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**THE BRAHMO SAMAJ:
INDIA'S FIRST MODERN MOVEMENT
FOR RELIGIOUS REFORM**

Spencer Lavan

Charismatic leadership appears clearly to be a hallmark of modern religious reform movements in India. The focus of renewal around one person—Dayananda Saraswati in the Arya Samaj, Sri Ramakrishna in the Ramakrishna movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in the Ahmadiyah Islamic reform movement — who stands over and above both the leading disciples and the later organizational expertise, seems to be the rule. The Brahma Samaj may be the exception among the reform movements under study in this volume, for the Brahma Samaj may be said to have had two founders and at least four major figures dominating its organization during the nineteenth century.¹

More than the other three reform movements, the Brahma Samaj spoke in its most effective way to an educated generation of young Bengalis seeking as educated Hindus, to respond religiously to the world in which they were living. In a real sense the Brahma Samaj was the first modern religious movement in India reacting to events precipitated by the presence of the British East India Company and, after 1813, by the increasing activity of evangelical Christian missionaries.

The period of Mughal rule in India from 1560 to the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, during which an Islamic presence was dominant throughout the subcontinent, was a period of sharp decline for

Hinduism. The Rajput princes in western India, and especially the militant Shivaji, attempted to reassert Hindu devotional values in face of Islamic political supremacy. Reformers such as Kabir, Ramananda, and Guru Nanak attempted assimilations of what they believed to be the best in Hindu and Muslim teaching. Nanak's piety and reform led to the creation of the Sikh movement, whose members' bitter experiences in the struggle against the Mughal emperors turned them away from the broad reforming ideas of Nanak toward a self-consciously organized new religious movement.

A new day of Hindu self-awareness, neither militant nor assimilationist, began during the period 1797-1805, when the Marquis Wellesley, a conservative English aristocrat, was sent to India as governor-general. Fearing French expansion into India under Napoleon, and believing many of the Company's civil servants to be unprepared for their duties, Wellesley proclaimed in 1800 the formation of Fort William College, whose purpose it would be "to fix and establish sound and correct principles of religion and government in their minds at an early period of life... which could ... provide for the stability of British power in India."² Wellesley envisaged a college modeled on Oxford or Cambridge, with a staff of professors teaching Arabic, Persian (the language of government at the waning Mughal court), Urdu and Sanskrit, as well as courses on Muslim and Hindu law, English jurisprudence, and traditional European studies such as the classics.

An interest in and revival of "Oriental studies" had started several decades earlier with a loosely established Asiatic Society of Bengal. Following the founding of Fort William College, the two institutions came closer together, especially after the death of Sir William Jones, founder of the Asiatic Society. Many of the translation projects of Hindu scriptures he began were continued by groups of scholars at the college. Two kinds of issues emerged from the work being done at Fort William: those developed by scholarly interest in India's antiquity and those which would help the East India Company civil servants govern more effectively.

One particular group of Christian missionaries, those at Serampore, first a Danish and then a British territory, combined an interest in Oriental studies and a renewal of ancient Hindu culture through the study of texts. At the same time they sought to convert Hindu Bengalis to Christianity. The reason for discussing Fort William College, the Asiatic Society, and the Serampore missionar-

ies is that all three were sources providing an impact on increasing numbers of young Hindu intellectuals learning English and undertaking academic studies. This was the generation of Bengalis who also served as tutors of the indigenous Indian languages to the English civil servants at Fort William College. The educational encounter did not provide a sudden enlightenment leading to a repudiation of Hinduism or conversion to Christian orthodoxy. It represented instead a developing realization by a new generation of Hindus of the benefits of English education as well as a renewed awareness of the potential value of long forgotten Hindu roots. The intersection of these forces has been described as the "Bengal Renaissance." It was from this renaissance that Rammohun Roy, "Father of Modern India" and founder of the Brahma Samaj, emerged.

It is significant at this point to note in some detail the impact of Western education and Rammohun's involvement with Christian missionaries as a prelude to discussing the Brahma Samaj. That Rammohun died in England and was buried in 1833 in a Unitarian Churchyard in Bristol, eulogized by the Rev. Lant Carpenter, was no accident. He came to England in 1830, shortly after he had established the Brahma Sabha or Brahma Society, a trust deed for which had been signed on January 23 of that year.

The events leading up to that signing begin with Rammohun's diverse and complex education and his early exercises reinterpreting the Upanishads. Rammohun's focus on monotheistic Vedantic Hinduism had already been noticed in Western publications before his controversy with Dr. Marshman, the Christian missionary, began in 1820.³ Before beginning his *The Precepts of Jesus*, Rammohun had been acquainted with Christians in Calcutta for at least four years. He may have learned some Greek and Hebrew. Thus far he was reforming Hinduism on an academic level. It, therefore, seemed appropriate to him that he should study other religions. Out of a deep concern for ethics and morality, Rammohun began a study of the Gospels in order to separate the ethical teachings of Jesus from the "accretions" the missionaries were teaching as Christianity.

"The simple code of religion, and morality," he wrote, "is so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notions of one God, who has equally subjected all living creatures, without distinction of caste, rank or wealth, to change, disappointment, pain and death, and has equally

admitted all to be partakers of the bountiful mercies which He has lavished over nature, and is also so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in discharge of their various duties to God, to themselves, and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in the present form."⁴

From his writings about Christianity, it is clear that Rammohun was an Arian, or Unitarian. His writings emphasize the ethical teachings of Jesus extracted from the theology and Christology of Christianity. For his unusual efforts Rammohun received criticism rather than praise from missionary Joshua Marshman. This led to a continuing debate between the two men and the publication by Rammohun of three additional "Appeals" to *The Precepts* to strengthen his case for an "enlightened" Christianity.

While one might think that such a controversy would have intimidated Rammohun, it actually led him to establish a close relation with two other Baptist missionaries, the Revs. William Yates and William Adam. Together, the three undertook a translation of the New Testament into Bengali, with Yates and Adam rendering the Greek text into English, and then, with Rammohun's assistance, into Bengali. The work of the translation went well until the three men reached the third verse of the first chapter of the Gospel of John. There a new controversy arose over the Greek preposition *dia* and whether it should be rendered "by" and "through" in the phrase "All things were made through Him." Fearing the tinge of Arianism if "through" rather than "by" were used, and that the position of Christ in the Trinity would thereby be compromised, Yates withdrew from the project.⁵

As outcasts, Adam and Rammohun Roy became close friends. Both decided while finishing the translation that there was indeed no proof of the Trinity to be found in the New Testament. The impact of Adam's decision to publicize his change in theological orientation was his expulsion from the Baptist church mission. For their outspokenly liberal positions, Rammohun and Adam were now opposed both by the *brahmins* and the Christians in Calcutta.

Together they decided to establish a Unitarian church. This decision coincided, by striking chance, with the founding of organized Unitarian movements in Boston and London. Journalists in both countries had already reported to Unitarians Rammohun's controversial stand with Hindus and Christians. Adam had received

sermons by the Rev. William Ellery Channing, father of American Unitarianism. By 1823, a correspondence between the two Calcutta men and both the American and British Unitarian organizations had begun.⁶

The excitement of this new relationship was short-lived. Calcutta's requests for money to support a mission took months to cross the ocean. The financial responses were too small to allow for any significant development in Calcutta. By far the largest financial support came from Rammohun himself and from Dwarkanath Tagore, a wealthy merchant, father of Debendranath Tagore, the next major Brahmo leader, and grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore, the poet. The other pervasive problem in the Calcutta—England—American axis was the Unitarian desire to describe Rammohun as a "Christian." This suggested a level of paternalism at work in the relationship. Unitarian services, while they were held under Adam's leadership, were conducted in English rather than in Bengali.

By 1828, Rammohun and his closest friends felt that a reform within Hinduism would be a far better approach than that of attempting to establish a Unitarian church where Hindus would never play a leadership role equal to that of British members. While William Adam was disappointed not to have them as part of his struggling Unitarian community, he takes credit in letters written to Boston in the winter of 1828 for having urged the *brahmin* leadership of the Unitarian movement to go in the direction of an indigenous reform movement.⁷

Adam also provides us with the earliest description of Brahmo worship in a letter he wrote to the Rev. Joseph Tuckerman of Boston in 1829. The service illustrates how the Brahmo Samaj in its earliest days helped upper-caste intellectual Hindus to reform their tradition without closing off religious, cultural, or caste identity.

The service begins with two or three of the Pandits singing, or rather, chanting in the cathedral style, some of the spiritual portions of the Ved, which are next explained in the vernacular dialect to the people by another Bengali...and the whole is concluded by hymns both in Sanskrit and Bengali, sung with and accompanied by instrumental music, which is also occasionally interposed between other parts of the service. The audience generally consists of from fifty to sixty individuals, several Pandits, a good many Brahmins

and all decent and attentive in their demeanor.⁸

Finding a sense of religious identity which could speak to the needs of a more educated, intellectual, *brahmin*-born elite seems clearly to have been the earliest motivation for establishing the Brahmo Samaj. Disappointed but understanding of what had happened, William Adam wrote again to Tuckerman:

Rammohun Roy, I am persuaded, supports this institution [the Brahmo Samaj] not because he believes in the divine authority of the Ved, but solely as an instrument for overthrowing idolatry. To be candid, however, I must add that... in my mind... he employs Unitarian Christianity in the same way, as an instrument for spreading pure and just notions of God, without believing in the divine authority of the Gospel.⁹

Thus it was that the Brahmo Samaj had its origins. Rammohun Roy combined in his personality and intellect a depth of spirit that saw new light from the two traditions essentially conflicting in Calcutta. On the one hand, Vaiṣṇava sectarianism with its practices such as *sati* (widow burning) and highly emotional bhakti seemed to offer nothing to speak to the needs of the early nineteenth-century educated urban Hindu. On the other hand, the British East India Company presence, with its new educational institutions and, after 1813, a Christian missionary participation, evangelical in its orientation, also did not speak to the needs of Hindus such as Rammohun.

From Brahmo Sabha to Samaj: Debendranath Tagore

Although a detailed discussion of Brahmo institutional development and the forces at work in it would require a study of the depth of that undertaken recently by David Kopf, it is here important to cite at least Akkhoy Kumar Dutt (1820-66) as one contemporary of Debendranath Tagore who brought a different perspective to the liberal religious movement. A product of both Hindu and Christian education, Dutt also attended Calcutta Medical College shortly after it opened in 1835. His philosophical orientation was centered in rationalism, deism, and scientism.¹⁰ Although he was accused of being an atheist and can certainly be labelled a secularist, Dutt's conception of the divine rested not on a Christian doc-

trine of prayer or a Vedantist experience of union with *brahmin*, but rather on an understanding of science and the natural laws which revealed the harmoniousness and interrelatedness of the universe. Dutt represents one extreme to which the combined presence of Western and Hindu education could lead a keen mind.

The Charter of 1833, which put an end to all restrictions on Christian missionary activity, led to new kinds of responses among the Calcutta intelligentsia. Renewal movements such as the Brahmo Sabha (Samaj) organized to include a broader base of the educated young Bengali generation meant that Dutt, who did not come from a wealthy family background and who held rather radical views, could find a place in the movement. The new freedom of Christian missionaries led also to a considerable amount of anti-missionary propaganda by the vernacular press, as well as rising opposition in the Hindu community to any attempts to teach Christianity in either government or missionary schools.

By 1839, Dutt had discovered Debendranath Tagore and had joined his Tattvabodhini Sabha, a reform movement roughly parallel to the Brahmo Sabha but more clearly dedicated to opposing the Christian expansion into Bengal. That Tagore, who was very much more a mystic and theist, should welcome the more theologically radical Dutt is a sign that Hindu religious liberalism was willing, at this stage, to be accepting and expansive. By the mid-1840s, Dutt was a teacher in Tagore's school and editor of the Brahmo Samaj newspaper, the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*.¹¹

Debendranath Tagore stands out as a figure markedly different from others of his generation. This is because he was already a second generation "Brahmo," the product of a wealthy landowning family steeped in Western liberalism and eclectic in its life-style. Dutt, by contrast, was the first in his family—as were so many other young men of the 1840s—to experience a break with conservative caste-dominated Hindu culture. Western education, the sciences, openness in examining the meaning of life, were new to him.

Tagore married early in the traditional Hindu style, but was exposed to non-Hindu practices of meat-eating and wine drinking at an early age. The death of his grandmother in 1835 seems to have been a traumatic experience for him. His autobiography also reports that Debendranath turned to religious concerns during a deep depression and after accidentally finding a passage from the

Upaniṣads that spoke almost mystically to him.¹²

This direct experience of God turned Tagore away from the luxurious and sensuous ways of his father. He gave up meat and wine, and rebelled directly against his father in other ways. For a period he studied traditional Hindu scriptures and theology, becoming deeply aware that in his father's house traditional idols continued to be present, in direct contradiction of Brahma values repudiating polytheism. The yearly celebration of Durga Puja in the home, and the fact that after dining with Europeans, members of the household purified themselves by washing in the Ganges, were both sources of distress to Tagore.¹³

Because of his father's close ties to Rammohun Roy and the founding of the Brahma Sabha, Debendranath stood back for a time to assess what was happening in Calcutta. During the period of his first spiritual crisis in 1835 at age eighteen, Thomas Babington Macauley and Governor-General Lord William Bentinck were advocating secularized Western education as a salvation for India over against the Orientalist tradition, which had for several decades been attempting the restoration of traditional cultural values. After 1830, Alexander Duff, a Presbyterian from Scotland, also played a major role in combining the power of Christian missions with a rationalist and modernist outlook. Duff turned out to be a major opponent of *brahmin* Hindu intellectuals during the 1840s.

It is in this context that one needs to see why Debendranath Tagore established the Tattvabodhini Sabha before joining forces with the Brahma Sabha, changing its name to the Brahma Samaj. The explicit purpose of the organization newly established in October 1839, was to stem the rapid growth of Christianity while familiarizing the Hindu population with its own scriptural tradition through extensive publications. Even when Debendranath joined the Brahma Sabha in 1843, he kept his other organization alive. The Tattvabodhini Sabha continued its work and grew in membership up to 1859, when it merged with the Brahma Samaj. Tagore's main tools against the missionaries were a school he founded in 1840 to oppose the values of Duff's missionary school, where all teaching was in Bengali rather than in English, and the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*, an outspoken newspaper.

The new association held weekly meetings to discuss religious and theological matters. This provided members with a chance to clarify questions and to come to some consensus about their be-

liefs. Debendranath wanted to use the organization to allow him to defend Hindu cultural values over against those of Christianity, while at the same time allowing the rational faith of Brahmoism to catch hold among the young Bengali intelligentsia. It was in such an atmosphere that Tagore and Dutt, coming from different orientations and backgrounds, could still work together.¹⁴

On December 21, 1843, Tagore and twenty others took an oath binding them to the tenets of the Brahma Sabha. This action opened the way for the Tattvabodhini and Brahma Sabhas to connect officially. Because the organizing by-laws of the Brahma Sabha did not contain strong statements of ideology, Tagore's act of affirmation with the Sabha seems clearly to have been a turning point for both Tagore and the organization which Rammohun had begun in 1828. Because the Brahma Sabha was relatively inactive between 1833 and 1843, some scholars date the real establishment of the Brahma Samaj from the date Debendranath Tagore took his oath.

Tagore quickly developed a new statement of faith for the Samaj, expressing clearly the theological position of the renewed organization.

1. God is a personal being with sublime attributes.
2. God has never become incarnate.
3. God hears and answers prayers.
4. God is to be worshipped only in spiritual ways. Hindu asceticism, temples, and fixed forms of worship are unnecessary... all castes and races may worship God acceptably.
5. Repentance and cessation from sin are the only ways to forgiveness and salvation.
6. Nature and intuition are sources for the knowledge of God. No book is.¹⁵

Debendranath's great strength seems to have been as an organizer of the rejuvenated organization. In the year 1845-46, the membership rose sharply from 145 to 500. Many college students joined. Clearly Tagore's two reform movements were the most significant such organizations in Bengal until well into the 1860s.

By 1850, Debendranath prepared a codification of Brahma teaching, emphasizing both ethics and theology, entitled *Brahmo Dharma*. Shortly before this, Debendranath had decided to remove "the Vedantic element of Shankara" from the Brahma Covenant.¹⁶

Brahmos with a more rationalist bent than Debendranath were overjoyed on learning that their leader, finding no way for the Vedas or traditional Vedanta to make sense for modern Hindus, had decided to remove those teachings. The theological part of the *Brahmo Dharma* was drawn almost entirely from the Upaniṣads. While texts from traditions other than Hinduism were not included, there was no diatribe directly against Christianity. A sense of universalism pervaded the introduction. Here Tagore wrote that "to be a theist or a professor of theism, it is not necessary to belong to a particular country, age or nationality. The theists of all countries have the right to teach about God."¹⁷

In the ethical portion of the book, evidence of the Brahmo "Puritan" ethic appears. While one might get the impression that the influence of John Calvin had worked upon Debendranath in this section, it appears that as a Hindu modernist he was rewriting the *Code of Manu* to meet the needs of the times. Debendranath's moral precepts include carefully explained duties of husbands, wives, and children, one to the others. The rules are not stated for their own sake, but are rationalized, offering the basis for family harmony. Writing that social good was derived from such qualities as "sincerity, devotion, purity, forgiveness and gentleness,"¹⁸ one might almost see the influence of Confucius at work in Debendranath's writings. As well, he developed sections from Manu on the nature of work reminiscent of Benjamin Franklin: "Acquire knowledge, religion and the habit on industry early in life" or "Do not be enchanted with earthly things in forgetfulness of the transitory character of life."¹⁹ Such Puritan ethics were soon to become the basis for the Brahmo doctrine of Keshub Chunder Sen.

Keshub Chunder Sen: Prophet of Harmony

Where some have declared Rammohun Roy to be founder of Brahmo Samaj and others held Debendranath Tagore to be the moving organizational force for the movement, still other scholars and observers would insist that it was Keshub Chunder Sen who truly turned the Samaj to a national religious reform. Born in 1838 to a Vaiṣṇava family, Keshub was educated at Hindu College and exposed at an early age to the pervasive influences of British and Christian culture in Bengal. Already religious, and even bordering on the ascetic as a young man, he lived in two worlds, exposing

himself to Western missionaries and also maintaining his traditional Hindu ties. Although married in 1856 at the age of eighteen, it appears that by 1857 Keshub had made a conscious decision "not to be overly fond of wife or world."²⁰ During his period of university studies, in his interactions with such missionaries as the social activist Reverend James Long and the Unitarian Charles Dall, and during his involvement in public organizations such as the Goodwill Fraternity, Keshub had begun a search for religious meaning through devotionism and a moderately ascetic life.

