud*, 112
- Bharatiya Hindu Shuddhi Sabha, 200
- Bharatendu, Harish Chandra, 27, 262, 263, 274
- Bhatta*, 162
- Bhattaraka*, 40
- Bhavartha*, 112
- Bhuka Bhagat of Karkata, 180
- Bhumihar brahmans (in Bihar), 242-44
- Bhuinhars (original settlers), 162
- bhuinhari, 163
- Bhuts*, 170
- Bhutaganas*, 34
- Bihar, 159, 164, 182, 242-45
- Bihar Schedule Areas Regulation 1969, 185
- Bijapur 67

- Bijjala II, 67
 Birsa, 16, 164, 166, 167
 Birsa movement, 166, 171
 Birsa-Munda, 16, 163, 169
 Birsais, 166, 167
 Bishnupur, 167, 169, 178, 184
 Bishnupur area Bhikhu Bhagat, 181
 Black Panthers, 253
 Bombay, 23-5, 77, 81, 89, 204, 216, 236, 240, 253
 Bombay Legislative Council, 216
 Brahma, 119, 141, 173-4
 Ramtahal Brahmachari, 182
 Brahmadev, 221
 Brahmo Samaj, 18, 24, 192, 196, 235-36
 Brijbhumi, 152
 British, 23, 24, 162, 191, 220, 227-28, 232-33, 235, 247, 264
 Buddha, 50
 Buddhism, 6, 7, 48-9, 50, 53, 57, 70, 102-3, 139, 251-52
 Buddhists, 33, 38, 92, 139, 151
 Bulla Sahib, 145
 Bundu, 182
 Burmu, 184
 Calcutta, 193, 204
 Caldwell, R.A., 238, 247
 Cakkaiyars, 40
 Camus, Albert, 27, 262
 Census Reports, 92
 Central Backward Classes Commission Report, 88
 Cerakula Nacaiyar, 47
 Ceraman Perumal Nayanar, 42, 47
 Ceylon, 218, 245
 Chainpur, 169, 184
 Chaitanya, 127, 262
 Chakradharswami, 105, formulations, 106
 Chalavadhis (belonging to the Holeya caste), 75
 Chalukya, 39
 Chamars, 256
 Chanda, 161
 Chander (Bhagat God), 172
 Chand Bondale (a disciple of Raja Mahamad), 128
 Chandra Kant Deotale, 267
 Changneo-parasthi, 108
 Chapatoli, 186
 chatra (an umbrella), 146
 Chaturvarga *Chintamani* (by Hemadri), 105
 chaturvarna, 13, 22, 222, 226
 chatushloki, 112
 Chaudhary, Raj Kamal 266
 Chauhan Rajputs (kshatriyas), 245
 Chaukidari tax, 181
 Chayavad, 27, 263-64
 Chera, 6, 38, 39, 44-5
 Chettis, 234
 Child marriage, 22, 220
 China, 255
 Chiplunkar, Vishnu Shastri, 23, 229
 —(critic who referred to Lokhitwadi as *ingrajalele*), 227
 Chitradurga Brhan, 76
 Chipri Nawatoli, 167
 Chokha Meher, 118
 Chokha Mela, 109, 121-3, 125, 127, 133
 Chola, 6, 36-7, 39, 44
 chiefs, Kalarcingam, Cengatchola and Anapaya, 45
 Chota Nagpur, 15, 159, 161-63, 166, 169, 181-2, 187
 Choundras, 107
 Christ, 116, 247
 Christians, 167, 174, 187-8, 191, 198, 206, 240
 Christian converts, 235
 gospel, 172
 missionaries, 20-1, 24, 191, 199, 203, 206-7, 235
 movement, 18, 235, 249
 paper *Nur-i-Afshan*, 199, 206
 Church Mission, 235
 Claud Etherli (story by Muktibodh), 270

- Coorg, 67
 Code of Manu, 201
 Colombo, 218
 Colonel Munro (Resident of Travancore), 235
 Constitution, 24, 232-3, 252
 Congress, 89, 181, 183-4, 200
 Comte, Auguste, 260
 DMK movement, 26, 241-42, 246, 248, 255
 Dadoba Pandurang, 133
 Dadu Dayal, 13, 14, 141, 152-53
 Dakshina, 162
dakshina, 192, 223
 Dalit Panthers, 25, 253
 Damajipant, 110
 Damle, Y.B., 101
 Dandin, 54
 Danish Mission, 235
 Darwin, Charles, 260
 Darya (of Marwar), 141, 145
 Dasala, 162
 Dasappa Sastry Turmuri, 90
 Raja Jai Kisben Dass, 193
dasyabhava, 34
 Datta sect, 110-12, 127
 Dattatreya, 131
 Dayanand Salvation Mission, 206
 Seva Trust, 208
 Deccan, 36, 113
 Dehu, 113
 Delhi, 162, 208, 242
 Deokuri, 174
 Deothan, 175
 Depressed Classes, 232, 236-37, 252
 Depressed Classes Mission, 236
 Deshastha brahman, 111
 Deshmukhs, 215
 Deshmukh, Gopal Hari, 21, 215
devas (*geervan vani*), 226
devasvam, 46
 Deviya, 181
 devotion (*bhakti marga*), 72
 Dewan, Sir Mirza Ismail, 86
 Dham, 176
 Dhanna, 144
 Dharma, 121, 140, 145
 Dharmdas, 141, 153
 Dharma Grantha, 79
 Dharmes (Bhagat God), 164, 167-68, 171-72, 174-75, 180, 188
 Dharwar, 67, 79, 80, 87
 Dharti Ayo, 172
 Dhasal, Namdeo, 253
 Dhritarashtra, 275
Dhruvswamini, 264
 Dhuku (or intrusion marriage), 177
 Dhumil, 267
 Diku, 162
divyadeshamis, 47
 Diwakar, R. R., 90
 Diwali, 175
 Diwan Chand, 198
 Diwan of Ratlam, 216
 Dixit, Jagadamba Prasad (his *Mudra Ghar*), 274
 Dobai (folk-deity), 106
 Dokotoli, 168
 Domes, 199
 Dravidians, 24, 238-39, 247-48
 Dravida Kazhagam, 26, 239, 241, 246, 248, 255
 Dube, S.C., 215
 Dusadh, 169
 Dussehra, 175
 Dutia, 175
dvarapalas (gate keepers), 52
 Dwarsamudra, 105
 Dwivedi, Hazari Prasad, 27, 262-63
 Dynaneshwar, 109 ff.
 Dynaneshwari, 108, 112, 117-8, 121, 127, 130
 East India Company, 235
 Eknath, 110-14, 117-19, 122, 124, 127-8, 130-31
 Ekoramaradhya, 68
 Ekveera, 131
 England, 227
 English traders, 226
 Etavah, 200
 European Missionaries, 235

- Ezljutheden, 234
- Fanon, Frantz, 253
- Ferozpur, 206
- Freedom Struggle, 28, 269, 272
- Freud, S., 27-8, 262
- Gandhari, 275
- Mahatma Gandhi, 176, 181, 183, 187, 208, 237-38, 250, 252
- Ganga, 39, 165, 172
- Ganga Ram, Sir, 206
- Ganesh, 118, 130, 172, 174
- Gangohi, Sheikh Abdus Quaddus, 142
- Hiriya Garanji, 107
- Garg, Mridula, 271
- Gavali, 112, 242
- Gau Rakshini* (Bhagats), 169
- Gaur, Ramesh, 266, 267
- Gaya Congress, 182-83
- gayatri mantra*, 199
- German baba (Kaiser), 170
- German victory, 170
- Gesudaraz, 110
- Ghaghra, 168-69, 178, 182
- Goala, 242
- Gokhale, Senapati Bapu, 215-16
- Gokhale, B. G., 236
- Gopal, 144, 242
- Gopalrao, 215-16
- Gopikabai, 215
- Gopinatha Rao, T.A., 35
- Gora Kumbhar, 109, 117
- Gosains*, 164
- Goswami Radhacharan (of Bharatendu Circle), 274
- Government of India Act 1935, 232
- Govinda Bhagat (of village Sakra), 186
- Gowda, Dr. R. Nagan, 88
- Gramrachana*, 226
- grantha*, 22, 218
- Granth Sahib*, 141
- Gujarat, 103, 242
- Gulbarga, 78
- Gumla, 168-9, 178
- guna*, 20, 195, 223
- Gupt, Maithilisaran, 263-4
- Gupta, 39-40
- Dharmender Gupta's *Apang Sangya*, 272
- Guru, 72-3, 164, 166, 227
- Gurudatt, 203
- gurukul*, 20, 196, 203-4
- Guru Nanak, 13-4, 26, 140, 153, 262
- Gwalior, 162
- gyan*, 262
- Gyan Ranjan, 275-72
- hagaludevatti* (holding torches during the day), 75
- Hansraj, Mahatma, 19, 195-96, 202, 207
- Hari Krishan 'Premi', 275
- haf*, 150
- Halkatti, P.G., 90
- Hanuman, 167
- Haralayya (an untouchable convert), 71
- Harbilas Sarda, 206
- Hardgrave, R.L., 245
- Hardwar, 193, 204
- Hari, 146
- Harijans, 237
- Haripant (father of Lokhitwadi), 215
- Haripath*, 108
- Hastamalak*, 112
- Haryana, 208, 242
- Hazaribagh, 169, 179, 185
- Hellodorus pillar (inscription of Vidisha), 39
- Hemadri, 110
- Himachal Pradesh, 208, 242
- Himalayas, 204
- Hindu deities (as Devi or Durga), 179
- Hindu Lokani Kay Karave* (by Lokhitwadi), 228
- Hindu-Muslim conflict, 150
- Hindu Revivalism, 49
- Hindustanas daridrata yenyachi karane*, ('Translation of Naoroji's

- Poverty in India* by Lokhitwadi), 224, 226
- Hiremath, R.C., 90
- Ho, 161
- Hodigere, 67
- hollow ladle (represents *Brahma Kapala*), 75
- Home Rule Movement, 238
- Hosadurga, 67
- Hoshjarpur, 206
- Hundred Letters Shatpatre* (Lokhitwadi's), 216
- Hyderabad, 90
- Ibsen, 29, 275
- Idayan, 242
- inamamarga* (or philosophical awareness), 40
- Inam Commissioner, 215-16
- Indian National Congress, 90, 228, 232, 237-8, 241
- Independence Day, 176
- Indra, 165, 172, 174
- Ikkeri, 67
- irai* (tax), 52
- Iran, 141
- istalinga*, 73
- Iyarpakai (merchant of Pumpukar), 48
- Izhavas (toddy-tappers), 234, 240, 249, 250-51
- Jabalpur, 242
- Jadhav, 111
- Jagudi, Lila Dhar, 267
- Jagannath, 172
- Jagjivan Ram, 196
- Jagirdars, 21, 162, 255
- Jahangir, 142, 162
- Jains, 33, 38, 41, 45, 49, 92, 106-7, 125, 139, 151
- Jain-acharyas, 102
- Jain-Buddhist rivalry, 49
- Jain literary works *Chilappadikaram*, 48
- Jain monastery, 44-5
- Jain-Shaiva conflict, 50
- Jainism, 6, 7, 43-4, 48, 49, 50, 53, 57, 70, 102-3
- Jainendra, 269
- Jakhai, 106
- Jamali Satish, *Pratibandh*, 274
- Jamuna, 165, 192
- Jan, Mian Muhammad, 198
- Janabai (female servant of Namdeo), 109, 122, 133
- Janana* (birth), 73
- Janardan Swami, 112, 128
- Jangama*, 72-7
- Jat Pat Todak Mandal, 196
- Jatra, 168
- Jatra Bhagat, 16, 167, 169
- Jats, 195, 202
- Jatti, B.D., 90
- Jayashankar Prasad, 29, 264, 274
- Jay, Edward, 187, 189
- Jehad*, 199
- Jenevu* (sacred thread) movement, 243
- Jews, 234
- Jhelum, 199
- Jharkhand, 159
- Jivaka cintamani*, 48
- Jitiya, 175
- Jitu, 181
- Joga Parmanand (teli), 109
- Jogi Hitaishini Sabha, 246
- Jogis (a caste of weavers), 246
- Jogisaka*, 246
- Judura, 175
- Julaha Bhagats, 180
- Jullunder, 195, 199, 200
- Justice Party, 24, 238, 246
- Justice Ranade, 133
- Kabir, 13, 14, 26, 127, 140-49, 150, 151, 153, 166, 262
- Kabirpanthi Bhagats, 166, 179
- Kailasha, 42, 47
- Kakinada, 183
- Kalachuri, 67
- kalasa* (sacred lamp), 73
- Kali, 14
- Mamta Kalia's *Beghar*, 274
- Ravendra Kalia's *Kala Registrar*, 272