Keshub's conversion to Brahmoism took place after he read a pamphlet, "What Is Brahmoism?" written by Raj Narain Bose, a close colleague of Tagore and Dutt. About that time Keshub and his cousin, Protap Chunder Mazumdar (the fourth major figure in the movement) saw Debendranath Tagore for the first time. Sen was impressed. "He was tall, princely, in the full glory of his health and manhood; he came attended by liveried servants, and surrounded by massive stalwart Brahmos, who wore long gold chains and impenetrable countenances. We who were very young men... were highly elated and encouraged by such company, and it was an inducement to follow with zeal our religious career."²¹

After reading the Bose tract, Keshub wrote, "I found that it corresponded exactly with the inner conviction of my heart, the voice of God in the soul. I always felt that every outward book must be subordinated to the teachings of the inner Spirit,—that where God speaks through the Spirit in man all earthly teachers must be silent, and every man must bow down and accept in reverence what God thus revealed in the soul. I at once determined that I would join the Brahmo Samaj, or Indian Theistic Church."²²

The basis of Keshub's rise to leadership in the Brahmo movement was above all religious. Yet, as early as 1860 in his speech to "Young Bengal", the fraternal organization of secularized Hindu students, there were overtones suggesting that social and political reforms would also be needed to regenerate India. Keshub's ideas were not highly original. Many views he espoused had been in the air since the time of Rammohun Roy. Many were similar to those views opposing the Christian mission movement. Many among the Young Bengal group saw the need for a religious faith, freed from the fetters of traditional Vaiṣṇava Hinduism, which would raise the Hindu personality out of the social and religious predicament in which it found itself. Keshub's skill seems to have been as the

reshaper of ideas already in the air. It was not long before he discovered that, through his speaking and vigorous organizational skills, he could make a significant impact on the Bengali Hindu community.

His biographer has written that "from the moment he had entered the Brahma Samaj, he had taken the vow of finding in it 'a Religion of Life', as opposed to a religion of theories. Every principle that he developed, every reform that he undertook, was the result of that vow."²³

Within a few years after the time the young Keshub had joined the Samaj in the shadow of the awesome Debendranath Tagore, he was lecturing and leading a dynamic new missionary thrust for the movement well beyond the borders of Bengal. Social concerns were first and foremost on his mind in the early years. In an 1863 lecture, "Social Transformation in India," he asserted that once all people came under one church and one God, all caste distinctions would "naturally perish in the uncongenial atmosphere of religious brotherhood."²⁴ It was this kind of idea, drawn from both Brahma and Western ideas of social reform, that was the basis of the Goodwill Fraternity, an organization whose members, in 1861, voted to end caste distinctions within that group while pledging to educate their wives and to abstain from alcohol already taking its toll among the younger secular generation. Keshub was part of this movement. Throughout the 1860s, young Brahmos, under the influence of Keshub's personality and his teachings on social and religious reform, began publication of *The Indian Mirror*, the earliest English language newspaper published by Indians. They convened as well public meetings to draw government attention to the need for educational reform and programs to alleviate poverty.

What was unusual about Keshub's religious leadership was the model he offered Young Bengal. It was not one normally to be expected in Calcutta. Keshub's exemplar was Jesus, the center of Christian salvation. Keshub's Jesus, however, was adapted to an Asiatic context, the reformer who was "meek" like an Indian and not "rough, stern, impulsive and fiery as Europeans were."²⁵ Jesus, the Asiatic, was the force of creative civilization West and East. It was not the English, but the spirit of Christ ultimately at the root of English rule, that was responsible for the progressive changes that had occurred in India. Jesus' life was the ultimate symbol of selflessness which, when considered in the Indian context, meant

an end to caste distinctions and willingness to work for the greater good of all humankind.²⁶

But for Keshub, Brahmoism was to be sharply differentiated from Christian sectarianism. His position sounded much like that of late nineteenth-century British and American Unitarianism, despite the fact that Keshub claimed that even Unitarian Christianity was no "absolute religion." The essence of Brahmoism, as Keshub articulated it in his 1860 essay "Religion of Love," was "Love God as thy Father and man as thy brother."²⁷ Keshub seems clearly to have been fully motivated by the concept of Christ, revering him above all prophets and teachers, even above so major a figure to Bengalis as Chaitanya. But for Keshub, Jesus, like Chaitanya, could not be a mediator between God and man, for Brahmoism out of its Vedantic tradition was a faith based on belief in God as *brahman*, the One without a second. "Christianity," Keshub argued in an 1863 lecture, "has prepared the world for the Brahma Samaj, but has not given birth to Brahmoism," for God, not the Bible, was the source and inspiration of Brahma ideas.²⁸

Throughout the 1860s, Keshub and the other Brahmos engaged in polemics and controversy with Christian missionaries. Keshub directly answered charges when attacked by the Reverend Dyson of Krishnagar, by the native preacher Lal Behari Day, and also by a Scottish Christian merchant who had deliberately insulted the Indian character. The impact of Keshub's work was far reaching. In 1862, ten per cent of the entering class of the University of Calcutta declared themselves "Universalists, Brahmos, pantheists, deists or atheists." While Keshub would not have agreed with those in the latter category, he was certainly pleased to see young Bengali students moving away from declared anti-Hindu secularism to more sophisticated theological positions.

The attacks on or rebuttals against the missionaries were but one stage in Keshub's quest to articulate a sense of identity for young liberal religious Hindus. A sense of patriotism comes through in the words spoken in 1860 when Keshub was only twenty-two years old:

Rest assured, my friend, that if in our country intellectual progress went hand in hand with religious development, if our educated countrymen had initiated themselves in the living truths of religion, patriotism would not have been a mere matter of oration and essay, but a reality in practice; and na-

tive society would have grown in health and prosperity... and effectually surmounted many of those difficulties in the way of social reforms which are not constituted insuperable.²⁹

In "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia," Keshub exhorted the new generation of Indians to reject the selfishness he believed to be the principal negative characteristic of Indians, so long a "subject race."

We have too long been under foreign sway to be able to feel anything like independence in our hearts. Socially and religiously we are little better than slaves. From infancy up we have been trained to believe that we are Hindoos only as far as we offer slavish obedience to the authority of the Shasters and the priests, and that any want of disobedience would be so much a want of our nationality.³⁰

Although Debendranath Tagore had defended the Brahmo movement against the incursions of Christianity, Keshub's words and call for a new religious and national identity were far louder and clearer. Perhaps the time was now more ripe for such a call. In 1866, Keshub Chunder Sen stood at the turning point of his career. He had taken a stand for Christ, but for Christ in a universal sense; he had called out for needed social reform, which also implied political reform. All this would require a major change in attitude and a religious revolution among the Hindus. It would not be enough to speak of reform; significant action was required.

Keshub's stance against caste was especially controversial. Debendranath Tagore was not prepared to give up the sacred thread of brahminism in favor of a true democracy for Brahmoism. In 1865, Keshub and his supporters had taken control of the Brahmo newspaper, *The Indian Mirror*, while also beginning a far more dynamic program of missionary expansion for the Brahmo Samaj.³¹ More than anything else, it was Keshub's two strongly articulated lectures, "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia," and "Great Men," in which he quoted from Christian history almost directly, that demonstrated his sharp refutation of the historical stance of most Hinduism.

The time was ripe. Keshub led a split in the Samaj in November 1866, establishing the Brahmo Samaj of India. Debendranath's faction was now to be known as the 'Adi or Original Brahmo Samaj. The split between the two groups also had its roots in

Keshub's 1864 decision to carry out a major missionary journey throughout India. By this time, the Brahmo Samaj and its opposition to the efforts of Christian missionaries was well enough known for him to want to pursue a more broadly based religious reform movement beyond the borders of Bengal. Well received in Madras, Bombay, and Poona, it was only a matter of time before active chapters would exist there. Debendranath, while concerned with social service in needy areas of India, did not have a vision through which the Samaj would be carried into non-Bengali areas. Neither could he accept the kind of social reform which would mean strong advocacy of legal status for Brahmors to conduct their own inter-religious marriages, widow remarriage, and intercaste marriage. Perhaps the greatest difference and that which eventually split the two men was Keshub's "Christian training" and his desire to integrate the best of Christ into the Brahmo religious movement.

Although Keshub's lecture "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia" had as its fundamental statement the concept that Christ was an Asiatic and not a European, his second major 1866 lecture, "Great Men," had the basic purpose of using Christ as one example of how God sends great men to serve and save humanity. Here Keshub's familiarity with biblical literature and teaching stands out. In the lectures "Regenerating Faith" (1868), "The Future Church" (1869), and "the Kingdom of Heaven" (1874) Keshub was utilizing Christ's concept of an ideal religious situation to set an ideal before his Indian audience.³² He was describing "an invisible reality which must be sought in the domain of the spirit, and not in the world of matter."³³

The contrast between Keshub's approach to Christ and Rammohun's approach to Jesus is clear. Where the latter came to Jesus because of a sense of the inadequacy of the Hindu spiritual life of his time (the 1820s), the former came to Christ (not the human Jesus) for the opposite reasons: to spiritualize a generation of young Bengal which had fallen from faith, albeit a corrupted Vaiṣṇavism.

In reaching out to a new audience, Keshub tried to synthesize aspects of Hindu devotionism and festivals in an attempt to formulate a non-Western but also anti-traditional, anti-caste religious community. Debendranath Tagore had turned Rammohun Roy's ideals around by limiting the Samaj to *brahmin* membership. By contrast, Keshub believed his Brahmoism was not just a variation

or reformation of Hinduism, but a "catholic" religion, a religion in which all the various sects and people of India could be reconciled to each other and live in peace.

In 1870, Keshub's impact reached well beyond India. He traveled to England, where he met and spoke before Unitarian and social reform organizations. In meetings with figures such as Lord Lawrence, Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Dean of Westminster, and Oxford scholar F. Max Müller, Keshub was well received. His ability to communicate with Westerners was quickly evident from the text of his first sermon in a Unitarian chapel. He chose the passage from Acts 17, "In Him, we live and move and have our being," a text appropriate enough for a Christian, a Unitarian, or a Vedantic Hindu.³⁴

In his English speeches, Keshub did not hesitate to speak out for reforms in India, nor did he hesitate to criticize failures of Christian culture. He made it clear that he was not in England to study Christian doctrine as much as he was there to observe "the truly Christian life as displayed and illustrated."³⁵ While impressing his hosts with kindness towards them, Keshub in later speeches attacked Christians who beat Hindus and enslaved them, sharply criticizing the English propagation of liquor and opium in India. He called for much more significant roles for educated Indians in government, and improved education and life-styles for Indian women.³⁶

In his lecture of May 18, 1870, Keshub spoke as a Hindu theist about the significance of Christ for his life and why he did not become a Christian. He explained his Christology: "I studied Christ ethically, nay spiritually—and I studied the Bible also in that spirit and must tonight acknowledge candidly and sincerely that I owe a great deal to Christ and to the Gospel of Christ";³⁷ "Jesus is not a proposition to be believed, nor an outward figure to be seen and adored but simply a spirit to be loved, a spirit of obedience to God that must be incorporated into our spiritual being."³⁸

If there is significance in discussing Keshub in England and his vibrant impression upon liberal Christians there, it is to demonstrate that in the liberal wing of the Brahmo Samaj there was a sense of mission beyond that which Keshub had already carried from Bengal to outer India. Keshub believed fervently that the Brahmo Samaj had a mission for the Western world as well. Until Svami Dayananda of the Arya Samaj and Svami Vivekananda car-

ried the concept of mission outreach much further in their own movements, what Keshub was doing was truly radical within Hinduism—an apologetic and new dimension of eclecticism for his faith.

A New Dispensation

The Brahmo Samaj reform program that developed during the late 1860s and the 1870s under Keshub's leadership was impressive. The Brahmo Marriage Act was passed in 1872 after four years of education and lobbying. In spite of opposition from the 'Adi Brahmos the Act reformed the practice of child marriage and allowed Brahmos to ignore the old practices of caste associated with marriage. The liberalization and simplification of other life-oriented ceremonies accompanied the marriage reforms in the Samaj. Keshub and his followers were also instrumental in founding the Indian Reform Association, a normal school for girls, and a campaign for temperance.³⁹

By 1876 and 1877, Keshub Chunder Sen had taken the Brahmo Samaj in a new direction. He felt an increasing pull towards *bhakti* or traditional Hindu devotionism. At the same time, he drew his closest followers into an increasingly ascetic community which developed meditative disciplines over and above those usually practiced in the Samaj. But a new crisis arose for the movement in 1878 when Keshub announced that he had arranged for his daughter, very much underage, to marry the youthful Maharajah of Kuch Behar. Loud criticism arose immediately on three counts: (1) that this was a breach of the Brahmo Marriage Act in regard to age, (2) that the marriage could not be performed without idolatrous ceremonies taking place, and (3) Keshub had arranged the marriage because of the material benefits that would come to his family. Keshub, on the other hand, justified the decision with claims that God had revealed to him the fact that he was in the right. While Protap Chunder Mazumdar, Keshub's cousin, and Gour Govind Roy wrote to defend Keshub's actions, opposition continued adamant. Many of Keshub's early followers withdrew to establish the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, the Samaj branch active to the present day. Keshub himself continued as leader of the Brahmo Samaj of India. By 1881, however, his group called itself the Navavidhan or Church of the New Dispensation.

The attitude of British and American Unitarians towards Keshub changed markedly after these events. His claims in lectures justifying the Kuch Behar marriage and his increasingly devotional theology flew in the face of the clear-headed, rational reformer they had seen in Keshub in England a decade earlier. A survey of articles in the Western church press indicates clearly complete opposition to Keshub because of what he had done.⁴⁰

In February 1880, Keshub's reassociation with Vaiṣṇavism became clear. He and his followers conducted a major procession through Calcutta. Stopping at one point, Keshub called on his followers for a religious revival of *bhakti*. The procession was filled with flags, musical instruments, and Brahmos, some of whom had come from as far away as Bombay and Sind. This event seems to have been one of the first clearly identified with the New Dispensation. Its emotional and revivalist character seems to have fused Salvation Army and traditional Vaiṣṇava appeal. Some 5,000 Hindus are reported to have prostrated themselves before Keshub, chanting a *kirtan* especially written for the occasion.

The same year Keshub also began a process of seminars on the teachings of the world's great prophets such as Socrates, Moses, and Muhammad. It was more than an academic experience for those who joined in it. It was very much of a pilgrimage in which the participants would hold a dialogue with a speaker representative of the prophet under study. Much in the spirit of Ramakrishna, who was emerging about the same time, Keshub was drawing his followers together, with strands from many differing faiths, towards a universal world faith.

While many would argue that Keshub's preoccupation with devotional matters in the 1880s foreclosed his involvement in social reform, other supporters claim that his concern was to provide moral transformation of individuals before attempting new major social changes. For all this he came under severe criticism from Sadharan Brahmos who wanted to follow his earlier reform and missionary path for a rational Hinduism to speak to the needs of the modern age. Four essays Keshub wrote in his new periodical, *The New Dispensation*, might have led his readers to the conclusion that he was an honest mystic, or else that he had gone mad. In these he spoke of his own "madness," of being haunted by the Holy Ghost, or hearing speakers everywhere that had no tongue. Serious physical illness was affecting him. His death came quickly

in January 1884.⁴¹

Although the leadership of Keshub Sen spiralled the Brahma Samaj to new prominence, it had also created a three-way split in the movement. One might think that such a split would cause the movement to lose its effectiveness. In one sense, the Brahma Samaj of the post-1880s gave way to new movements whose first-generation enthusiasm stirred Indian minds and hearts in more dynamic and emotional ways. On the other hand, one more figure emerged in the movement, making an especially strong impact for the Samaj in England and America—Protap Chunder Mazumdar, Keshub's cousin and associate throughout his career.

Two years younger than Keshub, Protap remained in the shadow of his cousin during Keshub's lifetime. An heir-apparent, he failed to take over the leadership of the Samaj in 1884 on his return from a trip around the world because of the predominance of Keshub's neo-Vaiṣṇava and *bhakti*-oriented followers who did not want the Westernized, well-traveled, urbane Mazumdar to become their leader. A second factor involved was the meteoric rise of Svami Vivekananda, once a Brahma himself, who caught the public eye despite Mazumdar's presence as the official representative of Hinduism to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.

Some of Keshub's followers, such as Bijoy Krishna Goswami, wanted to propagate Brahmaism among rural and less well-educated peoples, while Protap Mazumdar, himself educated, Western-oriented, and deeply influenced by Christian Unitarianism (this is evident from his numerous writings), preferred to travel throughout India by train, joining Keshub on his missionary journeys to Madras, Punjab, and elsewhere. While the Brahma Samaj might be spread in the Bengali language in the environs of Calcutta or Dacca, English, rather than Tamil, Urdu, or Marathi could be used in other areas.⁴² Throughout his travels in India, Mazumdar appears to have been a major factor in organizing chapters, keeping them alive, and moving them towards political and social reform.

In many respects, Protap Mazumdar is best known by his writings. His first book, *The Faith and Progress of the Brahma Samaj*, was an 1882 defense of Keshub's "spiritual universalism" published in Calcutta. This volume was dedicated to Rammohun Roy, however, described as "one who first cast on the wild waters of Hindu society, the bread, which, in the writer and others, has been

returned a hundredfold."⁴³ The image was biblical if the reference to Rammohun was not.

Mazumdar's letters to Oxford Professor F. Max Müller indicate as early as 1881 the extent to which Protap Mazumdar was disturbed by Keshub's move away from Unitarian-oriented Brahmoism. Impressed by Müller's comparative method in the study of religions, Protap wanted to see it applied to faith and devotion in the context of the Brahma Samaj. "The fatherhood of God is a meaningless abstraction unless the unity of truth in all lands and all nations is admitted. And the brotherhood of man is impossible if there is no recognition of the services which the great people of the earth have rendered unto each other."⁴⁴

Protap's book *The Oriental Christ* helped make him a favorite of American Unitarians. Here he developed in a different way the Keshubite doctrine of Christ the Asiatic. He was careful not to present Christ in an uncritically universalist manner, writing that he had come to Jesus out of a secular vacuum. He had been awakened, he said, to "a sense of deep inner unworthiness" and "a strong sense of sin."⁴⁵ Keshub and the general Indian environment of the times, rather than a direct association with Christianity, were the source of his commitment to Christ. His experience seems to have combined views of Rammohun and those of Keshub. Protap's encounter was with both the human Jesus and Christ as an ideal.