- Kali age, 144-45, 147, 149, 150, 153, 174, 227
 Kalikkama Nayanar, 42
 Kaliya Nayanar (of *Tiruvorriyur*—an oil merchant), 48
kallar (Tirumangal), 37
 Kammalars, 234
 Kamaraj Nadar (Congress), 245
 Kanarese, 103, 107
 Kanavi Channavira, 90
 Kanchi, 36, 38, 46
 Kanha and Bahudi, 107
 Kanhere, Diwanji, Balaji, 128
 Kannada, 10, 67, 107
 rulers, 8, 78
 Kanhopatra, 110
Kanphuki (or initiation), 165
 Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, 204
 Karaikkal Ammaiyaar (daughter of the Dhandatta of Karaikkal), 48, 57
karma, 20, 53, 72, 101, 104, 111, 114, 121, 175, 195, 222, 262
 Karma Bhagat of Belenda, 180
karmamarga (or dharma-based activity), 40
 Karnatak, 8, 10, 67-9, 75, 78-9, 81, 89, 90, 103, 105, 132, 242
 Kashi, 19, 149
 Kashinath Singh's *Apne Loge*, 272
 Kaul, Pandit Hari Kishen, 195
Kavitawali, 149
Kaya shakti dhela bhakti, 165
Kayaka (literally means physical work), 72, 74
kayakava kailasa (or Work is Heaven), 74, 92
 Kayastha, 148, 195, 234, 241, 244
 Khan, Dr. Rahim, 198
 Kendriya Basava Samiti, 79
 Kerala, 24, 45, 47, 67, 78, 234, 240, 242, 249
 Keshavan, C., 251
keshvapan, 221
 Khandesh, 242
 Kharia, 169
Khas, 162
 Khatris, 195, 202, 234, 241
 Khewar, 169
 Khilafat movement, 200
Khorposh, 162
Khutkattidars, 161, 162
 Khwaja Bandanawaj, 110
kirtan, 12, 109, 114, 125, 129
Kitni Kaade, by Mridula Garg, 271
 Kittur, 67
 Knowledge (*jñana*), 72
ko (deity), 51
 Kol rebellion, 16, 162, 181
 Konar, 242
 Konkun, 105, 215, 242
Koyil (temple or palace), 51
 Krishna, 120, 121, 123, 152, 242, 275
kul, 146
 Kulashekhar, 37, 39, 44, 47, 50
 Kumar, Dushyant, 175
 Ek Kanth Vispayey, 276
 Kumar Vikal, 267
 Kumaran Asan, 250
 Kumaril Bhatt, 103
kumats, 162
 Kumbakonam, 37, 46
 Kumhar, 85, 169
 Kunbi caste, 113
 Kuru, 169
 Kurukh Dharma, 167, 187
 Lahore, 198-99, 202, 204
 Lahore Arya Samaj, 195, 203
 Lakshman, 172
 Lakshmi, 176, 178
 Lapung, 169
 Latin Catholics, 234
 Laxmi-jnan, 224
 Laxmi Narain Lal's *Abdulla Divana*, 276
 Lekh Ram, 199
Lilacharitra of Kamakhya, 107
Linga, 72-3
 Lingavants, 68
 Lingayats, 9, 67-8, 76, 78, 81-2, 85, 87-8, 90, 92, 106, 107, 139, 239
 Linton, Ralph, 187-88

- Lodro Bhagat (of Belagara), 180
 Lohardga, 166, 169, 182
 Lokahitwadi, 21, 215-28
 London Mission, 235
 Low caste Christian, 236
 Lower non-brahman Backward Classes, 239
Luckman Ali, 266
- Madhav Sayan, 110
 Madhavacharya, 107, 110
 Madhavan, T.V., 250
 Madhurakavi, 37
 Madhuvayya (a brahman convert), 71
 Madhwa Sect, 107
 Madhya Pradesh, 242-45
 Madras, 23, 25, 77, 235, 237-40, 255
 Madura, 37, 39, 105
 Madurakkanchi, 47
 Mahabharata, 40, 275
Mahabharata Bhatta, 40
 Mahadev, 165, 168-69, 173-74
 Mahadevi, 264
Mahanubhava, 12, 105, 107, 125, 127
 acharyas, 117
 literature, 206
 Mahar movement, 25, 123, 249-56
 Maharaja of Kohlapur, 238
 Maharashtra, 21, 67, 77-8, 103-6, 110, 118, 126-27, 219, 229, 237-40, 243, 256
 Maharashtrian culture, 11, 105, 108, 132, 219
 Mahayana Buddhism, 139
 Mahendravarman, 38, 41, 45, 49, 54
mahesasthala (becomes *nistha-bhakti*), 72
 Mahamad, Raje, 128
 Mahamad, Sheikh, 127-28
 Mahipati, 130
 Mahto, 148, 161
 Mahua flower, 162
 Mahuadaur, 169
- makarathoranam* (a banner with a tortoise or whale embroidered on it), 75
 Makhan Lal Chaturvedi, 264
 Malabar, 200
 Malainadu (or Kerala), 37
 Malaya, 245
 Malayalam, 250
 Malayali brahmans, 240
 Memorandum, 240
 Sabha in 1884, 240
 Malcom, Sir John, 215
 Malik Kafoor, 105
 Malik, S.C., 215
Malis (gardener caste), 238
 Malkana Rajputs, 200
 Malledevaru, 76
 Malward, S.S., 90
 Mandali, 176
mandapas (halls), 52
 Mandar, 169, 175, 178, 184, 186
 Mangaiyarkkarasi (queen), 49, 57
mangalghar (community hall-cum-temple), 165
 Manglai, 106
Manigramam (trade guilds), 39, 48
Manimekalai, 48
 Manjappa, Hardikar, 90
 Manu, 9, 56, 58, 118, 201, 224
manusmriti, 22, 103, 219, 247, 252
 Marathas, 22, 215, 238, 256, empire, 23, 223, 226
 Marathi writings, 12, 107, 108-9, 117, 126, 129, 130
 Marathwada University, 215
 Maravars, 245
 Marularadhya (Marulasiddha), 68
 Marx, Karl, 27, 253, 260-62, 265, 269
Maths, 58, 76-7, 80
 Mathur, Girija Kumar, 265
 Mathura, 39, 192
Mati, 167
Mattavila Prahasana (by Mahendravarman), 54
 Maulvi Usman, 181
 Mauritius, 208
 Mauryan empire, 44

- Maya, 180
 Medhateethi, 103
 Meenakshi temple (of Madurai), 245
 Meerabai, 127
 Meghs, 199
 Mehta, Naresh's novel *Yeh Path Bandhu Tha*, 273
 Mehta, Narasi, 127
 Menstruation (*rafasa sutaka*), 73
 Mesabai, 106
messiah, 16, 169
 Mhasoba, 106
 Miller, Sir Leslie C., 85, 239
 committee, 239
 report, 83-6
minzalik, 149
mirasdars, 255
 Mirza Gulam Ahmed of Qadian, 199
 Mirzapur, 242
 Mishra, Bhawani Prasad, 266
 Mishra, Laxmi Narain, 275
 Mishra, Ram Darsh, 271
 novel *Jal Toota Hooae*, 273
 Modi, Nagarmal, 181
 Mohan Rakesh, 29
 Asad Ka Ek Din, 276
 Lehron Ke Raj Hans, 276
 Adhe Adhure, 276
 Mohan, Saumitra, 266
 Mohite (clan), 111
 Moksha, 72-3, 219
 More (clan), 111
 Morley-Minto Reforms, 236
 Moropant, 130
 Mudaliars, 238
 Mudra Rakshasa, 266-67
 play *Marjeeva*, 276
 Mughal, 18, 149, 191, 241
 empire, 15, 161
mujmil, 149
 Muktabai, 108
 Muktibodh, 28, 265, 270
 Mukti Prasang, 266
 Mukti ka Rahasya, 275
 Mukundraj, 127
 Mulk Das, 153
 Mulk Raj, 196, 202
 Mundas, 15, 16, 166, 168, 169, 181
 Munshi Ram (later to be known as Swami Shraddhanand) 195, 203
 Muntoji Brahmani, 127-28
 Muslim aualias, 128
 converts to Hinduism, 236
 Muslim rule, 105, 110, 112, 117
 saints, 127
mustaafi (or accountant), 149
 Mysore, 23, 24, 26, 76-83, 85, 89, 90, 237, 239, 240
 Mysore (Karnatak) Backward Classes Committee, 88
 Mysore Lingayat Educational Fund Association, 82
 Mysore State Electricity Board, 90

 Naba Bhagat (of Murma), 180
 Nadar, 234-35, 245, 249
 movement, 241-42, 255
 Nadar Kshatriya Mahajana Sangham at Madurai, 245
 Nagapattinam, 50
 Nagara, 175
 Nagpur, 183
 Naicker, Ramaswamy, 246-48
 Naidu, 234, 253
 Naidu, Sarojini, 182
Nai Kahaniyan, 28, 270
Nai Kavita, 27, 265-66
 Namashudras, 246
namaz, 150
 Nambi Andar Nambi, 34
 Nambudiri, 240, 249
 Namdeo, 105-7, 109-12, 114, 121-22, 124, 127, 130
 Nammalvar, 33, 37, 47, 50
namsankirtan, 116
Nandesikal, 48
nandidwajam (flag with a representation of Nandi), 75
 Nandimath, S.C., 90
 Nantanar (Paniya), 50, 53
 Naoroji, Dadabhai, 22, 224
naraka (*Laghuparashar*), 220