Protap drew his specific theology from two of Keshub's lectures. Denying that either he or the Brahmos were pantheists, he nevertheless appeared as something of a Vedantist when he wrote of the experience of *samādhi*. This was a direct experience of Christ rather than the understanding of Christ one would receive from the European dogmatic tradition. In his 1893 work, *The Spirit of God*, Mazumdar set forth a comparative evolutionary principle between Hinduism and Christianity. Here he compared the Vedas to the Old Testament, the Purāṇas to the Gospels, the Upaniṣads to the letters of Paul, asserting that Christianity clearly offered a dispensation of the Father and the Son but very little of the Spirit. The Brahma Samaj was the one worshipping community in which one could see that the Spirit of God was drawing all religions together. "Socrates is for the Greeks, Moses is for the Hebrews, Confucius for the Chinese, Krishna for the Hindus. But there is a need for a central figure, a universal model, one who includes in himself, all these various embodiments of God's self manifestations."⁴⁶

Christ was this figure.

Although Protap Mazumdar's voyages to England and America in 1874 and 1884 were major events in his career, his presence at the Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893 was surely a high point for him personally as well as for Brahma outreach to a new generation. The Parliament, organized as a humanistic adjunct to the technology of the fair, was conceived of by American religious liberals. One hundred seventy-two addresses by representatives of dozens of religious groups were heard. It was surely the first time in human history when representatives of all the world's religions were gathered to hear one another, even if Christians predominated.

Protap's two speeches, "The Brahma Samaj" and "The World's Religious Debt to Asia"⁴⁷ were both profound, intellectual, and intelligible. The speech on the Brahmos emphasized both history and social reform, while the second and longer lecture stressed the sense of immanence, mysticism, and spiritualism, so much a part of the Asiatic traditions. Protap made clear his broad knowledge of Asian religiousness, presenting something of universalism but little of nationalism in his talks.

That Protap made such a strong impression on his American Unitarian listeners was evident from the invitations he received. These included the four Lowell lectures in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1893, and the raising of a pension, which provided Protap with an annual stipend until his death in 1905. Although the traditional historical record makes Svami Vivekananda out to be the Hindu hero of the World's Parliament, Protap Mazumdar's impact was far reaching in a more subtle way. His role has only recently been uncovered.

Whatever impression Protap Mazumdar made on his American audiences, he was never able to become the leader of the Brahma movement in India that Rammohun, Debendranath, or Keshub had been. Most likely his defense of Keshub and his affiliation with the New Dispensation movement had worked against him in the eyes of those in the 'Adi and Sadharan Samaj groups. At the same time, his Western ways did not endear him to the neo-Vaiṣṇavas who had been attracted to Keshub's later devotionism.

Sivanath Sastri and Ananda Mohun Bose were prime movers in the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, which consisted of those who remained behind from Keshub's original split with Debendranath but

who did not join the Church of the New Dispensation. The Sadharan Samaj maintained the traditional Brahmo practices of faith in a personal God, belief in practicing congregational prayer, and condemnation of "mysticism and sentimentalism" which diverted religious enthusiasm away from "channels of practical usefulness." The Sadharan group also emphasized brotherhood, opposed caste distinctions, urged freedom of conscience, and lastly, urged members to use their "moral energy" to promote the "spiritual regeneration of the race."⁴⁸ These were precepts very much in the spirit of the early Keshub. They remain the backbone of the existing Samaj to the present day. Where the emotionalism of Keshub's Navavidhan could not survive organizationally, the well-ordered program of the Sadharan did. The Sadharan, of course, did not speak of the political issues of the twentieth century as Rammohun and the young Keshub had spoken of the social and religious issues of the nineteenth.

The meaning of the Brahmo Samaj and its significance for religious trends in modern India is several-fold. First, charismatic leadership in at least four major and several minor figures demonstrated that the old Hindu tradition of the guru could be transplanted to a setting in which modern social reform was called for. Second, the Brahmo Samaj demonstrated that theological reform in response to Hindu decline could be indigenous and at the same time draw on the best of what foreign, in this case Christian, culture had to offer. Third, the example set by Christian missionaries was first picked up and effectively used as a counterfoil to the missionaries themselves. What the Brahmo Samaj proved it could do successfully was soon to be imitated by the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna movement, and the Ahmadiyah movement in Islam. But for a Hindu religious organization to seek to convert, and to welcome to its membership those of varied castes, was to break significant new ground. Finally, the Brahmo movement built its membership on those who had fallen away from traditional Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* and *brahmin* caste practices, and who felt a religious vacuum in their lives.

The threads of the Brahmo Samaj story are far more complex than have been described here. The chronology of events as we have traced them should suffice as an introduction to both the intellectual and organizational development of this first modern Indian challenge to foreign domination, Christianity, and internal re-

ligious disintegration. For its time it was an answer to those who could find their identity with the movement. The Brahmo impact reached far beyond its numbers but in the end failed to speak to the needs of India's masses. Likewise, the third and fourth generations of Brahmos, without having to fight the battle of first generation Brahmos, lived comfortably in religious liberalism, unable to respond critically to the crisis of the 1906 partition of Bengal or to the massacre at Amritsar. Whatever indictment one may make of the Brahmo Samaj in the context of twentieth-century political events, the movement's contribution to the new age of the nineteenth century is without parallel.

Notes

1. The definitive work on the Brahmo Samaj is, without doubt, David Kopf's monographs, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). I wish to express my appreciation to David Kopf for the inspiration his work as a historian has provided me in all my studies of the Brahmo Samaj and its interactions with American and English Unitarianism. For the perspective offered on the interaction see Spencer Lavan, *Unitarians and India: A Study in Encounter and Response* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977). Both Kopf and Lavan contain notes and bibliography indicating primary sources for a complete study of the movement.
2. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 47.
3. Spencer Lavan, *Unitarians and India*, p. 36.
4. K. Nag and D. Burman, *The English Works of Rammohun Roy*, Part 5 (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1948), p. 4 of the "Introduction" to *The Precepts of Jesus*.
5. Lavan, *Unitarians and India*, pp. 41-42.
6. William Adam and Rammohun Roy, *Correspondence* (with the Rev. Henry Ware) *Relative to the Prospects of Christianity and the Means of Promoting its Reception in India* (Cambridge, 1824). See also Dilip Kunwar Biswas, ed., *The Correspondence of Raja Rammohun Roy*, (Calcutta: Saraswat Library, 1992).
7. Sophie Dobson Collet, *Raja Rammohun Roy*, eds. D.K. Biswas and P.C. Ganguli, 3rd ed. rev. (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1962), p. 227.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

10. Kopf, *Brahmo Samaj*, p. 49.
11. Ibid.
12. Debendranath Tagore's *Autobiography* was translated by S.N. Tagore and I. Devi (London: Macmillan, 1914).
13. Kopf, *Brahmo Samaj*, p. 190.
14. Ibid., p. 162.
15. M.M. Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities (1833-1857)* (Chittagong: Mehrub, 1965), p. 21. The statement appeared in Debendranath's *Autobiography* and was republished in the article by J.N. Farquhar in the *Encyclopaedia of Religions and Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), p. 815.
16. Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities*, p. 33.
17. Kopf, *Brahmo Samaj*, p. 106.
18. Ibid., p. 107.
19. Ibid.
20. Protap Chunder Mozoomdar, *The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen* (Calcutta: Navavidhan Publications, 1931), p. 332.
21. Ibid., p. 68.
22. Ibid., p. 69.
23. Ibid., p. 270.
24. Prem Chunder Basu, ed., *Life and Works of Brahmananda Keshav* (Calcutta: Navavidhan Publishing Co., 1940).
25. Keshub Chunder Sen, "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia" in *Lectures in India* (Calcutta: Navavidhan Publication Committee, 1954).
26. Ibid., pp. 35-36.
27. Keshub Chunder Sen, "The Religion of Love," in *Essays: Theological and Ethical*, 5th ed., (Calcutta, 1916), p. 26.
28. P. C. Basu, *Life and Works of Brahmananda Keshav*, p. 75.
29. Keshub Chunder Sen, "Young Bengal: This is for you," in *Essays*, p. 6.
30. Sen, "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia," p. 30.
31. Sivanath Sastri, *History of the Brahmo Samaj*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1974), pp. 163ff.
32. All these lectures are included in Sen, *Lectures in India*.
33. "The Kingdom of Heaven," in Sen, *Lectures in India*.
34. Keshub Chunder Sen, "Diary in England," in *Keshub Chunder Sen in England*, 3rd ed. rev. and enlarged (Calcutta, 1938), p. 37; see sermon text, pp. 61-70.
35. Ibid., pp. 100-01.
36. See his addresses in *Keshub Chunder Sen in England*: "England's Duties Towards India," pp. 300-07; "Indian Reforms," pp. 307-15; and "The Duties of Christian Missionaries in India," pp. 315-29.
37. "Christ and Christianity," in Sen, *Keshub Chunder Sen in England*, p. 229.
38. Ibid., p. 234.

39. For details, see S.D. Collet, ed., *Brahmo Yearbook*, 1879, pp. 43-52.
40. Spencer Lavan, "Liberal Religion in India: The Keshub Chunder Sen Controversy," in *Alone Together: Studies in the History of Liberal Religions*, eds. Peter Iver Kaufman and Spencer Lavan (Boston: Skinner House, UUA Press, 1979), pp. 77-87. This essay details the attitude of Unitarians towards Keshub during his varied career.
41. Kopf, *Brahmo Samaj*, pp. 278-279.
42. See Keshub Chunder Sen, "Diary in Madras," in *Essays*, for details of Protap's journeys.
43. Protap C. Mozoomdar, *The Faith and Progress of the Brahmo Samaj* (Calcutta, 1882).
44. Friedrich Max Müller, "The Letters of Protap Chunder Mozoomdar to Max Müller" (August 20, 1881), in *Biographical Essays* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1884), p. 146.
45. P.C. Mozoomdar, *The Oriental Christ* (Calcutta: Navavidhan Publication Committee, 1933).
46. P.C. Mozoomdar, *The Spirit of God* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1894), p. 239.
47. P.C. Mozoomdar, "The Brahmo Samaj" and "The World's Religious Debt to Asia," in *Lectures in America and Other Papers* (Calcutta: Navavidhan Publication Committee, 1955), pp. 4-29.
48. David Kopf, *Brahmo Samaj*, p. 143.

2

THE ARYA SAMAJ IN BRITISH INDIA, 1875-1947

Kenneth W. Jones

Scholars have long agreed that the Arya Samaj was a significant force in British India, yet the first overall sketch of this movement appeared in 1919 as a chapter in *Modern Religious Movements in India* by J.N. Farquhar. Since that time general accounts were written in Hindi and specialized studies in English,¹ but no general assessment of the Arya Samaj existed in English. This chapter will attempt to fill this gap with a sketch of the Arya Samaj from its founding in 1875 to the creation of India and Pakistan in 1947. A detailed examination of the Samaj remains beyond the scope of this study, but we can provide an outline of its founding and growth through this period, the complex of institutions and programs created by the Samaj, and the major historical forces that shaped the history of this movement. Among all the socio-religious movements founded in nineteenth century colonial India, the Arya Samaj created the most extensive institutional structure, stretching over much of north and central India and beyond into the world of emigrant Indian settlements in Africa, Southeast Asia, the South Pacific, and the Caribbean. Beginning as a small sect, the Samaj grew to resemble denominations as we know them in the West. It created its own Arya Jagat, or Aryan world, and it is this world we hope to delineate in the next few pages.

Founder and Founding

The origins of the Arya Samaj are embedded in the personality

of its founder, Svami Dayananda Saraswati. Born in 1824 in the small town of Tankara located in the Kathiawar peninsula,² young Dayananda demonstrated a strong involvement in religion, but he began to raise numerous questions about the rituals and beliefs accepted by his parents. Unwilling to be married and accept the normal duties of a householder, Dayananda fled his home at the age of twenty-two. He became a wandering *sanyāsi*, joined the Saraswati order with the name of Dayananda, and focused his attention on a personal pursuit for salvation. After searching for an acceptable guru, Dayananda met Svami Virajanand in November 1860. He studied with the blind Virajanand for three years at Mathura and left him in 1863 to continue his ascetic existence. There was, however, a crucial change in Dayananda, for he no longer sought a personal goal. After leaving Virajanand, Dayananda turned increasingly toward reforming contemporary Hinduism, which he felt was corrupted with superstition and error. The basic tools needed to comprehend this reform was the study of grammar. Dayananda believed that all truth lay in the Vedas and could be perceived only through a proper reading of these texts. To do so one must know the works of the grammarians Panini and Patanjali. Then the Vedas could be read correctly and truth revealed. For Dayananda the Vedas were *ārsha*, i.e., derived from *ṛsis*, inspired sages of antiquity. The Vedas contained all truth and were the ultimate authority against which other texts were to be compared. Those works, which did not agree with the Vedas, were considered *unārsha*, that is, false, illegitimate, and filled with error.³

Dayananda's vision of Vedic Hinduism rejected most of the major elements of the Hindu religion: idolatry, polytheism, the Puranas, priestly privilege, popular rituals, and deities. Dayananda's religion was monotheistic, open to all, rationalistic, and compatible with modern science. For him it was, as well, the one true faith. Not only did he reject popular Hinduism but also all other religions including Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, for these too were false beliefs, since only Vedic Hinduism contained the truth. In his basic ideological treatise, the *Satyārth Prakāsh*, first published in 1875, Dayananda laid out his beliefs and his criticisms of other religions. In his writings he also provided an explanation of the present degenerate state of Hinduism. He declared that the *Mahabhārata*, that great war of antiquity, had led to the loss of correct Vedic knowledge, which in turn began a lengthy process of

decline among the Hindus. Because of their lack of proper knowledge the Hindus were defeated first by Muslims and later the Christian English. To become, as Dayananda saw them, a subjected people steeped in error and superstition.

After leaving Virajanand, Dayananda began to preach his own vision of Hinduism. He entered into debates with orthodox pundits, visited religious fairs, and travelled extensively throughout northern India. He spoke in Sanskrit and primarily addressed members of the brahmanical community. In 1872 Dayananda visited Calcutta where he met with leaders of the Brahma Samaj. This encounter led him to change his tactics for reforming Hinduism. He began to speak in Hindi and to address the literate middle classes of the Hindu community. He found the educated elite far more responsive to his message than the priestly groups. With their support Dayananda founded schools and published periodicals to express his ideals. He also wrote extensively, publishing two versions of the *Satyārth Prakāsh*, one in 1875 and a second rewritten edition in 1883, plus numerous other books and pamphlets.⁴ In 1875 he founded the first successful Arya Samaj in Bombay. This new organization prepared a list of principles and regulations, which expressed Dayananda's ideas as well as his program for the reform of Hindu society. Although the Bombay Arya Samaj continued to exist, it was in north India that Dayananda found the greatest acceptance of his message.

In 1877 Dayananda travelled to Delhi for the Durbar in honor of Queen Victoria where he met with prominent Hindus from the Punjab, who invited him to visit that province. Dayananda journeyed north from Delhi, reaching Lahore on April 19, 1877. He stayed in the Punjab until July 11, 1878. Yet in these few months Dayananda either directly or indirectly established the Arya Samaj in eleven different cities. Many Punjabi Hindus responded to his ideas with enthusiasm and religious fervor, especially among the young college-educated men of Lahore. Hindus of the Lahore group rewrote and condensed the lengthy statement produced by the Bombay Arya Samaj into ten short, easily grasped principles. On July 24, 1877, at its first meeting the Lahore Arya Samaj adopted these principles, which then became the standard creed for all Arya Samajes. Afterwards the Lahore Samaj evolved into the organizational center of the fledgling movement. When Dayananda left the Punjab, behind him were a growing collection of Samajes

throughout the province. Through their militant ideology newly founded Arya Samajes created an arena of religious controversy.⁵ Aryas clashed openly with orthodox Hindus, other Hindu reform groups, and Christian missionaries.

After his visit to the Punjab, Dayananda toured the United Provinces, preaching, holding debates, and founding branches of the Arya Samaj. In spite of two extensive trips throughout this area he had succeeded in adding only six more Arya branches by 1880.⁶ Some of these were established while he was still present in a particular town, others either before or after his arrival. The response he met in the United Provinces proved less enthusiastic than that of the Punjab, yet in time this would be the province with the largest number of Aryas. Numerically the Arya Samaj had its core in the western districts of the United Provinces and throughout the Punjab. Its leadership, however, was heavily Punjabi and would remain so, although as long as Dayananda lived, he was the spiritual and to a degree practical head of the movement. Yet Dayananda soon turned his attention elsewhere. In May 1881, he arrived in Rajasthan, where he spent the last year and a half of his life. Dayananda hoped to persuade the ruling Hindu princes to accept his concepts of a reformed Hindu state and thus open the way for a return to previous Hindu greatness. During this period in Rajasthan Dayananda remained in contact with numerous Arya Samajes, but did not provide direction for the young movement. As a result each of the Samajes tended to act on its own initiative and according to its own interpretation of Dayananda's ideas. Meanwhile, Dayananda toured Rajasthan, preached to the ruling princes, and in October 1883, after visiting the state of Jodhpur, fell seriously ill. After returning to Ajmer he died on October 30, 1883.⁷

The death of its founder, rather than restricting the progress of the Arya Samaj, acted as a catalyst. The common reaction to Dayananda's death was that the Aryas should create a memorial to him, preferably a school or college in which Vedic Hinduism along with the regular English-oriented curriculum would be taught.⁸ The Lahore Arya Samaj provided the leadership for this educational movement. In January 1886, after raising funds for the proposed school, they established the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic Trust and Management Society and approved an educational scheme drafted under the leadership of Lala Lal Chand. The Dayanand Anglo-Vedic High

School opened in Lahore on June 1, 1886. Lala Hans Raj, a brilliant young graduate, became the principal of this institution on the basis of his agreement to serve in this position without pay and for life. The school quickly proved a success, enrolling 550 students by the end of the month. By 1889, it became a college that was recognized as such by the Punjab University.⁹ For many Aryas this was their first and foremost "cause." They raised funds for it and recruited students with great success. The Lahore school provided a model for local Arya Samajes, who soon founded elementary and middle schools upon the lines of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College. By the end of the century, this single school became the foundation-stone for a system of schools throughout the Punjab, the United Provinces, and adjacent areas. The Arya Samaj not only won converts and established new branch Samajes, but it also began the process of institution building.