- Narayana, 250
 Narayan Bhagat (of Danda), 180
 Narendra Mohan, 267
 Narahari Sonar, 109, 117
 Nasik, 216
Nath Panthis, 13, 139, 140, 151
 Nath sect, 106-7 109, 127
 Nath and Mahanubhav Sampradaya, 219
 Nathamuni, 34
 Nathu Bhagat (of Jaira), 180
 Nationalism, 226
 Nativistic (or revitalization movements), 17, 187
 Nawakhain, 162
 Nayaks of Keladi, 67
Nayanars, 5, 33-5, 37, 43, 45-7, 49-51, 53, 57
 Nayars, 238, 240, 250, 251
nayika, 34
 Nedumaran, 45, 49
 Nehru, Pandit Motilal, 182
 Nemha Bhagats, 166, 179
 Neo-Buddhists, 256
 Netarhat plateau, 161
 Nijamshahi rule, 111
 Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., 35
 Niladhara, 204
 Nilgiris, 204
 Nimbalkar, 111
 Nipakh, 152-53
 'Nirala', Suryakant Tripathi, 27, 264
niti, 140
 Nivruti, 108
 Noudih, 106
 Non-brahman movements, 10, 237 ff.
 Non-cooperation movements, 17, 181-82
 Noniyas (a caste of earth-workers), 245
nyaya, 224
 Odes, 199
Ojha, 167
Om, 72
 Oraons, 15-16, 161, 164-69, 174, 176-79 188
 Orissa, 182, 242
 Other Backward Classes, 232-34
Pahan, 161, 164-65
Paisa Akhbar (owned by the Muslims), 199
 Paithan, 111
 Pakhand Khandini, 193
 Pakistan, 248
 Palamau, 166, 169, 185
 Palkot, 169
 Pallavas, 36-9, 43-5, 246
 Pallis, 246
 Paltudas, 145, 153
Pana (Tiruppana), 37, 53
Panchacharas (five codes of conduct), 74
 Panchacharyas (five prophets), 68
Pancharatra, 103
 Panchayats, 233
 Pandharpur, 107, 112
 Panditaradhya, 68
 Pandya, 6, 37-9, 41-4
 Panjab, 19, 103, 195, 202, 242-43
 Panjab Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 203, 208
 Panodas, 145
 Pant, Govind Vallabh, 275
 Pant, Sumitranandan, 264
Paraiyas, 53, 56
Paramabhagavata, 40
Parameshvara, 40
Parashar, 220
Parkaras (fortress walls), 52
 Parliament, 90, 233
 Parsis, 234
 Parvati, 42, 165, 173-74, 276
 Patel, Vallabhbhai, 182-83
 Pathak, N.R., 224
Pathshalas, 80-1
Patwari, 148
Pavani (or *nagarapradaksina*-procession), 51
 Pavgada, 67
 Pawar, J.V., 253
Pax Britannica, 236
 Periyalvar, 37, 47, 50

- Periyapuranam*, 46
 Persian, 118
Perumal, 51
 Peshwas, 21, 23, 130, 215, 226
 Phadnis (secretary), 215
 Phagu or Holi, 165, 175
 Phagua, 175
 Phule, Jyotiba, 24, 237-38
 Pillai, Nallaswami, 238
 Pillai, P. Sundaram, 247
 Pollution (*sutakas*), 73
 Polygars (of Chitradurga) 67
 Poona, 113, 216
 Pope, 247
 Post-Mauryan period, 39
Prabhakar (Journal), 216
 Prabhakar, Vishnu, play *Doctor*, 275
Pracharaks, 208
Pragativad, 27, 265
 Praja Mithra Mandali, 239
 Prasad, Jayshankar, play *Vishakh*, 274
 Prasad, Dr. Rajendra, 183
 Prasad, Ramchandra, 181
Prasadas (mansions), 52
Prayogvad, 27, 265
 Prem Chand, 28-9, 268-9, 272
 Kafan, 269
 Poos ki raat, 269
 Godan, 272
Preta (death), 73
 Prometheus, 262
 Proselytization, 198
 Proto-Australoid, 159
 Provincial Civil Service (Madras), 238
 Public Service Commission, 90
 Pulli (chief), 36
Punarjanma, 53, 56
 Pundalik, 107
Punya Sanchaya (merit), 130
Puranas, 40, 118, 128, 220, 246
 Purusha, 122
 Purushartha, 113, 148
 Puttana Chetty, Sir K.P., 78
 Puttaswamiah, B., 90
Qazis, 151
 Quit India movement, 17, 183
Quran, 151-2
 Rahatias, 199
 Rai Das, 13-14, 143-44, 153
 Rai, Lala Lajpat, 19, 195, 206
 Raichur, 78
 Raidih, 169
 Rainy, Mr. G., 182
 Raj, Lala Dev, 204
 Raja Dhale, 253
 Rajagopalachari, C., 182
 Rajasthan, 103, 242-43
 Rajjab, 153
 Rajogunatmak, 118
Rajopacara (music and dance), 51
 Rajput, 195, 200, 234
 Rajput Upkarini Mahasabha, 200
 Rajya Basava Samiti, 79
 Ram, 175, 247
 Ramanand, 127, 145
 Ramanuja, 108
Ramayana, 112, 127
 Ramdas, 110, 112-13, 129
 Ramdeoral (the Yadav ruler), 105, 108
 Ramdurg incident, 89
 Ramlila grounds, 208
 Ranganatha, Krishna, 42
 Ramtahal Brahmachari, 181
 Ranchi, 16, 159, 167-69, 182-83, 185-86
 Rationalist Movement, 21
 Rautia, 169
 Ravana, 247
 Rawalpindi, 199
 Renu, Phansisavarnath, 29
 Malla Anchal, 273
Report of the Backward Classes Reservation Commission, 1970, 234
 Republic day, 176, 232
 Revanaradhya (Renukacarya), 68
 Rhodesia, 267
 Ritu Raj, 267
 Rohtak, 208

- Roman empire, 44
 Rowe, William, 244
 Roy, S.C., 166, 168, 172, 189
Rozu, 150
 Rukmini of Apegaon, 108
Rukmini Swayamvara, 112
 Russia, 255

Sad (Diku), 162
 Sada Bhagats, 179
Sada-i-Hind, 199
 Sadasivaiah, 76
 Sadgop, 242
 Sahni, Bhisham, 171
 Mooka Prastha, 272
 Tamas, 274
Sahasrabhojanas, 223
 Sahay, Raghuvir, 266
 Sahi, Vijay Dev Narain, 266
 Sahu, 169
 Sain Dass, 196
 Saina, 144
 Saint Ambigara Caudayya, 73
Saivagamas, 80
 Salvite, 68
Samantas (feudatories), 39
 Sambandhar (a brahman from
 Kaundinya Gotra of Shiyali),
 41, 47
Samskaras, 74
 Sanatan Dharm Rakshini Sabha,
 198
Sanatanis, 19, 196, 205
 Sangam period, 38
 Sanjay, 275
 Sankar, 108
 Sanskrit College at Bangalore, 86
 Sanskritization, 16, 164, 187
 Sant Dnyaneshwar, 11, 105, 107-9,
 112-16, 119-21, 124, 127, 129,
 133, 219
 Sant Tukaram, 11, 105, 108, 112-15,
 119, 122, 124-25, 127, 129-30,
 133
 Santebennur, 67
 Santhals, 29, 273
Santulan, 140
 Sanyasis, 151, 275

 Sarada (diety), 250
 Saraswati, 110-11, 129-30
 Sarda Act, 206
 Sardari agitation, 163
 Sardars, 168
 Sardars in the Deccan, 215-16
 Sarguja States in Madhya Pradesh,
 169
 Sarhul, 175
Sarna, 164, 175
 Sartre, Jean-Paul, 27, 262
 Sat Pahari hill, 179
 Satara, 216
 Satavahanas, 36
Satdharm Pracharak, 204
 Sati, 227
Satsthalas (stages), 72
 Satvagunatmak (righteousness), 118

 Satya Shodhak Samaj, 24, 250
Satyagrah, 183
Satyartha Prakash, 19, 21, 193-94,
 202, 205
 Saugar, 242
 Savata Mali, 109, 117
 Saxena, Rajeev, 267
 Sayanacharya, 110
 Sayedpur, 199
 Scheduled Castes, 25, 232-34, 249,
 252
 converts, 231
 Scheduled Tribes, 15, 232-34
 Self-Respect movement, 241, 245-48,
 254
 Sen, Keshab Chandra, 236
 Sen Gupta, J.M., 182
 Senha, 182
 Servants of India Society, 236
 Service (*dasaha*), 74
 Shahirs, 130
 Shalva, 34, 37-38, 46, 49-51, 71, 73
 Shalvism, 5, 6, 33, 41, 44, 49
 Shakti, 151
 Shanar castes, 249
 Shankar, R., 251
 Shankaracharya, 54
 Shanker, 276
 Shah Sharif, 110

- Sharma, Balkrishan, 'Naveen', 264
 Sharma, G.N., 215
 Sharma, Dr Ram Vilas, 275
 Shastrarths (discussions and debates), 193
Shastras, 19, 23, 45, 118-20, 123, 192, 218, 221-22, 227
 Shatrughan, 172, 174
 Shaw, Bernard, 29, 275
 Sheikh, 151
 Shimoga, 78
 Shinde, V.R., 236, 252
 Shiv, 34, 39, 42-3, 47, 72-4, 76, 250
 linga, 192
 ratri, 192
 temple, 41
 shivachars, 68
 Shivaji, 11, 105
Shradha, 72
 Shreedhar, 130
 Shree Guru Charitra (Biography of the Preceptor), 111
 Shridavithal (a Kanarese poet), 132
 Shrilanka, 218
 Shri Prannath, 153
Shruti-Smriti, 118
Shuddhi, 20, 198-200, 207, 236
 Shukla, Lal, novel *Rag Darbari*, 273
Shupashpak, 112
 Sibb Bhagat, 179-80
 Siddaganga, 76
Siddhas, 13, 141
 Sikh, 18, 92, 191
 Simhavishnu, 36
 Simon Commission, 183
 Sind, 204
Sindur Ki Holi by L.N. Misra, 275
 Singh, Dudh Nath, 266
 Singh, Kumar Suresh, 168
 Singh, Sir Nahar, of Shahpura, 200
 Singh, Vijaya Mohan, *Bheed ke Baad*, 272
 Singaji, 145
 Singia, 181
 Sira, 67
 Sirajuddin, 110
 Sirhindi, Sheikh Ahmad, 142
 Sirigere, 76
 Sisal, 169, 171, 178, 181, 186
 Sita, 172-4
 Sivamurthy Sastri, B., 70
 Sivanagamayya (an untouchable convert), 71
Snan-sandhya, 223
Snana or nirattupalli (bathed), 51
 Sohrai, 175
 Someshwar (from Hoyasal Yadav clan), 107
 Sona Nhavi, 117
 Sonchipi Ashram, 184, 186
 Sopana, 108
 Soropa, 182
 Soul (*jiva*), 73
 South Africa, 267
 South Frontier Agency, 162
 South Indian Liberal Federation, 238
 South Travancore, 249
 Spencer, Herbert, 260
Sradhabhakti (devotion as termed in *bhaktasthala*), 72
Sravana or Onam (as birthday of Vamana, an avatar of Vishnu), 47
 Sri Hanagal Kumaraswamy, 78
 Sri Lingayat Samaj Sudharana Sangh, Hubli, 79
 Sri Mad Virasaiva Kuruvinareshetti Samaj, Rabkavi, 79
 Sai Mad Virasaiva Sivayoga Mandir, Bagalkot, 79
 Sri Nandikol Basavesvara Devasthan Sanstha, Dharwar, 79
 Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana movement (SNDP movement), 249
 Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, 249-51, 254-5
 Sri Sadguru Muppinendra Mahaswami Dharmadev Fund, 79
 Sri Ulavi Basavesvara Dharma Fund, Dharwar, 79