The success of the Lahore college stimulated increasing ideological strain within the new movement. Each Samaj and each individual Arya could develop his or her own concepts of what it meant to be an Arya and of the historic role of its founder. Two differing schools of thought began to emerge. One group, "the moderates", saw Dayananda as a great reformer, a teacher and a guide to religious and social practice. They were heavily involved in the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College and would, in fact, be called the "College Party". Opposed to them were the "militants" who believed Dayananda to be a *rsi* or divinely inspired teacher, whose words were infallible. For the militants the Arya Samaj represented a new religion that demanded a total commitment from its followers. The differences between these two groups surfaced first over the nature of the education to be provided the new school. The moderates wanted and got a school curriculum that was essentially the same as the government and missionary schools, with the addition of Arya Samaj principles. The militants wanted a dramatically different education, one which would be taught primarily in Hindi and Sanskrit with considerable time devoted to the study of scriptures, Arya writings, and the correct methods needed to interpret Vedic texts.¹⁰

Debates over the nature of an Arya education soon fused with other issues that were to divide members of the movement. The militants maintained that all Aryas should be strict vegetarians, while the moderates claimed that diet was a personal matter and

not a part of the Arya code. This issue of vegetarianism came to symbolize each party. By the 1890s open struggles for control had erupted, first in the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic Trust and Management Society and secondly in the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Punjab. The Pratinidhi Sabha was founded in October 1886 as the provincial representative body for the Punjab. Similar provincial sabhas were created to provide some central point of coordination for the expanding Arya world. By 1893 the Punjabi Aryas were bitterly divided. The moderates retained control over the schools through the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic Management Society, while the militants took over the Pratinidhi Sabha and a majority of the local Arya Samaj branches. This division created a crisis for both groups. Supporting the Lahore college and its associated schools had been the major task for all Aryas. Now those in charge of the schools retained their "cause" but had lost most of the organizational structure needed to sustain it. Conversely, the militants retained the structure and resources but needed new activities to utilize them.¹¹ In contrast the moderates faced a financial crisis.

The moderates succeeded in maintaining their schools and began to establish their own branch Arya Samajes, with the result that in many Punjab towns there were two Arya Samajes, each allied with a different faction. In 1903 the moderates founded the Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha, a provincial body parallel to the older Arya Pratinidhi Sabha.¹² Power and leadership among the moderates remained, however, centered in the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic Trust and Management Society. It contained representatives from all the Samajes allied to the moderate party, controlled a system of schools and the funds raised to support these schools. The moderates, however, did not limit themselves to educational work. As a group they tended to see Hindus as members of a community, a group of individuals sharing a similar religious heritage. As a result the moderates turned to various forms of community service, to famine relief, care for orphans, and, in time, to politics. Leading moderates, such as Lala Lal Chand and Lala Lajpat Rai, would have a deep involvement in both the nationalist politics of the Indian National Congress and later the openly Hindu politics of the Punjab Hindu Conference and the Hindu Mahasabha.¹³

Support for the Indian National Congress during the 1880s and 1890s fluctuated from enthusiasm to apathy, depending largely on whether the Congress and Punjabi Hindus shared similar goals. In

1900 Aryas flocked to the Congress meeting in Lahore, but shortly afterwards turned away from politics in general and the Congress in particular. The partition of Bengal in 1905 brought a wave of enthusiasm for the Congress, a wave which merged with the Punjabi political unrest of 1907. At this time Lala Lajpat Rai and a number of moderate Aryas became politically active, condemning the British government openly and with considerable passion. The arrest and deportation of Lajpat Rai, followed by the jailing of other prominent Aryas, opened a period of government suspicion of and hostility to the Samaj.¹⁴ They saw the Samaj as a seditious organization that must be guarded against and, if necessary, suppressed. The government was particularly hostile to the moderate party because of its schools and supply of activist students. Thus Lala Hans Raj and other leaders of the Dayanand schools took a position against political activity by the Samaj. They feared that the schools might be closed by the government and sought above all else to maintain the institutions to which they had dedicated their lives. The last major political shock prior to World War I came in 1909-1910, when the Sikh state of Patiala arrested numerous Aryas and closed down the local Samajes. Gradually the era of politics and government suppression eased, especially for the militants, as the government made clear its approval of religiously-oriented Aryas.¹⁵

One major result of these governmental actions was the first meeting of the Punjab Hindu Conference. Hindu fears reached a climax in the year 1908-1909 as they increasingly saw themselves faced with a de facto alliance between the British government and the Muslim community and the possibility of extinction. A vision of doom was portrayed in a series of letters to the *Bengalee* written by Lt. Col. U. N. Mukerji under the title "A Dying Race." Mukerji focused on the relative decline in numbers of Bengali Hindus in relation to the Muslim community and the possibility of destruction that faced the Hindus of Bengal. Lala Lal Chand expressed another set of concerns in a series of letters to the *Punjabee*, entitled "Self-Abnegation in Politics." Lal Chand turned his attention to the uselessness of the Congress, calling for the establishment of a new organization that would be openly Hindu in its politics. The Punjab Hindu Conference, which met for the first time on October 21-22, 1909, in Lahore, became just such an organization. It met annually and was transformed in time into the

Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha.¹⁶ The evolution of the Mahasabha received Arya Samaj support and leadership, but it also moved beyond the limits of the Samaj, which remained divided in its political attitudes. Many Aryas were firm advocates of the Indian National Congress, others of the Hindu Mahasabha, while some remained relatively apolitical.

The militants, with their vision of the Arya Samaj as a religious movement and a religious experience, turned to a concern for *Ved prachār*, preaching the Vedas. They developed a system of paid missionaries, *updēshaks*, which aimed to transform popular Hinduism into the "purer" Vedic form of that religion. The militants also extended and utilized the institution of *shuddhi*. Dayananda performed *shuddhi* to return a Christian convert to Hinduism. Following this example Aryas use of *shuddhi* to reconvert Hindus from either Christianity or Islam increased throughout the 1880s and 1890s. A Shuddhi Sabha was established and conducted by Aryas and Sikhs, since both groups faced the same religious challenges.¹⁷ By 1896 the Aryas began to perform *shuddhi* with groups of people and by 1900 had extended *shuddhi* to a new area, the uplift of untouchables who were transformed into "pure caste" Hindus. On June 3, 1900, militant Aryas purified a group of Rahtias, Sikh untouchables, much to the horror of the Sikh community.¹⁸ This opened the door to both winning back those lost to Hinduism as well as ending untouchability.

Concern for untouchability stemmed in part from the realization that this segment of society was the most likely to convert to another religion. The success of Christian missionaries among untouchable Hindus and Muslims had demonstrated this possibility, as had Islamic conversion prior to the arrival of the British. In the years before World War I *shuddhi* campaigns were conducted among various untouchable groups in the northwest: Odes, Meghs, Doms, Rajputs, and the Sheikhs of Larkhana in Sind. On June 23, 1911 at Allahabad, the All India (Bhārat) Shuddhi Sabha was founded by Ram Bhaj Datta. The Arya Samaj had developed *shuddhi* as a weapon of defense from the conversion threat posed by both Christianity and Islam.¹⁹ Anxiety over the future of the Hindu community and Aryan ideology merged to produce radical attacks against caste privilege as well as militant efforts at proselytism, conversion, and reconversion. The aggressive stance of the Arya Samaj heightened religious competition as they en-

gaged in a multi-sided struggle with orthodox Hinduism, reform organizations, and militant groups from other religious communities. Certain Aryas, such as Pandit Lekh Ram, specialized in criticism of a particular religion, in his case, against Islam. In speeches, tracts, and newspapers he condemned Islam as a religion founded on greed, violence, and ignorance. In 1897 the bitter rivalry between Aryas and Muslims peaked in the Punjab with the murder of Pandit Lekh Ram. The resulting religious conflict was a preview of the more extensive violence of Partition.²⁰

The militant Aryas, determined to create the new world of Aryanism as envisioned by Dayananda, engaged in radical social reform. To do so they performed new Vedic life-cycle rituals of birth, marriage, and death. They entered the field of education for women by founding the Kanya Mahavidyalaya of Jullundur on June 14, 1896. The Kanya Mahavidyalaya was a girls' high school which would in time add college classes as well. Aryas preached widow remarriage and began to practice this within their own families. In addition they sponsored education for widows and built homes for them. In order to create a new Hindu, an individual who would not be tainted by contemporary corruption, the militants, led by Lala Munshi Ram (later Svami Shraddhanand), moved to create a dramatically different educational system. In 1902 they opened the Gurukula Kangri, just outside of the city of Hardwar. This was a resident educational institution, teaching students from the elementary through the college level. As at the ancient Hindu institutions, students remained at the Gurukula under the direction of religious teachers and separate from their families and from society. Instruction was in Hindi and Sanskrit, with a heavy emphasis placed on religious training, although much of the standard curriculum was retained. This institution sought to mold the entire personality of its students into the patterns of life and thought demanded by Arya ideology. Its graduates would be the first truly reformed Vedic Aryas.²¹ With the creation of the Gurukula Kangri the militants completed their own institutional structure as a rough parallel with the moderates, although both groups would continue to add new institutions for specific purposes.

The division between two groups remained a specifically Punjabi phenomenon. Only in the Punjab were there two provincial sabhas with rival branches allied to each. All other provinces had a single representative organization. Whatever differences of interpre-

tation existed did so within individuals, and were not institutionalized. Also, it must be remembered that rivalry between the two parties contained elements of personal struggle between two entrenched organizations, as well as opposing interpretations of the Samaj. These differences, however, did not mean that either party was prohibited from joining with members of the opposing group to support similar causes, or that either group did not take up independently similar work being carried out by the other. Both would engage in preaching, missionary work, *shuddhi*, and various programs of social reconstruction. Also, the growth of the Arya Samaj tended to make this division less crucial than it had been during the nineteenth century, even though the separate institutional structures within the Samaj continued to exist and still do today.

Expansion of the Arya Samaj

During the first twenty-five years of its existence the Arya Samaj grew steadily. In 1891 the census report recorded a total of 39,952 Aryas, and ten years later the total had jumped to 92,419, an increase of 131 per cent. This upsurge indicated primarily an intensification of the Samaj in two provinces, the Punjab with 25,000 Aryas and the new center of the movement in the United Provinces with 65,268.²² The Samaj also began to move outward in all directions. This expansion led to the establishment of new provincial (*pratinidhi*) sabhas in the United Provinces, 1886; Rajasthan, 1888; Bengal/Bihar in 1889; a joint Madhya Pradesh/Vidarbha Sabha, also in 1889; and the Bombay provincial sabha in 1902.²³ Sustained growth of the Samaj created the need for a central coordinating body, even as expansion at the provincial level had made the founding of *pratinidhi* sabhas a necessity. Dayananda did leave behind one central organization, the Paropkarini Sabha. He established this society on August 16, 1880, with the writing of his will.²⁴ The Paropkarini Sabha was to act, and did so act, as the executor of his estate, particularly in regard to his written works. While it could have provided overall leadership for the Arya Samaj, it failed to do so, largely due to the appointive nature of its membership, who did not necessarily speak for major constituencies of Aryas. Instead there was a growing consensus that the Samaj needed to found a new coordinating organization that would be able to act on behalf of all Aryas.

A number of Aryas, who attended the Bharat Dharam Mahamandal meeting in Delhi during 1900, began discussing the need for such an organization. Nothing concrete was done, however, until 1908, when at the anniversary celebration of the Gurukula Kangri a subcommittee was chosen to draft the regulations and structure of the proposed Sarvadeshik (All-India) Sabha. On September 15, 1908, a full committee met in Agra with representatives of the various provincial sabhas and on August 31, 1909, the Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha convened its first meeting in Delhi. Twenty-seven delegates were elected to the Sarvadeshik Sabha from six provincial *pratinidhi* sabhas. All provincial societies were represented save one, the Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha of the Punjab, which had been created by the moderate party in that province. The organizers of the Sarvadeshik Sabha asked the Punjabi moderates to send representatives to the new organization, but were told they would do so only if the Pradeshik Sabha would be the sole representative body of Punjabi Aryas. This was unacceptable to the organizers and so the Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha, Punjab, remained the sole provincial group outside the newly instituted Sarvadeshik Sabha.²⁵ Over the years efforts were made to incorporate this group into the overall representative body, but without success. In spite of their formal separation, the Punjabi moderates did cooperate with the Sarvadeshik Sabha on numerous occasions.²⁶

The new Sarvadeshik Sabha presided over a steadily expanding movement as the Arya Samaj gradually extended beyond those areas in which it was originally located. It also added members within those areas. The Samaj had penetrated into the Muslim state of Hyderabad during the late nineteenth century, but significant movement south would wait until historic forces brought the Samaj there in the 1920s.²⁷ In the meantime the Arya Samaj began to follow the flow of Indian immigrants abroad. In 1896 the *Satyarth Prakāsh* was carried to Mauritius by members of the Bengal Infantry.²⁸ Within the next two decades Arya Samaj branches were founded there in what became the first major center of the Samaj outside of British India. In 1911 two Arya leaders, Dr. Maniklal and Dr. Chiranjiv Bhardwaj, succeeded in publishing the *Mauritius Patrika*, an Arya Samaj newspaper.²⁹ The Samaj traveled further west in 1904, when Pandit Purnanandji went to Nairobi. He was followed in the next year by Bhai Parmanand, who reached Durban

and then went on an extensive tour of South Africa. South and East Africa became centers of successful Samaj missionary activities, as branch Samajes were opened throughout the area and were supported by the local Indian communities.³⁰ By the 1920s the Samaj had also reached the Fiji Islands, and by 1921 had become sufficiently settled there to open a girls' school.³¹ Diffusion abroad moved in a pattern of waves as the Samaj penetrated new areas settled by Indian immigrants.

In 1933 another period of overseas expansion began with the departure of Pandit Ayodhya Prasad for the World Fellowship of Faith Congress held that year in Chicago. The Pandit visited this conference and then spent a year preaching in the United States. The next wave of Arya expansion began, however, when he left the United States. Pandit Ayodhya Prasad first visited Trinidad, where he preached and performed *shuddhi* ceremonies to reclaim Hindus who had converted to Islam and Christianity.³² Next the Pandit travelled to Dutch Guyana and British Guyana. Arya Samajes were founded in all these areas and grew steadily through local efforts, as well as through continual visits of Arya missionaries. During the 1920s and 1930s overseas Aryas organized their own provincial sabhas which became affiliated with the Sarvadeshik Pratinidhi Sabha: British East Africa, 1922; South Africa, 1927; Fiji, 1928; Mauritius, 1930; and Dutch Guyana, 1937.³³ Continued growth within India brought additional provincial sabhas into the central organization. Bihar joined a separate body in 1930 and in 1935 a provincial sabha was established for the Muslim-dominated state of Hyderabad.³⁴

Continued growth of the Arya Samaj was recorded by the decennial census reports in British India. Even without the figures for the widely spread Arya movement outside of India, there still was an impressive growth. By 1911 the total given for the Samaj was 243,000, an increase of over 163 per cent from 1901. A decade later the Aryas had doubled again to 467,578 and in 1931 reached the total of 990,233.³⁵ The census of 1941 and all censuses thereafter no longer carried figures for the Arya Samaj, but it is safe to assume that growth did not end. In 1947 the Samaj must have been somewhere between one and a half to two million members, both inside British India and throughout the world. This growth in numbers carried with it the addition of provincial and local Samajes. The *Arya Dairectori* of 1941 indicates over 2,000 Arya Samajes af-

filiated with the provincial sabhas.³⁶ The creation of new local Samajes led to a continual development of specialized organizations, particularly in education.

The Dayanand Anglo-Vedic movement began with a single school in Lahore and then grew rapidly as elementary, middle, and high schools were founded throughout the province. The picture of educational institutions, however, is complex. A number of schools were controlled by the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic Trust and Management Society, but many also were under the administration of local Arya Samajes or various provincial sabhas. It was a fluid situation with schools being opened, occasionally closed, and at times taken over by other groups when it appeared that they might not survive. By the 1940s the educational world of the Samaj stretched throughout India, as far south as Sholapur in Maharashtra and the state of Hyderabad. By then there were 179 schools and 10 colleges in India and Burma. These included regular art schools, industrial training institutions, girls' schools, Sanskrit Pathshalas, and religious training centers.³⁷ In addition the Gurukula Kangri had become the model for an alternate system of education. Schools patterned after the Gurukula Kangri were founded at all levels. Some of these were affiliated with the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Punjab, and others were administered locally. In 1921 the original Gurukula became a university and by the 1940s there were seven other major institutions in the Gurukula system. The *Arya Directory* listed a total of thirty-three establishments labelled as "Gurukulas".³⁸ One of these was a women's college, the Kanya Gurukula, located in Dehra Dun, founded in 1923. Like the Gurukula Kangri this was a national school, drawing students from throughout India.³⁹ As with the Lahore high school, the Gurukula Kangri became the basis of an entire educational system.

In 1947 when India and Pakistan became independent the Arya Samaj had evolved into a complex world, an "Arya Jagat", of associations at the local, provincial, and central level. These associations in turn managed and maintained numerous institutions—schools, orphanages, student hostels, widows' homes, reading rooms, libraries, tract societies, newspapers, journals, missionary societies, and various organizations dedicated to social reform, particularly among the untouchables. Clearly the most fundamental task of the Samaj lay in administering and financially supporting these organizations. A complex of programs in differing socio-reli-

gious areas was maintained by the Samaj, providing an organizational impact that is difficult to examine but should not be underestimated. The original message of Svami Dayananda Saraswati was magnified and molded by the establishment of the Arya Samaj and its growth over the decades prior to Independence. The original dynamics of Dayananda's ideology were modified by historical forces, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s.

The Arya Samaj from World War I to Independence

The outbreak of World War I had little direct effect on the Arya Samaj, but the intensification of the nationalist fervor at the close of the war and just afterward drew many Arya Samaj leaders into active involvement with the Indian National Congress. Svami Shradhanand, for example, became a major figure in the campaign against the Rowlatt Bills. He and others then went on to support Mahatma Gandhi's first non-cooperation campaign.⁴⁰ At the height of this movement, in August 1921, a group of Muslims, the Moplahs of Kerala, rose against the British and their Hindu neighbors. The Aryas were shocked and horrified since the Moplahs not only attacked Hindu property and person, but also conducted a number of forced conversions to Islam. Lala Hans Raj heard the news and at a meeting the next day of the Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha in Lahore sponsored a resolution to send help to the Hindus of Kerala. This they did, as Pandit Rishi Ram, Sriyut Khushal Chand, and Pandit Mastan Chand were dispatched to Kerala. Others would follow. The prime service the Aryas could and did provide was the institution of *shuddhi*, which they used to bring converted Hindus back into the fold of their religion and society. In doing so the Aryas won considerable acceptance of *shuddhi* by orthodox Hindus. Originally leaders of Hindu orthodoxy had strongly opposed the use of *shuddhi*, but at this time it was the only effective weapon Hindus possessed to counter forced conversion. Also, Aryas provided financial aid and assisted in rebuilding damaged Hindu temples. The Moplah affair marked a major step in the introduction into south India of ideas and institutions developed in the northern areas during times of acute religious conflict. On this occasion northern attitudes of communal defense flowed into an area already the center of religious competition.⁴¹

Following the cessation of the non-cooperation campaign in

February 1922, north India sank into a morass of religious conflict and violence. Major riots erupted in many cities: Multan and Saharanpur in 1922, Delhi in 1924 and 1926, Kohat in 1924. In fact, no city was without its share of religious strife as such incidents became endemic in even small towns and villages.⁴² Although many conflicts arose spontaneously, emerging from inherent points of conflict between Islam and Hinduism, each community grew increasingly aggressive about its rights, particularly in regard to proselytism, conversion, and reconversion. A community of Muslims, the Malkana Rajputs, had requested re-admission into Hinduism. This group, living in the area where three provinces, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, converge had been converted to Islam, but still retained much of their Hindu culture. The All-India Kshatriya Mahasabha at its annual meeting in Agra on December 31, 1922, agreed to accept the Malkanas back into the fold of Rajput society. On February 13, 1923, a body of approximately eighty representatives of caste sabhas and various Hindu groups—Aryas, Sanatanists, Sikhs and Jains—met in Agra to plan this proposed reconversion campaign. Svami Shradhanand attended and at his suggestion they organized the Bharatiya Hindu Shuddhi Sabha. Shradhanand became president and Lala Hans Raj first vice-president.⁴³ The Shuddhi Sabha raised funds, supported missionaries, and began an extensive campaign to win back the Malkanas. Although this was a broader movement than the Arya Samaj, its leadership was mostly Arya and included individuals from both wings of the Samaj, for this of issue transcended divisions within the Hindu community.

The work of the Shuddhi Sabha heightened communal competition between Hindus and Muslims. Almost immediately Muslim groups in north India formed counter-movements to send missionaries to persuade the Malkanas and others to remain within the Islamic community. Among Hindus the twin slogans of *shuddhi* (conversion) and *sangāthān* (unity) expressed their heightened religious aggressiveness. Muslims reacted with their parallel movements for *tanzim* and *tabligh*. The Arya Samaj with its institutional base, resources of money, and manpower, became deeply involved in this religious competition. In turn, the Samaj was diverted its program by other demands of communal defense. Perhaps no issue better typifies this period of history and its atmosphere of strife than does the case of Mahasaya Rajpal, a bookseller

and devout Arya Samajist. In 1924 he published an Urdu tract entitled *Rangīla Rasūl*, the Merry Prophet. This was a vicious attack on the Prophet Muhammad that offended many Muslims throughout the north. They tried to have it banned by the government and failed, but in the process Rajpal became a bitter symbol for all aggressive Hinduism.⁴⁴ As a result Rajpal was attacked by a Muslim in September 1927, and finally killed on April 3, 1931.⁴⁵ The Rajpal affair illustrates the tensions and underlying violence of this period. During these years the Arya Samaj reacted to such events, which stimulated Samaj programs, particularly on the issue of continued caste prejudices within the movement. At the 1922 anniversary celebration of the Lahore Arya Samaj, Bhai Parmanand presented a vigorous condemnation of the caste system, particularly its persistence among members of the Samaj. Shortly afterward came the establishment of the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal dedicated to the removal of all caste distinctions. The Mandal decided to work first among Aryas, since it was necessary to remove caste distinctions within the Arya Samaj in order to facilitate the incorporation of new members brought in through *shuddhi*.⁴⁶ Concern for an end to caste distinctions, *shuddhi*, and communal defense were linked and reinforced each other.

Within the context of communal tensions a new Samaj institution began to evolve. In September 1920, at a meeting of scholars and *sannyāsis* held in Delhi, it was decided to hold a centenary celebration of Dayananda's birth at Mathura. A managing committee was selected and the celebration scheduled for February 15-21, 1925. Among the eighty-six members of this committee were representatives from the Sarvadeshik Sabha, both Pratinidhi Sabhas of the Punjab, the Paropkarini Sabha, and various other groups.⁴⁷ The two wings of the Samaj, which had cooperated in the Moplah and Malkana *shuddhi* campaigns once again worked together, as the long-standing division within the Samaj tended to close under the pressures of communal conflict. When this centenary celebration convened, Aryas came from all sections of the Samaj. They stayed and worked in Arya Nagar, a tent city with fourteen camps, five bazaars, one huge mandal, and four smaller ones. A procession was held, hymns sung, and rituals conducted, along with speeches and the passing of resolutions.⁴⁸ This meeting had two purposes, first the celebration of Dayananda's birth with all the pomp that could be mustered, and, secondly, the passing of resolutions, which pro-

vided direction and goals for the movement. Such a grand meeting offered a new method for gathering opinions of leading Aryas and expressing them in a series of statements. For while such a gathering could and did advocate various steps for the Samaj to take, it had no machinery to carry out a particular program. That would have to be left to others, such as the Sarvadeshik Sabha.

The centenary celebration contained more than one meeting. The planning committee had established a Dharm Parishad (religious council) and an Arya Vidvat Parishad (a learned council), which met continuously in the smaller mandals. In addition, there were a number of conferences on different religions, a gathering of individuals who had met Dayananda, and a poetry conference. Following the centenary celebrations various Arya groups held their own sessions. These included the Arya Swarajya Sannam, the Arya Kumar Sannam, the Dalitoddhar Sannam, the Jat-Pat Todak Sannam, the Pradeshak Sannam, a Gau Conference, a Kshatriya Conference, and Brahman Conference.⁴⁹ Among the many resolutions passed, the Arya Vidvat Parishad recommended that a Dharmarya Sabha be established. This group would act to decide religious issues and remove doubts within the Samaj.⁵⁰ The executive committee of the Sarvadeshik Sabha, at a meeting on January 27, 1928, decided to establish such a sabha and thus carry out the resolution passed in 1925. The Dharmarya Sabha functioned extensively for the next twenty-five years.⁵¹ The centenary conference also decided to hold a second celebration at Tankara, Dayananda's birth place. Arya Samajists gathered at Tankara on February 12, 1926, conducted a grand *nagar kirtan* and visited the home of Dayananda as well as other historic sites in the area.⁵² This was solely a meeting in honor of Dayananda; no working sessions were held nor resolutions passed. The 1925 gathering had managed to set a precedent that would be followed in 1927, although this next conference would be stimulated by a different set of causes.

Religious violence turned bitter in 1926 and 1927 with the Arya Samaj a major target of the Islamic community. At least that was how the Aryas saw events of this period. The assassination of Svami Shradhanand at the close of 1926 was followed in early 1927 by riots in the Bareilly area on the occasion of Muharram. Arya Samaj individuals and buildings were attacked, allegedly with the assistance of the local police. The Sarvadeshik Sabha met on

July 24, 1927, and called for a series of meetings to take place in north India on August 7, 1927. At these meetings, Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, and Jains, as well as the Aryas, were asked to pass resolutions expressing their anger at the apparent police hostility toward Hindus and at the violence that resulted. The conferees were then requested to send copies of these resolutions to all levels of the government. In September a managing committee was established to organize the first Arya Mahasammelan, or great conference, to take place early in November in Delhi.⁵³ Unlike the Dayananda centenary conference, this gathering was called specifically to deal with the question of religious violence and of the Hindu community's reaction to it. The Delhi Mahasammelan became the first of four such conferences to be held prior to Independence.

The Delhi Mahasammelan followed in organization and function the model of the 1925 centenary celebration. Once again all factions of the Samaj participated. The president of the meetings, Lala Hans Raj, was joined by both leading members of the moderate and militant Aryas. During this conference they passed a series of eighteen resolutions, beginning with a tribute to Svami Shradhanand in which the Aryas stated their general view that they recognized the hatred and anger of the Muslim leaders from these provinces have towards the Hindus in general and the Arya Samaj in particular.⁵⁴ They then went on to pass the remaining seventeen resolutions, which accused the government of failing to protect the Hindu community, condemned Muslim violence, called for more extensive *shuddhi* campaigns, continued work among the depressed castes, and asked for an end to caste distinctions among all Aryas. All eighteen resolutions centered on communal defense and solidarity, on *shuddhi* and *sangathan*. Two new institutions were created, the Arya Raksha (Defense) Committee, and the Arya Vir Dal.⁵⁵ Branches of the Vir Dal were founded throughout the Samaj, funds raised, and volunteers recruited. This militant arm of the Samaj served on a variety of occasions, from the *satyagraha* struggle in Hyderabad to the upheavals of partition in the Punjab.⁵⁶ The Delhi Mahasammelan clearly grew out of and focused on the issue of religious violence, while the normal functioning of the Samaj's other institutions and programs drew little attention. A similar set of circumstances lay behind the Bareilly Mahasammelan of 1931.

One of the by-products of the religious tensions during the

1920s was a number of restrictions imposed on religious demonstrations at both the local and provincial levels. The Arya Samajists found it necessary to take out licenses from the local police before they could hold processions or march singing through the streets of a particular town. Occasionally permission was not granted and the annual anniversary ceremonies could not be held in the traditional manner. Both Hindus and Muslims had become increasingly aggressive in demanding their traditional rights as they saw them and in objecting to those rituals employed by the opposing community when they seemed to interfere with their own religious practices. Hindu processions complete with hymn singing were offensive to Muslims, especially when they passed a mosque at prayer time. From the standpoint of the Aryas all attempts to limit, let alone ban, their normal rituals were seen as elements of oppression by the government and its de facto allies, the Muslims. By 1929 the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of the United Provinces was engaged in a lengthy quarrel over such limits in that state. Similar difficulties arose in the Punjab, as it seemed to the Aryas that all governments were acting to curb their activities.⁵⁷ In response to rising frustration the Sarvadeshik Sabha decided to hold a second Mahasammelan on February 1931, in Bareilly, because they had already concluded that Mahasammelans would be called whenever a major problem faced the Samaj.

The Bareilly Mahasammelan considered a wide range of issues centering on the needs of the community for self-protection. The Arya Vir Dal was praised and all Aryas urged to support it, by founding local branches, raising both funds and finding recruits for the Dal. The main task of the Dal was to protect Aryan culture, assist the oppressed, and provide social services.⁵⁸ Educational developments, the system of Arya preachers, and internal social reform among members drew attention and produced new resolutions. Two areas, though, are of special interest. Now that the Samaj saw *satyāgraha* as an important tool for itself and others, it shifted concerns to the rights of Hindu prisoners, particularly Arya prisoners. Consequently, the Samaj they passed a resolution demanding that jail regulations be changed to allow Aryas to practice their own religious rituals while interned. The Mahasammelan also turned its attention to restrictions on various Arya Samaj activities in the major Muslim states, specifically Hyderabad, Bhopal, Bahawalpur, and Rampur.⁵⁹ This last concern would grow rapidly

during the 1930s to finally culminate in the Arya Samaj's first *satyāgraha* campaign.

Unlike the Delhi and Bareilly Mahasammelans, the third one was focused on the fiftieth anniversary of Svami Dayananda's death. The idea of holding such a meeting may have been discussed at the Mathura conference, but the first concrete plan came from the Paropkarini Sabha at the suggestion of Sriman Nahar Singh. The Sarvadeshik Sabha agreed to assist in this Mahasammelan, which was planned for October 14-20, 1933, and finally held in Ajmer.⁶⁰ The lack of a major overriding problem behind this conference meant that resolutions, nine in all, tended to be relatively general, covering the major themes of the movement.⁶¹ By contrast the importance of this celebration stemmed from the wide variety of Arya institutions and organizations that participated. Special meetings and programs were presented from throughout the Samaj. An Arya Mahila Sannelan (Ladies Conference) met with representatives of women's groups, especially the Kanya Gurukulas, to pass twenty-three resolutions on issues particularly important to women.⁶² A special conference was held of those who had met Dayananda, and another group presented a demonstration of physical exercises and training.⁶³ The Arya Vir Dal and the Arya Kumar Sabha met as did special sessions focused on Hindi, Sanskrit, poetry, *sannyāsis*, overseas Indians, untouchability, and widow marriage.⁶⁴ This was to be the last Mahasammelan for eleven years. There were no centenaries to celebrate during the next decade and the intensity of religious conflict in the north had abated somewhat. Instead Arya Samaj attention began to be increasingly focused on the Muslim-dominated state of Hyderabad.

The Arya Samaj had been in the Hyderabad state since the nineteenth century, but only in the late 1920s and early 1930s was there an expansion of its role. New Samajes were founded and Arya missionaries extended their aggressive campaigns beyond the limits of Hyderabad. By 1932 the first of a series of clashes between the Samaj and the government of Hyderabad took place. An Arya missionary, Pandit Chandra Bhanu, was charged with being a political agitator, and the Samaj a political organization. The Samaj attempted to answer these charges both to the Nizam's government and the British Indian government but did not succeed in doing so.⁶⁵ Over the next few years incident after incident took place as relations between the Arya Samaj and the Hyderabad government

steadily deteriorated. Also relations became severely strained between the Hindu majority and the Islamic minority in this state.⁶⁶ In 1935 the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Hyderabad was organized as the number of Samaj branches and institutions continued to increase. The Nizam's government grew steadily more suspicious of the Samaj. As they saw it, "The Arya Samaj has been working in the Dominions of his Exalted Highness for several years. It has eighteen organizations in the Capital City while its central organization, known as the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Nizam Rajya, is located in Udaigir with branches in different parts.... Ostensibly, its principal functions are to hold periodical congregations, organize processions, establish *akhadas* (gymnasiums) and employ missionaries for Shuddhi and Sangathan work. Outside preachers are often invited to deliver lectures and enroll fresh converts."⁶⁷ Tensions between the government and the Samaj accelerated until 1938, when they resulted in open conflict.

The Arya Samaj had been particularly active in the Marathi-speaking areas of Hyderabad, and it was here that frustrated Aryas began to engage in *satyagraha* against the government.⁶⁸ These were local affairs with some support from Arya Samajes across the border in Bombay Province. The Sarvadeshik Sabha, in response to requests from the Hyderabad Aryas for support, decided to hold an Arya Conference at Sholapur just beyond the borders of Hyderabad. It met on December 24-26, 1938. By this time the Samaj had begun to rally its support for the coming struggle and had also received offers of aid from other Hindu organizations, especially the Hindu Mahasabha. The Sholapur Conference aired Arya grievances, particularly those against the Nizam's police. "Our chief complaint of very, very long standing is that the unscrupulous Police of the Nizam's Government fabricates unfounded lies against the Arya Samajists, sheer out of bigotry."⁶⁹ By this time the Nizam's government published its own view of the Samaj and Samaj activities:

Audiences have been exhorted to rise, fight the Muslims, kill them and overthrow them as the country belonged to the Hindus and not the Muslims. In certain areas, they have gone so far as to exhort the ryots not to pay land tax and to boycott Government officials and Muslims. Every act and intention of the Government is deliberately misinterpreted in order to bolster up complaints that they and the Hindu com-

munity generally are being "oppressed". ... In addition to written and spoken propaganda, definite acts of lawlessness on the part of Arya Samajists have now become common. Instances are the taking out of Arya Samaj processions in defiance of the orders issued by the local authorities in the interest of public peace, the processionists being armed with deadly weapons, shouting offensive slogans, singing provocative songs and firing guns in crowded localities.⁷⁰

Both sides feared and distrusted each other and both saw the other as motivated primarily by religious fanaticism. As in the north the Aryas felt that their traditional rights and privileges were being taken from them by the Nizam's government, which in this case was an expression of the Muslim community. A struggle proved inevitable.

A *satyagraha* campaign against the government manned by Arya Samajists within the state had started in October, well before the Sholapur Conference. The Aryas found allies in the newly-formed and almost immediately-banned Hyderabad State Congress. The Sholapur Conference declared January 22, 1939, as Hyderabad Day in order to popularize the movement and bring support throughout the country. On January 31, 1939, the Arya Samaj began its *satyagraha*.⁷¹ With the backing of the Sarvadeshik Sabha other Arya groups, such as the Arya Vir Dal, joined this campaign, as did students from the Gurukulas as well as Arya leaders throughout British India. The Hindu Mahasabha also sent parties of its followers to perform *satyagraha*. This campaign continued through spring and into early summer and ended when the Nizam's government announced a set of political reforms on July 17, 1939. By this time approximately 8,000 Hindus had been jailed.⁷² On August 17, all political prisoners were released and the *satyagraha* campaign was discontinued by the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha.⁷³ This marked the first successful *satyagraha* campaign for both organizations. It also was another instance, as in the case of the Moplah uprising, of Arya Samaj penetration into an area of the south already caught up in Hindu-Muslim conflict. Only in such an area did the Arya Samaj find an acceptance of their ideology and techniques; in the rest of south India barriers of language and culture made it extremely difficult for the Samaj to gain adherents.

Following the Hyderabad *satyagraha* the Arya Samaj once

more became involved in Hindu-Muslim conflicts in the north. The constitutional reforms of 1935 opened the way for parliamentary government in the provinces. With the outbreak of World War II the Indian National Congress resigned its elective positions, but the Muslim League did not. Muslim-dominated provincial governments established themselves in those provinces with a Muslim majority, one of which was Sind. As in the Muslim princely states tensions developed between a Muslim-dominated government and the Arya Samaj. In the case of Sind, however, the majority of the population was also Muslim. The Hindus of this area were a small minority located primarily in the cities and towns. By 1943, the Sind provincial government found itself under pressure from various Muslim groups to ban the *Satyārth Prakāsh* of Svami Dayananda Saraswati. Muslims objected in particular to Chapter 14, in which Dayananda attacked Islam at considerable length, attempting to show that it was a false religion based on ignorance and greed. On June 25, 1943, the *Hindustan Times* claimed that the Sind government was considering just such a ban. This angered the Arya Samaj and they saw it as another example of Muslim intolerance. The Sarvadeshik Sabha telegraphed its answer to the Sind government: "Shocked learning your ministry's contemplated move proscribing *Satyārth Prakāsh*, Aryas' indispensable religious book. If materialised, all Aryas will accept challenge. Ready sacrificing all for religious liberty as in Hyderabad State. Please give up unwisest proposed step avoiding bitter struggle."⁷⁴ The Sind government responded that it would not take action, but there was increasing pressure from Muslim groups, particularly the Muslim League to initiate the ban.