- Sri Virasaiva Kuruvinashetti Samaj, Banhatti, 79
- Sri Virasaiva Mahasamaj, Hirekerur, 79
- Sri Virasaiva Pattasali Sangh, Hubli, 79
- Sri Virasaiva Sajjan Samaj Sudharana Sangh, Bevrur, 79
- Sir Virasaiva Vidyalaya Association, Almatti, 79
- Srimara Srivallabha, 50
- Srirangam, 36, 46-7, 50
- State Legislatures, 233
- Sthalapurana*, 43
- Structural changes, 255
 reformatory, 25, 255
 transformatory, 25, 255
 revolutionary, 25, 255
- Sudarshana Chakra, 218
- Sufi, 12, 110, 127-28
- Sukra* (Bhagat leader), 181
- Sundarar, 42, 47
- Suraj, 172
- Surajmukhi Andhere ke* by Krishna Sobti, 274
- Surat, 216
- Surdas, 13-14, 144, 148-50, 152
- Suttur, 76
- Svadeshpriti*, 228
- Swabhav, 20, 195
- Swadeshi* movement, 23, 202, 226
- Swami Chakradhar, 219
- Swami Dayanand, 18-20, 191-96, 198, 200-1, 204, 205, 208
- Sri Narayan Guru Swamy, 249-51
- Swami Shraddhanand, 19-20, 195, 200, 204, 207
- Swami Virjanand (of Mathura), 19, 192
- Swaraja, 202
- Swatmasukha*, 112
- Swetachachatram* (white silk umbrella), 75
- Syaha*, 149
- Syrian, 234
- Syrian Christians, 251
- Tamar, 182
- tambiran*, 53
- Tamil, 24, 40, 42, 103, 240, 247
 bhakti movement, 33, 35
 cult, 33
 consciousness, 37
 heritage, 6, 37
 language, 8, 58, 247
 literature, 36, 43
 religion, 5
- Tamil Nadu, 24, 67, 77-78, 241-45, 249
- Tamil Vaishnava canon, 34
- Tamilakam, 31, 37, 42, 48
- Tamogunatmak (or passion), 118
- Tana Bhagats, 16-88, 166-67, 169-79, 182-89
- Tana Bhagat Agricultural Land Restoration Act, 1947, 185
- Tana Bhagats of Karra (near Kunti), 166
- Tana faith, 169, 178
- Tana Mandali, 177
- Tanjore, 50
- Tantrism, 139
- Taralabalu, 76
- Taregan, 172
- Telugu, 103, 107
- Tenure Act, Chota Nagpur, 16, 163-64, 185
- Tevadiccis (devadasis), 47, 57
- Thakurs, 242-43
- Thana, 216
- Thipperudraswamy, H, 90
- Tiko Tanr, 181
- Tilak, Lokamanya, 104
- Tillai temple (or Chidambaram), 36, 46, 51
- Tirai* (tribute), 52
- Tirujnanasambandhar (king), 49-50
- Tirukkatkarai, 37, 47
- Tirukkayilayanana Ula of Ceraman Perumal Nayanar (or *Adiyula*), 51
- Tirumal (or Vishnu), 36
- Tirumangai Alvar (Kallar), 50
- Tirumaraikaadu* (*Vedaranya*) 41
- Tirumulikkalam, 37, 46
- Tirunallur, 36