On August 13, 1943, the League passed a resolution urging all Muslim governments and the government of India to ban the *Satyārth Prakāsh*. It reiterated this demand at its annual session held in Karachi during that December.⁷⁵ The Arya Samaj objected and stepped up its pressure by calling a Mahasammelan. It met in Delhi on February 20-22, the fourth and last such gathering before Independence. The Delhi Mahasammelan had as its president Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee, a non-Arya but prominent leader of the Hindu community. Three thousand delegates came and according to Arya estimates, fifty thousand men and women attended. Numerous resolutions were passed but the center of focus remained the issues in Sind and relations between Hindus, Muslims, and the

British regime. The Delhi Mahasammelan brought together Aryas and also members of the Sanatana Dharm Sabhas, who saw ban as a symbol of the Hindu-Muslim struggle.⁷⁶ Other units within the Samaj held meetings during the spring and summer. The Sind government vacillated but finally on October 26, 1944, announced that "The Government of Sind is pleased to direct that no copies of the book entitled '*Satyārth Prakāsh*' written by Swami Dayananda Saraswati shall be printed or published unless Chapter XIV (Chapter fourteen) thereof is omitted."⁷⁷

The Arya Samaj continued its campaign against this ban and in August 1945, the Sind government announced a modification of its ruling.⁷⁸ This was, however, unacceptable to the Samaj, but since the ban had not been effectively enforced and was due to lapse in September 1946, they waited to see what would happen next. Within ten days of its lapse, the Sind government restored the ban.⁷⁹ This was the last straw, and on January 1, 1947, the All-India Satyarth Defense Committee led by Mahatma Narayan Svami announced that:

The Sind provincial elections are now over. People of Sind cannot now legitimately ask for further postponement of Satyagraha on the issue of ban on the *Satyārth Prakāsh* in Sind.

I, accompanied by Rajguru Pandit Dhurendra Shastri and Lala Khushal Chand Anand, am reaching Karachi on 3rd January, 1947. Satyagraha will be launched in consultation with the workers of the Sind Provincial Arya Pratinidhi Sabha.

I call upon the Aryas, Arya Samajes and Provincial Arya Pratinidhi Sabhas to send to me the names of the persons who may reach Karachi to offer Satyagraha on a week's notice.⁸⁰

The *satyāgraha* campaign began in earnest on January 14, 1947, and was over by the 20th. The Sind government simply ignored the *Satyāgrahis* and refused to arrest them even when they publicly defied the ban. The Aryas interpreted this as a capitulation by the Sind government and so terminated their campaign as another successful struggle for the protection of their rights. Following the Sind campaign the Arya Samaj was soon engulfed by the chaos and confusion of Partition and Independence. The Samaj lost pro-

perty and valuable institutions, such as the Lahore Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College in the area of the newly-created state of Pakistan, and thousands of its members became refugees. In the 1950s and 1960s the Samaj went through a period of re-establishing lost institutions and re-organizing itself.

We have seen here only a brief outline of the Arya Samaj, yet that outline is impressive because of the scope and variety of Samaj achievements. The personal vision of Svami Dayananda Saraswati was transformed into an ideology and a movement. This ideology was sufficiently persuasive to attract individuals who, in many cases, made a lifetime commitment to the Arya Samaj. These ideas provided for numerous individuals a coherent explanation of the past and present as well as a method for the creation of a reformed Hinduism and a return to ancient greatness. Converts to Arya ideology gave to this movement their personal abilities and resources, which in turn were used to create, manage, and sustain a large number of organizations and institutions. The Samaj launched programs in the areas of education, proselytism, communal defense, social uplift, and social service. As they struggled to defend their own ideology and give substance to Dayananda's vision, they also contributed to the heightening of religious tensions, first in the north and then into south India. The Arya Samaj also was able to continue to draw new members into the movements and to expand its institutional structure within and beyond India. As a result the Samaj played an important role in nineteenth- and twentieth century India. Its impact can only be estimated at this time, since extensive research would be needed before we could compile a detailed and verified account of its history and of the areas of its influence. Scholars have been correct in seeing the Arya Samaj as historically significant, but we must await the future before this significance can be clearly delineated. In the meantime this article can act as a starting point for students of the Arya Samaj and its place in recent history.

Notes

1. J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), pp. 102-129; and Lala Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj* (London: Longmans, Green, 1915) are both generalized in their approach. In Hindi the best general history of the Samaj is

- the two-volume work by Indra Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās* (Delhi: Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1957). For a study of the Samaj in the Punjab, see Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) and his article, "Social Change and Religious Movements in Nineteenth-Century Punjab," in *Social Movements in India*, ed. M.S.A. Rao (Delhi: Manohar, 1979), 2: 1-16. The most recent sketch of the Samaj is in Kenneth W. Jones *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India, The New Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I-III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 95-106, 192-199. For additional bibliographic references, see Kenneth W. Jones, "Sources for Arya Samaj History", in W. Eric Gustafson and Kenneth W. Jones, eds., *Sources of Punjab History* (Delhi: Manohar, 1975), pp. 130-170.
2. Numerous biographies of Dayananda have been written, but the most authoritative and scholarly work is by M.F. Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati, His Life and Times* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978). A useful, older biography was done by Har Bilas Sarda, *Life of Dayananda Saraswati, World Teacher* (Ajmer: Vedic Yantralaya, 1946).
 3. For a discussion of Dayananda's basic ideology see Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati*, pp. 99-126, 245-295; and Jones, *Arya Dharm*, pp. 30-36.
 4. Sarda, *Life of Dayanand*, pp. 405-412, and Yudhishtir Mimansak, *Risi Dayānanda kē Granthon kā Itihās* (Ajmer: Prachyavidhya-Prathishthan, 1949), pp. 16-46.
 5. Jones, *Arya Dharm*, pp. 36-50.
 6. Sarda, *Life of Dayanand*, has lengthy lists of those places Dayananda visited with the dates of each visit, see pages 337-347.
 7. Jones, *Arya Dharm*, pp. 43-44, and Sarda, *Life of Dayanand*, pp. 324-336.
 8. Jones, *Arya Dharm*, pp. 67-77.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
 10. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-90.
 11. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-93.
 12. *Ibid.*, pp. 330-331; also see Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, 2:212-213.
 13. Jones, *Arya Samaj*, pp. 235-241.
 14. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-279; also see N.G. Barrier, "The Arya Samaj and Congress Politics in Punjab, 1894-1908", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 26, no.3 (May 1967), and by the same author, "The Punjab Government and Communal Politics, 1870-1908", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 37, no.3 (May 1968).
 15. Jones, *Arya Dharm*, pp. 299-303.

16. Ibid., pp. 280-299.
17. Kenneth W. Jones, "Ham Hindu Nahin: Arya-Sikh Relations, 1877-1905", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 32 no. 3 (May 1973): 436.
18. Ibid., p. 471.
19. Jones, *Arya Dharm*, pp. 303-312; for a study of the aftermath of Arya Samaj uplift work among untouchables, see James Sebring, "The Formation of New Castes: A Probable Case from North India", *American Anthropologist*, June 1972: 487-600.
20. Ibid., pp. 193-202.
21. Ibid., pp. 215-223.
22. *Census of India, 1901 General Report Subsidiary Table No. 1*, pp. 289-395.
23. Radhuvir Singh Shastri, *Sarvadēshik Ārya Pratinidhi Sabhā kā Sankshipt Itihās* (New Delhi: Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, vikrami samvat 2018), p. 1.
24. Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati*, p. 215.
25. Radhuvir Singh Shastri, *Sarvadēshik*, pp. 1-6.
26. Ibid., p. 8.
27. Carolyn M. Elliot, "Declines of a Patrimonial Regime: The Telengana Rebellion in India, 1946-51," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 34, no. 1 (November 1974): p. 56.
28. Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, 2: 47.
29. Ibid., p. 48.
30. Ibid., pp. 41, 47.
31. Ibid., p. 48.
32. Ibid., p. 186.
33. Radhuvir Singh Shastri, *Sarvadēshik*, p. 5.
34. Ibid., p. 5; also see Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, p. 5.
35. *Census of India, General Reports* for 1911, 1921, and 1931.
36. These figures are approximate and may be on the low side and extensive research would be needed to establish accurate data on the Arya Samaj. See *Ārya Dairectari arthat Samvat 1997 Vikrami ki Ārya Jagat ki Pragatiyōn ka Vivaran* (Delhi: Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, vikrami samvat 1978), pp. 43-81.
37. *Ārya Dairectari*, pp. 120-133.
38. Ibid., pp. 86-119. No definition was given as to exactly which institutions were classed as Gurukulas and why.
39. *Gurukula Kangri Vishwavidyala, An Introduction* (Hardwar: Gurukula Kangri Vishwavidyalaya, 1962) p. 25.
40. Svami Shraddhanand, *Inside Congress* (Bombay: Phoenix Publications, 1946), pp. 46-125.
41. Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, 2: 130-131; G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 137-145.
42. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations*, p. 161.
43. Ibid., see *Bhāratiya Hindū Shuddhi Sabhā ki Pratham Varshik Report* (Agra: Shanti Press, vikrami samvat, 1980) and other annual reports through 1927.
44. N. Gerald Barrier, *Banned: Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India, 1907-1927* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974), p. 99.
45. Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, 2: 267.
46. James Reid Graham, "The Arya Samaj as a Reformation in Hinduism with Special Reference to Caste" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1942) pp. 537, 563-569.
47. Radhuvir Singh Shastri, *Sarvadēshik*, pp. 18-47.
48. Ibid.
49. Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, pp. 136-141.
50. Radhuvir Singh Shastri, *Sarvadēshik*, p. 19.
51. Ibid., p. 1:141.
52. Ibid., p.25
53. Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, 2:157.
54. Ibid., p. 158.
55. Ibid., p. 158-164.
56. Radhuvir Singh Shastri, *Sarvadēshik* p. 99; Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations*, p. 92 and Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, 2:162-163. Considerable competition and animosity developed between the Arya Vir Dal and the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh. See *Sarvadēshik Pratinidhi Sabhā kē Nirnay* (Delhi: Sarvadeshik Pratinidhi Sabha, vikrami samvat 2018), pp. 15-17.
57. Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, 2: 169.
58. Ibid., p. 172.
59. Ibid., pp. 68-71.
60. Radhuvir Singh Shastri, *Sarvadēshik*, p. 25.
61. Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, 2: 175.
62. Ibid., p. 176.
63. Ibid., pp. 176-177.
64. Ibid., p. 180.
65. Radhuvir Singh Shastri, *Sarvadēshik*, p. 45.
66. Elliot, "Decline of a Patrimonial Regime", pp. 30-35
67. *The Arya Samaj in Hyderabad* (Published by order His Exalted Highness the Nizam's Government, n.d.), p.1.
68. Elliot, "Decline of a Patrimonial Regime", pp. 35-36.
69. *The Arya Samaj in Hyderabad*, p. 2.
70. *Nizam Defence Examined and Exposed, A Rejoinder to the Pamphlet "The Arya Samaj in Hyderabad"* (Delhi: International Aryan League, n.d.), p.5.
71. Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, vol. 2.
72. Elliot, "Decline of a Patrimonial Regime", p. 36.

73. Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, 2: 209-210.
 74. S. Chandra, *The Case of the Satyarth Prakash (The Light of Truth) in Sind* (Delhi: International Aryan League, 1947), p.20.
 75. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
 76. Vidyavachaspati, *Ārya Samāj kā Itihās*, 2: 42-43.
 77. Chandra, *The Case of the Satyarth Prakash*, pp. 60-61.
 78. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
 79. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
 80. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

3

THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT: A STUDY IN RELIGIOUS CHANGE

George M. Williams

The pattern of ultimate concern of an organization or movement can be more complex to portray than that of an individual. Such is indeed the case with the Ramakrishna movement. This movement has been credited with championing the cultural revival or renaissance of modern India, defending the total religious heritage of the Hindu tradition when others were in retreat, and purifying Hindu monasticism so that its members have become exemplars of Indian spirituality.

This study will focus on the religious ideals of this movement, seeking to articulate what has been of ultimate concern.¹ Initially, nine descriptors of the pattern of ultimacy of the Ramakrishna movement will be presented. Then, the second portion of this study will offer a diachronic examination of this general pattern of ultimacy, which has led to three findings: (1) There are variations diachronically in the relative emphases given different elements of the pattern of ultimacy. As in cooking, all the ingredients may be the same, but different portions yield cake, bread, or saltine crackers. For a *māyāvādi*, in this case a historian of religions, the difference in taste is worth noting.² (2) There are inner tensions within the major elements of the pattern of ultimacy. None of the central ideals of the movement are without an internal dynamism which prohibits later followers of the realization of Sri Ramakrishna from emphasizing an aspect of a central ideal. (3) Six periods of relative emphasis of various ideals emerge over the century of existence (1880-1980) of the Ramakrishna movement. Because of the limits

of this study, a full discussion of each period cannot be attempted; rather, a selective discussion will be undertaken to emphasize salient religious changes within the movement. The reader will need mentally to re-list general ideals which do not change in each period.

I

The General Descriptors of the Ramakrishna Movement

During the history of the Ramakrishna movement, nine descriptors have been used repeatedly by members and others to describe it. It has been portrayed as monistic, monastic, universal, tolerant, non-sectarian, liberal, humanitarian, progressive, and scientific. These descriptors are linguistically rooted in the religious ferment of nineteenth-century Indian religion. Yet, all of them continue to be used to describe the Ramakrishna movement today. The descriptors have a general linguistic history but also serve the special function of carriers of truth claims for the movement's teachings. It is this latter function of the terms which will be briefly presented in this section. These descriptors reveal the invisible "convictional world view" of Ramakrishna Vedanta. What follows is a general overview of the nine descriptors:

Monistic. True Ramakrishna movement found in the Vedanta a central truth: that truth is one. Unity of life, of mankind, of religion, of the self, of God, is an unequivocal one. The Personal God and the Impersonal are the same.

Monastic. True spirituality requires renunciation of the fruits of one's actions. The monastic life promotes spiritual growth through actual renunciation.

Universal. The Ramakrishna movement, its organizational super-structure of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, or its message of the *sanātana dharma* (the eternal principles) are not a religion. Its teachings are the universal foundation of all religions or, more properly, of spirituality itself.

Tolerant. The Vedanta of the Ramakrishna movement proclaims that all religions are true. It teaches humanity the basis for universal tolerance, which is "unity in diversity." Ramakrishna Vedanta teaches that all faiths—Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist—lead to the Godhead.

Non-sectarian. The Ramakrishna movement is not a sect within Hinduism, but a defender of the entire Hindu tradition. It demonstrates that each of the paths (*jñāna-mārga*, *bhakti-mārga*, and *karma-mārga*) and any sect (whether Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, or Śakta) is true. All spiritual tendencies lead to the goal of unity.

Liberal. The movement is dedicated to the social uplift of mankind through the goals of liberty, justice, equality. According to the principles of the *sanātana dharma*, religion and society throughout the world can be reformed.

Humanitarian. The Ramakrishna movement is dedicated to the service of all creatures. Its programs of relief in famine and flood are renowned throughout India. Service to the suffering is service to the Godhead.

Progressive. Education aids the progress of humanity. The Ramakrishna movement has emphasized the need for mass education, especially for the lower and underprivileged classes. That education has as its central purpose to raise the masses to the level at which they may realize the eternal principles.

Scientific. As truth is one, so also is true science and true spirituality. Western science and the eternal principles can be taught and practiced together. Both will awaken mankind.

This delineation of these nine descriptors of the Ramakrishna movement is necessarily stark. If we now proceed diachronically to study these descriptors, we will see how they are valued within the pattern of ultimacy which the movement perceives as unified, as unified as the *sanātana dharma* itself.

II

The Historical Periods of the Ramakrishna Movement

Our interest in the various periods of the ideals of the Ramakrishna movement leads us to suspend judgment concerning the validity of its central truth claim (i.e., that the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna are the eternal principles of spirituality). Instead, we will look at each period to see how the descriptors function as elements in the pattern of ultimate concern in each period.

Period One. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (c. 1880-86): Birth

By 1880 a small movement had begun to form around the person

of a Kālī priest at the Dakshineswar Temple outside Calcutta. They were drawn to a priest of an endowed temple who had deviated significantly from his expected role as *pujari* or *brahman* ritualist. Sri Ramakrishna behaved as a *sannyāsi*; even though he was married to Saradamani Devi, the marriage was never consummated. Years of practice of various *sādhana*s (spiritual disciplines) led him to teach that all religions were essentially true. He taught that the God of each, whether Vaiṣṇava, Śākta, Christian, or Muslim, was the same and could be worshipped according to one's inherent preference for the type of religious practice. He demonstrated exceptional spiritual powers (*siddhis*), being able to go into prolonged trance states such as *nirvikalpa samādhi* or induce altered states of consciousness in others.

The message of Sri Ramakrishna centered on God-realization and renunciation of "women and gold." Professor C.T.K. Chari correctly observed a unique feature of Ramakrishna Vedanta: the denial of the law of the excluded middle.³ *Brahman*, the impersonal absolute, and Śakti, the personal Godhead, were the same. *Jñāna* and *bhakti* led to the goal. Ramakrishna realized that even the philosophies of *advaita*, *viśiṣṭādvaita*, and *dvaita* (monism, qualified monism, and dualism) were different only because of the varying spiritual tendencies within the individual, but that they ultimately resolved themselves as different ways of expressing the same truth. Ramakrishna taught that he could know this because he was an *īśvarakoti*, one who could merge with the Absolute and return. By implication, he taught that he was an *avatāra*, for he was not different than Kṛṣṇa or Rāma.

Sri Ramakrishna appears to have instructed his disciples in two ways regarding renunciation. For householders he taught the mental renunciation "of the *Gita*," but for those who had never touched women, he taught that they also renounce "in actuality." His requirement to renounce "gold" set them against the world of material goods and left only mendicancy.

The monastic order which bears his name did not solely come from his message or his practice. He initiated no one as a *sannyāsi* in his lifetime. He entitled no one *svami* nor set a rule for them. He did ask his favorite disciple, Narendranath Datta, the future Vivekananda, to keep his "boys together" and to "teach them."