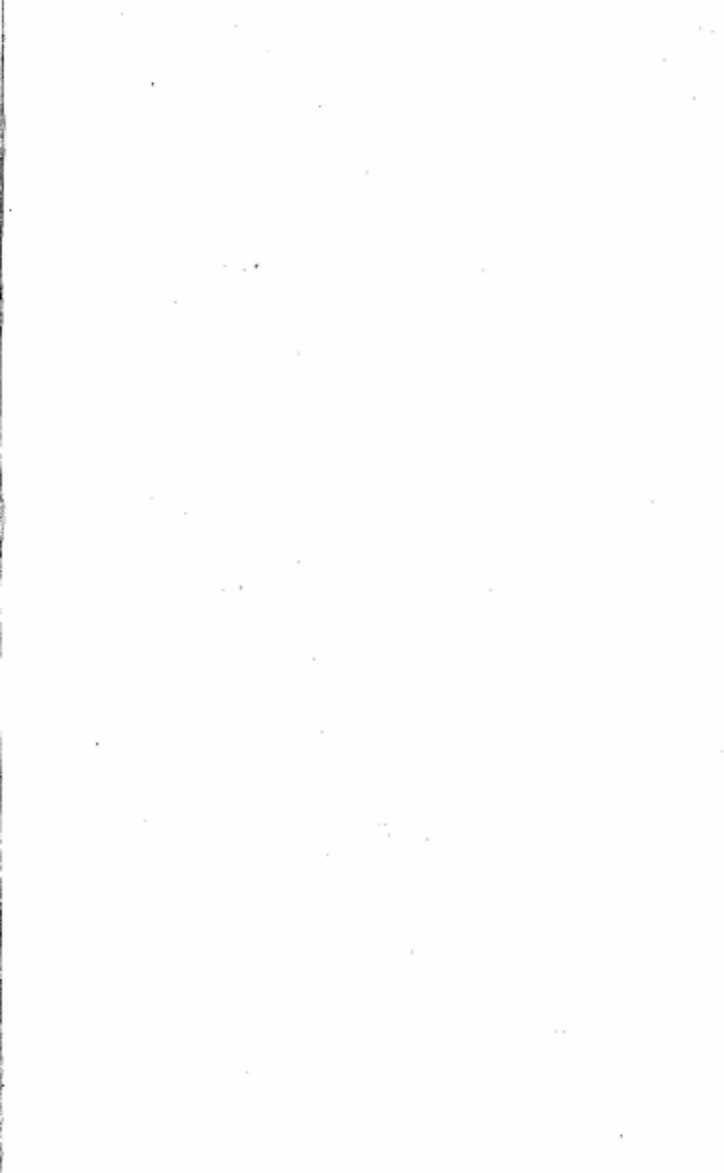
- Tirunavay, 37
 Tirunavukkarasu or Appar, 46, 49
 Tirunelveli, 37
 Tiruppanna Alvar (Pana), 42, 50, 53, 56
Tiruppati, 36, 47
 Tiruvallaval, 47
 Tiruvalla Copper Plates, 51
 Tiruvancaikkalam, 42, 46
Tiruvanjaikkalam, 37
Tiruvaratturai, 42
 Tiruvavur, 36, 42, 46
 Tiruvittuvakkod, 46
 Tiwary, Shri Gulab, 183
 Tondaradippodi Alvar, 37, 44, 50
 Travancore, 235
Tribune, 203
Trigunas, 123
Trikon, 271
 Tulsidas, 13-14, 26, 127, 144-45, 148-50, 153, 262
 Tumkur *maths*, 76
 Turkistan, 141
 Turkish rule, 13, 139-40, 142
 Turiya 181
 Tyagavira Sircangi Lingaraju, 78
 UP, 195, 200, 204-5, 242-45
 USA, 227
 Uchangidurga, 67
Uchchista (spittle), 73
Udaiyar, 53
 Un-Arsha literature, 192
 Untouchability, 237
 Upadayay, Govind, 267
 Upadhyay, Ayodhya Singh, 263-64
 Upanishads, 80, 103, 117, 127, 193
 Vaid, Kishan Baldev, novel
 Us ka Bachpan, 273
 Vaid, 234, 241
 Vaikom temple-road-entry-movement, 250
 Vaikunth, 125, 129
 Vaishnav, 34, 37
 bhakti cult, 36
 sadhya, 143
 saints, 153
 of *viragi* 164
 Vaishnavism, 5, 33
 Vaishyas, 234, 241
 Vajpeyi, Kailash, 266
 Vakhana, 145
 Vallabhacharya, 153
 Vanhikul Kshatriya Movement, 241-46
Vansh (family), 147
 Vanshi, Baldev, 267
 From the Visitor's Gallery, 268
 Varaguna I, Pandyan King of Madurai, 39
 Varanasi, 40, 208
Varnas, 12-13, 19, 31
Varnashrama dharma, 8, 13, 57-8, 70, 111, 122, 140, 145, 150, 238, 248
 Vasishnava Gosains, 165
 Vatandars, 215
 Vedantasutra, 103, 224, 250
 Vedas, 14, 19, 45, 72, 80, 104, 118-20, 122, 142, 144-45, 151-52, 192-93, 201, 250
 Vedic, 20, 54, 101, 242
 chants, 72, 245
 lore, 41, 203
 religion, 102-3, 110-11, 115, 132
 ritualism, 7
 times, 3, 194, 295
 tradition, 102-3, 112, 115, 118, 134, 208
 Vellalas, 234
 Vellalars, 238
 Venattadigal (chieftain of Venadu), 45
Venkatam, 36, 46
 Venu Gopal, 267
 Verma, Srikanth, 266
 Verma, Surendra, play *Draupadi*, 276
 Vichar Kavita, 28, 267 ff
 Vidhya Vivah Sahayak Sabha, 206
 Vidur, 275
 Vidyaranaya, 110
 Vijayanagar, 8, 110-12, 132
 Vijendra, 267
Virakta monks, 80

- Viranminda Nayanar (Vellala), 50
 Virasaiva, 9, 67-77, 82-3, 90-1, 239
 associations, 78
 brahmans, 92
 Hindu, 91
 population, 79
 saints, 72, 74, 80
 scriptures, 73
 tenets, 80
 texts, 74
 Virasaiva Kare-Kul Samaj Bijapur, 79
 Virasaiva movement, 8, 67, 69-72,
 75-8, 81-3, 90-2, 239
 Virasaiva Tarun Sanghas, 79
 Virasaivism, 24, 67-8, 73
 Virasaivites, 9, 67
 Vishnu, 34, 39, 42-43, 46, 165
 Vishnu Bhagats, 165, 181
 Vishvambhar-Bava, 113
 Visvaradhya, 68
 Vithal (Pandurang), 107-13, 117,
 121, 124-33
 Vithalpant Kulkarni (father of
 Dyaneshvar), 108
 Voget, F., 189
 Vokkaligas, 78, 85, 88-90, 239
Vratas, 224
Vyakarna, 224
Vyasahasta (of Vyasa, 75)
 Wai, 216
 Wallace, A., 187
 Waman Pandit, 130
 Warangal, 105
 Warkari Sect, 105-17, 121, 124-26,
 129, 131
 sampraday, 219
 Westernization, 18, 192
 Widow-marriage, 205, 220, 272
 Wodeyars, 67
 Women's Liberation, 219 ff
 Yadavs, 25-6, 234, 242-45, 254-56
 movement, 241-44
 rule, 105
 Yadev, Rajendra, 271
Yajnopavit, 198-99
Yajnyavalkya, 221
Yajurveda, 201
Yal (musical instrument), 42
 Yama, 218
 Yogiraj, 121
 Yudhishtir, 275
 Yuyutsu, 275
 Zilla Basava Samitis, 79
 Zilla parishads, 233
 Zamindars, 255



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