The differences between the teachings and practice of Sri Ramakrishna as noted from direct evidence, and the message

(*sanātana dharma*) of the Order (the Ramakrishna Math and Mission) which followed him can be demonstrated by briefly reviewing the nine descriptors. Ramakrishna's monism dissolved *advaita*, *viśiṣṭādvaita*, and *dvaita* into the experience of truth's unity. Ramakrishna's monasticism was as a *brāhman pūjari* in a Śākta temple, not a monastery. It entailed total abstinence from sexual contact and the touching of money. Ramakrishna's universalism was total; at the highest level, there were no distinctions. Liberal religion in the 1880s taught that religion based on reason could rid the world of superstition, idolatry, and the social ills which weighted down the men and women. However, Ramakrishna was not interested in any of these issues, and therefore, cannot be judged a religious liberal. Non-sectarianism was addressed by Sri Ramakrishna when he stated that he did not want to start any sect. This may well have been the reason he initiated no one and taught that all Hindu sects—Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Śākta, Tantra—were equally true. He himself did not affiliate with any of the existing monastic orders in India. Yet, he affirmed their worth as equally capable of bringing one to God-realization. He practiced Śakti-pūjā (worship of the Mother Goddess Kālī) and taught that the best path (*mārga*) in this evil age was *bhakti* (devotionalism).

The descriptor of tolerant, as used by the Ramakrishna movement to stress non-conversion to another faith, because all faiths are true does not fit Sri Ramakrishna. He did believe in reconversion of Indians to Hindu sects. Sri Ramakrishna used all his spiritual powers to bring Narendra to do *pūjā* to Kālī in her manifestation at the Dakshineswar temple as a basalt image. In so doing, Narendra was "converted" from his faith and practice as a Brahmo Samaji.⁴ Ramakrishna's humanitarianism was traditionally Hindu. He taught service to all beings (the five *dānas*) and taught nothing of work (*karma-yoga*) or its dignity for *sannyāsis*. Ramakrishna was not the source of the Ramakrishna movement's teaching about being progressive, in the way in which the term acquires meaning in the Hindu renaissance. He was anti- or non-intellectual. He did not believe that education aided spiritual growth. In fact, he often stated that too much study was not helpful. Finally, Ramakrishna was not scientific. He did teach the oneness of truth, but was not scientific, even in the peculiar sense of the Indian renaissance.

Sri Ramakrishna's extraordinary achievements were in the area of the human spirit, not in the intellectual realm, for he was almost

illiterate. His humility, humanity, and purity are a monument to the heights that few reach, even the most saintly. But Ramakrishna was not the single source of the Ramakrishna movement's teachings and practice.

Period Two. Svami Vivekananda's 'Militant Hinduism' (1886-1902): Infancy

The death of Sri Ramakrishna in August 1886, left a nascent movement with an appointed leader and the single instruction of "staying together." Yet, the four final years of their master's life had left "his boys" with the resolve to continue his central concerns of God-realization and renunciation of "women and gold." Some began to exhibit spiritual powers such as those so amply demonstrated by Ramakrishna himself, but Narendra discouraged the acquisition of these powers. They all practiced severe disciplines (*sādhanās*) in order "to see God." Visions occurred but certainty about God did not, at least for Narendra.

The main spiritual routine during their master's lifetime had been *bhakti*. Ramakrishna-pūjā was now added to Kālī-pūjā. The movement had become a traditional localized ascetic group of *bhaktas*, dedicated to devotion for their guru and Kālī. When Narendra left the group in 1890, he condemned their practices.⁵ He intended never to have contact with them again, due to his frustration with their excessive devotionism. Yet, he contacted them from America in 1893, after years of silence, and tried to win them to his mission. When he returned triumphantly to India in 1897, he soon encountered almost total resistance to his plan from his former fellow disciples.⁶ Only through the dominance of his will were these *śakta-sannyāsis* moved from their central focus on God-realization through renunciation and *pūjā* to trying "his plan" and "the Mission," which involved work in the world.

Vivekananda actually used all nine descriptors which are representative of the elements in the Ramakrishna movement's pattern of ultimacy. He joined the realizations of Sri Ramakrishna with the liberal ideals of the Brahma Samaj.⁷

Monism. Advaita Vedānta was the rational articulation of the Absolute and the principles of oneness. The *māyāvāda* doctrine of Sankara was accepted as definitive. But in the realm of multiplicity, *viśiṣṭā-dvaita* validated one's involvement in the world. Ramakrishna's radical destruction of the epistemological differences of *advaita*, *viśiṣṭādvaita*, and *dvaita* in his experiential harmony of

all approaches can be portrayed by the model of the wheel with three spokes coming to the oneness of truth at the center. Vivekananda's solution to the same problem used the model of the ladder and postulated, as Professor Nalini Devdas correctly observed, "a reasoned system in which *dvaita* and *viśiṣṭādvaita* are the stages and *advaita* is the goal."⁸

The thirst for the realization of God as *brahman* or *śakti* or *Kālī* or even in Ramakrishna as the *avatāra* of the *satya yuga* was relegated by Vivekananda to a subordinate role for intermittent periods of time after 1890. What became more important than realizing God and attaining *mukti* was his "God the poor and the miserable." But as a *viśiṣṭādvaitan* the poor and God were the same, only perceived from different levels of reality. For the poor he would forego his own liberation—the traditional reason for the total renunciation of the *sannyāsi*. Nor did it matter much experientially whether or not Sri Ramakrishna was really God. Epistemologically, Ramakrishna's *avatāra* nature vouchsafed the unity of *brahman* and *śakti*, for only an *avatāra* could return from merger in the oneness of the Godhead and know its identity with the God of form. Yet Vivekananda's ladder model placed *advaita* at the top as the truest philosophical expression and relegated *avatāras* to the relatively real of *vivarta* (appearance).

Monasticism. Narendra became Svami Vivekananda at the suggestion of the Raja of Khetri. When Vivekananda went to America, he claimed to be a monk of the oldest order of *sannyāsis* in India, that of Sankaracharya.⁹ He allowed himself to be known as a *brahmin*, he identified himself as being from Bombay or even Madras, and was credentialed to speak before the World Parliament of Religions on the basis of these verbal claims. After his remarks in defense of Hinduism and often at the expense of other Indian religious groups (the Brahma Samaj and Theosophy, in particular), some attacked him as a liar. These attacks almost aborted his work in America, but he managed to get resolutions of support from the Raja of Khetri and from lay disciples in Madras proving that he represented pure Hinduism. His former *gurubhāis* did not provide him with the needed credentials.

When Vivekananda returned to India in 1897 and asserted his leadership over the circle of Ramakrishna monks, he accommodated more to their monasticism than they did his. (This will be treated in the next period.) When they accused him of being Western and

said that his teachings were not compatible with those of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda responded "with great fervour": "How do you know that these are not in keeping with his ideas? Do you want to shut Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of infinite ideas, within your own limits? I shall break these limits and scatter his ideas broadcast all over the world. He never enjoined me to introduce his worship and the like. The methods of spiritual practice, concentration and meditation and other high ideals of religion that he taught—those we must realise and teach mankind. Infinite are the ideas and infinite are the paths that lead to the goal. I was not born to create a new sect in this world, too full of sects already."¹⁰

Vivekananda's monasticism would lead the movement away from total renunciation of gold to its use for mankind. His was an "in-the-world" asceticism which was not practiced by their master, Sri Ramakrishna.

Universalism. The nineteenth-century quest for the foundations of universal religion which proved the unity of all religions was founded by Svami Vivekananda in Vedanta. He equated the principles of Vedanta and *sanātana dharma*. These were the principles of spirituality with its realization of the One. This was the pure Hinduism.

Toleration. Sri Ramakrishna had realized all religions as true. This was experiential and grounded in the special nature of his experiments with Islam, Christianity, and the Hindu sects (such as Tantra, Śakta, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva). Neither Svami Vivekananda, nor any other monk known to the author, ever carried out his own experiments. They all accepted the truth of all religions on the basis of their master's work. Svami Vivekananda tried to lead in some comparative studies—reminiscent of those at the Brahma Samaj. But no one actually went into the practice of Islam or Taoism. The Ramakrishna movement's outer form would be Hindu.

Vivekananda's message asserted that Hinduism is the most tolerant of all religions in the world. It accepted all as true. Unity was the basis of tolerance. But as the defender of Hinduism at a time when cultural inferiority was a bitter reality, Svami Vivekananda often lapsed into what Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble, a British disciple) termed his "militant Hinduism." Taken out of this historical context, many of his remarks about Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam appear hypercritical and do little to further this ideal of tolerance. But these critical remarks were

often cherished more by his countrymen desiring some area of superiority than the mild statements of unity and tolerance.

Non-sectarian. Vivekananda applied the doctrine of universality to the Hindu tradition and sought to lessen any divisiveness among its sects. He wanted to lead all Indians to a purified Hinduism, diverse enough for all. Following Sri Ramakrishna's realizations about difference resting on the variety of spiritual paths (*mārgas*), Vivekananda taught that there were four tendencies through which mankind sought God. Hinduism was the only religion that recognized that the religious capacities of persons vary according to their inner tendencies (*saṁskāras*).¹¹ These capacities must be channeled into a proper method or path (*yoga*), and only Hinduism taught the four yogas (*jñāna*, *bhakti*, *karma* and *rāja*).¹² Each of these paths had the same goal, oneness with *brahman*. (He did not seem to notice that *jñāna yoga* and *rāja yoga* covered much of the same spiritual territory—the non-rational or intuitional knowledge of the Absolute).¹³ Vivekananda insisted that *karma yoga* was the best path for the present and even *sannyāsis* should forsake other paths and work for the awakening of all.

Liberalism. Liberal religion in the nineteenth century was founded on beliefs in universal reason, in progress, and in the potential of the masses—democracy or socialism. Justice, liberty, and equality were liberal religion's principles. These taught that the lack of food and clothing was unjust and a social rather than a personal ill. Therefore, liberal religion sought social reform through legal redress and educational uplift for the underprivileged and downtrodden. These ideas came to Vivekananda as part of his education in Scottish Church College in Calcutta and through his involvement as a member of the Brahma Samaj (1878-85). These ideas were not primary concerns of Sri Ramakrishna—not in these ways. When Svami Vivekananda acted as a liberal, he called for the end of puranic superstitions and for a reform of the religion of "don't touchism" (a reference to untouchability and defilement by touch) and the religion of the kitchen (a reference to the restrictions on intercaste dining). At times he even predicted an end to the caste system itself because the principle of *sanātana dharma*, and consequently purified Hinduism, was oneness—even of caste. In the *satya yuga*, which was coming into being through the preaching of "fiery mantras" to the masses, all would become *brāhmins*. Svami Vivekananda was especially critical of priestcraft.

He predicted it would lose its business. He was hurt deeply when his *gurubhāis* resembled puranic priests instead of *advaita sannyāsis*. He attacked their devotions on many occasions before he finally lapsed into silence:

You think you understand Sri Ramakrishna better than myself? You think Jnana is dry knowledge to be attained by a desert path, killing out the tenderest faculties of the heart. Your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense which makes one impotent. You want to preach Ramakrishna as you have understood him which is mighty little. Hands off! Who cares for your Ramakrishna? Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? Who cares what the scriptures say? I will go to hell cheerfully a thousand times, if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in Tamas, and make them stand on their own feet and be Men, inspired with the spirit of Karma-Yoga. I am not a follower of Ramakrishna or any one, I am a follower of him only who carries out my plans! I am not a servant of Ramakrishna or any one, but of him only who serves and helps others, with caring for his own Mukti.¹⁴

Vivekananda demanded that his *gurubhāis* be "in-the-world" ascetics. He demanded that these *sannyāsis* who had renounced the world to gain *mukti* must become servants of the poor and underprivileged. He called it karma yoga, but as professor A.L. Basham has observed, this respect for physical work is a purely Western idea.¹⁵ Vivekananda's genius was to establish the connection between the *Bhagavadgītā's* call to action with India's modern awakening, ignoring its demand that all action be given to Kṛṣṇa as *pūjā*. This awakening linked social reform in India to liberal, progressive education of the masses. In the nineteenth century liberal religionists believed that this was the formula for world reform. It would end in a brotherhood of mankind and a commonwealth of nations.

Humanitarianism. Svami Vivekananda's liberal principles for social reform were supported by humanitarian commitments. His "Practical Vedanta" taught karma yoga as service to all creatures (*seva dharma*). He formulated "the Plan" for dedicated *sannyāsis* to teach the masses industrial and agricultural technology, develop them intellectually, and then raise them to their true nature through the highest principles of Advaita Vedanta. He differed with Sri

Ramakrishna in that he believed that even householders could be taught the principles of unity with the Absolute, the relative reality of the universe (*māyāvada*), and renunciation while remaining in the world of duty and toil. He believed that even *sannyāsis* should give up their selfish goal of *mukti* and work to feed, educate, and lift the masses to their true greatness, in full knowledge of the Divine within.

Progressive. Nineteenth-century liberal religion linked social reform, humanitarianism, and progressive education. Education was the key to awakening the masses of the world from the darkness of ignorance. Progressive education was universal in principle and democratic in philosophy. Vivekananda believed that proper study would help the paralyzing ills of poverty and superstition. The basic content of these studies would be the Vedanta, to learn the principles of true spirituality, and Western science, to utilize the discoveries which would better material existence. First one must eat; then one can explore spirituality's heights.

Scientific. As just mentioned, Svami Vivekananda sought to bring the science of the West to India. He believed that Vedanta was the only scientific religion. Since its principles were grounded in the Absolute, there could be no incompatibility with science.¹⁶

Period Three. Svami Brahmananda and the Young Order (1902-22): Adolescence

When Svami Vivekananda returned to Calcutta after seven years' absence, he asserted his right to lead his former *gurubhāis*, who were then staying in their Math in Alambazar. Svami Vivekananda called a meeting on May 1, 1897, at a layman's home in Calcutta and founded the Ramakrishna Mission. Through funds from his Western disciples Vivekananda purchased property for Belur Math and brought the monks together there. He appointed their implicit spiritual leader, Svami Brahmananda, as head of the Math. The monks called Brahmananda "the son of Ramakrishna," because of his high devotional qualities, and *mahārāj*, because they recognized him as their spiritual leader. Brahmananda was later appointed head of the Ramakrishna Mission, six months before Vivekananda died (1902). The official histories of the Order note that Svami Vivekananda had lost interest in these organizations several years after founding them.¹⁷

Svami Brahmananda placed spirituality above humanitarian

service. He placed total control of the Mission under monks. He organized the monastic life and slowly incorporated Vivekananda's "plan" of action to feed, educate, and spiritualize the "poor and miserable" of India.

The nine descriptors of the Ramakrishna movement's pattern of ultimacy received a different emphasis during this period. The process of harmonizing may again be observed. The realization of Sri Ramakrishna and the teachings of Svami Vivekananda were joined as one.

Monism. Svami Brahmananda did not share Vivekananda's periodic rejections of *bhakti*. He made it a central part of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission's activities. Birthdays of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Sarada Devi were celebrated with *pūjā* along with the major Hindu festivals and the birth of Christ.¹⁸ He brought into the cultus a wide variety of orthodox Hindu ceremonies such as Rāma-, Rādha-, and Siva-*Saṅkīrtanas*.¹⁹

Vivekananda's ladder model with Advaita Vedanta at the top was established as the unquestioned interpretation of the stages of philosophical development. Realization of God at the highest level was the impersonal absolute (*brahman*), but in the world of manifestations worship of one's own favorite expression of God or of godly men was not only helpful but often necessary.

Monasticism. Svami Brahmananda established the process of a long tenure before initiation as a *sannyāsi*. Eight or more years of training were necessary before *sannyāsa* might be awarded.²⁰ Although the Order had few rules, the process of a long inspection period allowed the instrumental nature of the spiritual practices (*sādhana*s) to have their result. This extremely long period of spiritual infancy under the guidance of senior monks allowed the mature monk to be sent out in relative freedom, carrying the unwritten monastic rule within.

Brahmananda believed that the ratio of spiritual training to humanitarian service was three parts to one. He would teach: "The only purpose of life is to know God. Attain knowledge and devotion; then serve God in mankind. Work is not the end of life. Disinterested work is a means of attaining devotions. Keep at least three-fourths of your mind in God. It is enough if you give one-fourth to service."²¹

Universality and *tolerance* were easily harmonized and fixed in the pattern of ultimacy of the Ramakrishna Order. Any strident

tones of spiritual militancy were softened. Complaints by Vaisnavas and Theosophists about Svami Vivekananda's tendency to condemn their religious ideas and practices would cease. No longer would one hear: "We implore the Svami (Vivekananda) to spare us such sweeping denunciations and judgments on men and things, as usually adorn his lips in every meeting now."²²

The spiritual quest was divorced from politics. Brahmananda, and succeeding leaders of the Order, would remember Vivekananda's words: "No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses of India are well-educated, well-fed and well cared for." Even "the national ideals of India are religion and service,"²³ Vivekananda had counseled.

The ideals of a *non-sectarian* Hindu order were quickly harmonized. The four yogas began to be a guide for the completion of the monk's training. Karma yoga was subordinated for monks to fourth place. The internal struggles over *bhakti* were silenced with a clear vision of its rightful place as one of the four spiritual tendencies which each monk would develop. Leaders of the Order would never again doubt the Ramakrishna movement's use of *bhakti* or repeat Svami Vivekananda's fear: "What I am most afraid of is the worship room. It is not bad in itself but there is a tendency to make this all in all and set up that old-fashioned nonsense over again—that is what makes me nervous. I know why they busy themselves with these old, effete ceremonials. Their spirit craves for work, but having no outlet they waste their energy in ringing bells and all that."²⁴ More importantly, outsiders would cease to draw attention to differences between its two great leaders, as this Vaiṣṇava journal's obituary notice did in 1902: "Though a disciple of the Paramahansa, Vivekananda chalked out a path for himself. The Paramahansa was a bhakta, but Vivekananda preached yoga, and there is a wide divergence between the two cults. Vivekananda also preached the Avatarship of his Guru, the Paramahansa, and this led Svami Abhayananda (Madam Marie Louise), whom he had initiated and who is now in our midst delighting the Calcutta public by her sweet discourses on the religion of the Lord Gauranga to secede from him."²⁵

Humanitarianism. When Svami Vivekananda got ochre-robed monks to do relief work for the first time in 1900, the results could not be measured in physical terms. The Indian press found new heroes, servants of the suffering who were neither Christian

missionaries nor foreigners. Despite whatever doubts the *gurubhāis* may have had about a *sannyāsi* laboring for social change, once they were recognized as archetypes of a new spirituality, or an ancient spirituality recovered, there was no turning back. By practicing this ideal, they had adopted it.²⁶

Progressive. The dedication of the Order to progressive education was firmly established in this period. As the monks prepared themselves to teach and preach the *sanātana dharma*, studies of the glory of Hindu spirituality emerged. Translations and commentaries on the "most spiritual" scriptures of the Hindu tradition were made available in English and the regional languages of India. These translations often required a more formal study of Sanskrit, English, and at least one regional language other than their own. Mass education meant the founding of schools and colleges and the beginning of journal and magazine publications. The *Brahmavadin* had been started even before the *gurubhāis* of Ramakrishna had begun to work on Vivekananda's "Plan"—and that by lay Madras disciples in 1895.²⁷

The descriptor of *scientific* was harmonized into the pattern of ultimacy of the Order. By working with this ideal in the speeches of Svami Vivekananda, editors were taught the place of science alongside the *sanātana dharma*. Monks no longer had to have direct exposure to Western educational institutions; they had Vivekananda's canonical statements.

Period Four. A General Convention (1926): Young Adulthood

During the third presidency, that of Svami Sivananda, there occurred an event that would suggest that the Ramakrishna movement had reached a new period in its development. This was the first General Convention in 1926.²⁸ Svami Saradananda, in giving the Chairman's Address of Welcome, pointed out that the movement had passed through "two stages of opposition and indifference" and had now entered a stage of acceptance.²⁹ Warning that this might bring "a relaxation of spirits and energy," he called upon the Order to "keep close to their purity and singleness of purpose, their sacrifice and self-surrender."³⁰

Svami Sivananda told the Convention: "What we after all know is that Sri Ramakrishna was the mainspring of all that the Svamiji (Vivekananda) spoke and did. It was the Master's message that Svamiji carried from door to door, elucidating it to all in the

light of what leading he had from the Master himself."³¹ From the point of view of the Order there could be no doubt about the harmony between the teaching of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

The Order's monism was so well established that no time was wasted defending its relation to worship. Their collective mind seemed to move between the levels of the real and relative reality when shifting from oneness with *brahman* to *pūjā* before images of *Kālī* or Ramakrishna. These aids meant nothing on the higher level (Vivekananda's model of the ladder); but the warmth of *bhakti* was as legitimate as any other form of worship (Ramakrishna's model of the spoked wheel with all leading to God-realization equally).

This period in the life of the movement had three major emphases: a repetition of the central principles, a justification of its stand against political involvement, and an administrative concern about the significant growth of humanitarian and educational operations.

Svami Saradananda's summary of the realizations of Sri Ramakrishna at the convention indicates that the descriptors of *monism*, *universality*, *tolerance*, and *non-sectarianism* had been routinized. They would be expressed more or less elegantly throughout the succeeding decades, but their meaning was set. One should note in Saradananda's summary that spiritual practices were again producing the *siddhi* of "religion transmitted by touch." This seven-fold summary emphasized the spiritual rather than the humanitarian aspects of the movement,³² even as they became increasingly involved in the latter:

- (1) Every sincere devotee of any religion whatsoever will have to pass through the three stages of dualism, qualified monism and ultimately monism.
- (2) As all jackals howl in the same pitch, so all devotees of any religion whatsoever have declared in the past and will continue to do so in future, their oneness with the Deity on realising the heights of monism.
- (3) That there need not be any quarrel between dualism, qualified monism and monism, for each comes in turn to every devotee in accordance with the growth and development of his spiritual life.
- (4) The positive part of every religion, in which are found the way and the method of procedure through that, as well as

the goal which its sincere follower would reach in the end—is true. But the negative, which speaks of punishment and damnation, eternal or otherwise, for the straggler, is not so, being added to the former for keeping the members of the community from deserting and straying to other folds.

- (5) That religion can be transmitted to others by will and touch by the great teachers.
- (6) In the Sanatana Dharma of the Vedanta are to be found the eternal principles and laws that govern every single manifestation of religion in a particular time, place and environment.
- (7) Stick to your own religion, and think that the followers of other religions are coming to the same goal through different paths.

—Svami Saradananda (1926)³³

Ramakrishna's concern for humanitarian service was portrayed to the convention by Svami Sivananda in a retelling of Sri Ramakrishna's denial of Narendra's request to be initiated. The lack of the Master's initiation was to be interpreted as having a spiritual end. (A more novel interpretation within the Order is the notion of a valid initiation "by touch").

The Admonition of his Master to forego the selfish enjoyment of Samadhi and dedicate his life to the welfare of the many, seeing Him alone immanent in the Universe, haunted him day and night ever since that memorable day when Sri Ramakrishna in a mood of inward absorption handed over to his illustrious disciple the precious fruits of his own realisations reaped in the course of the crowded period of his Sadhana and made him the happy conduit for the flow of the elixir of spirituality that the world needed at a great psychological period of its history.

—Svami Sivananda (1926)³⁴

The inner tension between spiritual liberation (*mukti*) and social service (*seva*) was resolved organizationally rather than philosophically. Svami Sivananda stated that "Any attempt to make a cleavage between the existing Math and Mission works is distinctly against the ideal of Svamiji and therefore stands self-condemned."³⁵ It was further "unholy and dangerous."³⁶ "This Math represents the physical body of Sri Ramakrishna. He is always present in this institution. The injunction of the whole Math is the injunction of Sri

Ramakrishna. One who worships it, worships him as well. And one who disregards it, disregards our Lord."³⁷

Institutionalization had occurred, though in a youthful form. The institution could now speak as a body. *Sannyāsis*, free and renunciate to the world, now worked and spoke as a body. They were now svamis—bound by the will of an Order.

The movement would reaffirm its non-involvement in politics. Even when asked by the Gandhi movement for support, the Ramakrishna Mission and Math stayed out of the political struggle against the British. National leaders seemed to understand, however aloof the Ramakrishna movement remained, that this movement was functioning as "the soul of the nation."³⁸ The movement might resist politicization, but many of Svami Vivekananda's one million recorded words awakened more than quiet spirituality.

The third concern of humanitarianism and progress was celebrated at the convention with calls for renewed effort, without losing sight of spiritual goals. The Order's relief and educational work set it apart as the exemplar of spirituality in an awakening India.

Period Five. Indian Independence and the Order: Mature Adulthood

When Independence was won in 1947, even though the Order had not taken an active role politically, it had become the archetype of spiritual service. Praised even by Prime Minister Nehru, who otherwise characterized all *sādhus* as parasites, the movement responded to nation-building with differing emphases in its thoroughly routinized pattern of ultimacy. Svami Tejasananda pointed to four ideals of the Ramakrishna movement in this report from 1954; they were:

- (1) to conduct the activities of the movement for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms of one Eternal Religion;
- (2) to train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as were conducive to the material or spiritual welfare of the masses;
- (3) to promote and encourage arts and industries; and
- (4) to introduce and spread among the people in general Vedantic and other religious ideals in the light of the life and teaching of Sri Ramakrishna.³⁹

The descriptors are implicitly there. They seem to have become

so commonplace that the spiritual elements need not be stressed, while humanitarian concerns head the list. Within the same report Tejasananda recited an impressive listing of ten concerns which were being engaged in by the Ramakrishna movement: "Liquidation of illiteracy, rural reconstruction, work among laboring and backward classes, economic and social uplift, removal of untouchability, female education, relief works in times of natural calamities, preservation of indigenous culture, dissemination of the accumulated spiritual wisdom of the race, and evolution of a cultural synthesis."⁴⁰ The movement had grown from the five Maths and centers in the lifetime of Svami Vivekananda to 84 Maths and Missions in India alone.⁴¹

Its educational work in the year 1949-1950 comprised two full degree colleges, 17 high schools, 121 lower grade and other schools, and 50 student houses, with a total enrollment of 27,000 students. Its work for women involved 3,000 students. Its medical work included 10 general hospitals, one maternity hospital, 65 dispensaries, and reached 13,000 "indoor patients" and two million "outdoor patients."⁴²

While never more than seven hundred monks and a few nuns served in the Order, their prodigious literary production increased with more translations, monographs, and series, lectures, cultural activities, and regular classes. These activities were manifestations of the vitality of the spiritual quest of the Order.

Professor Gerald Cooke, in a study sponsored by the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society in Bangalore, reported on the everyday activities of a Ramakrishna Math in south India in the mid-sixties. Since his study focused on historical and sociological questions, it is even more impressive that he had such high words of praise for the movement: "It is not difficult to acknowledge the blessings which the Ramakrishna Math and Mission brings to India. Indeed it would be humanly and religiously insensitive not to rejoice in the constructive efforts and results of this movement."⁴³

Yet Cooke noticed that the ideals of universalism and non-sectarianism were working out somewhat differently in history than the ideal. "For all its stress on a universal, super-sectarian outlook, the Ramakrishna—Vivekananda movement is rooted in Hindu traditions and in actuality serves primarily Hindus."⁴⁴ He noted that monasticism was not a role of highest prestige "even of young

people who maintain constant contact with the Ramakrishna movement."⁴⁵ This observation is reinforced by the fieldwork of Professor David Miller in Bhubaneswar during 1964.⁴⁶ Miller noted another sectarian feature: "In 1964, the trend seemed to be toward making the deity's presence more immediate to the laity through the worship of gurus."⁴⁷ John Yale and Christopher Isherwood both speak of the cult of Sri Ramakrishna and its increasing importance during this period.

Period Six. The Call for a Second General Convention: Old Age

By the end of the 1970s, with a sensitivity rare for organizational leaders, Svami Gambhirananda, president of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, had begun to talk about calling a second General Convention of the movement. On the one hand, statisticians would be comparing the reports on the activities of the movement in the seventies with any very successful business: increased centers, libraries, hospitals, patients, colleges, schools, students, and all other indices of growth, save one. The number of svamis remained about seven hundred. On the other hand, there were definite signs that a new stage in the life of the movement had been entered.

The last of the disciples trained by the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna are reaching their eighties. A totally different generation of leaders will soon take over the movement. Yet to an outsider their spirituality is remarkable in its own right. But the sure signs of old age are admitted when the body cannot cope with all its demands. The very success of the movement in physical terms (maths, centers, publishing houses, journals, schools, colleges, hospitals, and dispensaries) has overtaxed the Order. It has begun to show signs of not coping fully with life's demands. This pattern of ultimacy does not vary significantly in the articulation (the ideal level) from the previous period. Yet old age almost invariably demands a comparison of the ideals one has lived by with actual achievement. There have been questionings in the author's presence by leading svamis of the movement. The thesis of this study is that the Ramakrishna movement has now entered old age because of the dynamics of its own pattern of ultimacy. It shows signs of not coping with the demands of its own ideals.

This is a historical point of view. The historical actuality does not address the idealist vision. As Cooke observed in his study of the movement, "It is characteristic of Hindu thought and belief to

regard historical actuality as less decisive for human life than inner private experience."⁴⁸ That ideals will both influence and be influenced by historical contingencies is an unstated assumption in Western thought—an assumption capable of being examined and falsified. Yet, following Cooke's argument, "This devaluation of the objective stuff of history may encourage the view that ideas and exhortations and right inner convictions...are enough to constitute the ideal."⁴⁹ The *advaita* view that the realized ideal is real and the *viśiṣṭadvaita* and *dvaita* demand that truth manifest itself in the world reasserts itself. Despite its ways of harmonizing this problem, the movement slights history and reform or revolution.

The Ramakrishna movement is being attacked in Bengal by Communists who actually share the last three ideals of the movement (e.g. reform of society, a belief in progress, and a belief in science). There are increasing incidents of students and lay faculty attacking the curriculum of the movement's schools as superstitious. They find the offerings too narrow to facilitate progress. They find the movement's commitment to reform of the caste system hypocritical.⁵⁰ When the Bengali government began "modernizing" the movement's schools, a lawsuit regained control by arguing that the Ramakrishna Mission was literally a minority religion and subject to the constitutional rights of Article 25(1).⁵¹ Sadly, in order to retain its schools, the movement no longer claimed to be universal and non-sectarian.

Another line of attack has come from India's new rationalists, who are going back to the very foundations of the descriptors to which the Ramakrishna movement has been able to claim sole ownership for the last eighty of its hundred-year history.⁵² The rationalists show other ways of actualizing many of the same ideals. For instance, the liberal commitment to social reform is not hampered by an idealist commitment to the caste system. The new rationalists are joining the Indian communists in demanding action to alleviate inequality. Sanskrit scholars have argued other ideals within Indian scriptures than monasticism. And it is not unusual to hear Indian scientists charging that the Ramakrishna movement is anti-scientific in that the method (falsifiability) and scope (every facet of life being examined critically) have not been utilized in Ramakrishna Vedanta.

What does this have to do with the way the Ramakrishna movement currently emphasizes the various descriptors of its vision

of ultimacy? At the beginning of the 1980s in India there is pronounced unrest. Whereas it could once be assumed that the Ramakrishna movement articulated the spiritual aspirations of the Indian renaissance (and that was the positive conclusion of Bharati's essay),⁵³ these very ideals are calling the movement into question. Of the nine descriptors of the movement only the ideal of monasticism is rejected by some as irrelevant for modern India. The other eight have survived into the 1980s but function now to judge the Ramakrishna movement's commitment to actualizing them in history.

In December 1978, the author conducted twenty-five interviews with svamis of the Ramakrishna Order in India. Among the svamis were Gambhirananda, Lokeswarananda, and Ananyananda. The conclusions of these interviews regarding the movement's pattern of ultimate concern are (1) that the radical commitment to social reform inherited from the Brahmo Samaj and Svami Vivekananda has been lost, (2) that Vivekananda's criticisms about puranic superstitions and ignorant priestcraft are thought by the members of the movement to apply in no way to the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, (3) that Vivekananda's call to lead worshippers from lower *bhakti* characterized by fear and greed does not apply to any of the worship in the movement's institutions, (4) that reform and spiritual growth are extremely slow processes requiring many lifetimes and the movement should be judged by the progress made by the few who are totally engaged in those endeavors, (5) that eternal principles realized by Sri Ramakrishna and Svami Vivekananda can only reach a small portion of the world's population through Ramakrishna educational institutions and publications, and (6) that monasticism is necessary for God-realization.

Period Seven. Particularistic Hinduism (Ramakrishnaism): A Hindu Religion

When governmental interference from Calcutta and the state of Bengal (both then controlled by the Indian Communist Party) became intolerable, the Ramakrishna Mission sought the protection of minority status in 1985. Swami Bhashyananda stated: "The Ramakrishna Mission made no claim that we are non-Hindu. . . . Our lawyers advised the court that we are Hindus, but special Hindus."⁵⁴

The Indian Constitution (1947 and thereafter) created a political

entity, the majority religion. This legal fiction had a number of advantages—both ideal and real. It satisfied both secular and religious interests. The majority religion was identified by Hindus as the Hindu religions of India, from the religion of the Vedas to the thousands of current Hindu religious groups. To the reformers, secular and religious, this legal creation provided a normless entity which could be transformed (re-formed) by law. The Indian Constitution did not attempt to make India a Hindu state but created instead a special category of “the majority religion,” which everyone assumed to be “Hinduism.” “Minority religion” also became a category of the constitution. There are numerous sections of the Constitution of India which recognize rights of and demarcate governmental controls over these two constitutional entities [Arts. 15(1), 15(2), 16(2), 16(5), 23(2), 25-28, 29(2)]. The constitution does not define either “Hinduism” or “the majority religion.” The constitution creates a state which is entrusted with jurisdiction over the majority religion.

There were also disadvantages for particular Hindu groups—on the idea and on the real levels of conceptualization and in their historical contingencies—that were never anticipated. One of these included interference by Indian governmental entities acting contrary to that Hindu group's interests and aspirations. That was of course unthinkable in 1947 as the Indian Constitution was being written (at least for reformist Hindus), but it became a reality in the 1980s—first in Calcutta, then in Bengal, and later in Kerala.

It began for the Ramakrishna Mission and Order in a dispute in one of their colleges. Prof. Madhad Bandopadhyaya of the Vivekananda Centenary College brought a lawsuit against the Order. At issue administratively for the Order was the privilege to run its schools according to the desires of the Order rather than by the vote of the various faculties of its schools. The Indian Constitution, state constitutions, law, and various departments governing education established that educational institutions of the majority religion (presumed “Hindu”) would be subject to the rules of majority (presumed “Hindu”) reform. Minority religious educational institutions could be administered by their own rules, democratic or otherwise. Since the faculty wanted an academic and not a monk as its president and even seemed to want to hire Communists as faculty the Order filed suit to retain control.

The text of the Order's responding affidavit in 1980 would

seem to affirm Ramakrishna's notion that all religions are essentially equal but seek to be a minority religion that is at the same time the embodiment of the Religion Eternal. “Minority religion” had been substituted for “a purified Hindu religion.”

6. Shri Ramakrishna's cult or religion throws a new light on the concept of religion, and gives a new meaning and interpretation to all religions of mankind, thereby enriching them with a new value. This new religion is unique by itself, and comprehends within itself each of all the other religions, and yet is not identical with any one of them.

7. The most important features of this new cult or religion practised and preached by Shri Ramakrishna, which clearly distinguish (sic.) it from all the other cults or religions, including traditional Hinduism, are as follows:-

(i) The religion of Shri Ramakrishna looks upon Shri Ramakrishna as an illustration and embodiment of the Religion Eternal which constitutes the core of all religious ideals, and permits his worship through his image (like portraits, photos, statues, etc.), relics or otherwise, with or without any ritual or ceremony.

(ii) It not only tolerates all religions (sic.), but also accepts them all to be true, and it considers all religions to be only different paths leading to the same goal, whereas other religions claim absolute authority in all matters to the exclusion of all others.

(iii) It believes that the underlying truth in all religions is the same Eternal Truth which is the essence of the scriptures of all religions.

(iv) It preaches the harmony of all religions.

(v) It prohibits condemnation of any religion.

(vi) It enjoins no particular ritual or ceremony whatsoever as compulsory.

(vii) It enforces no restriction regarding food as in many other religions.

(viii) It recognises no privilege whatsoever due to caste, colour, creed, language, or nationality.

(ix) It recommends selfless services (sic.) to man in a spirit of worship, looking upon him as the veritable manifestation of God, as a sure means to attain one's spiritual goal.

(x) It does not require any person belonging to any other faith to abjure the same, on initiation into or acceptance of this unique religion of Shri Ramakrishna as is so demanded by other religions.

(xi) It does not impose or require any specific ceremony by way of conversion or purification or otherwise, for initiation into this new religion, unlike other religions.

(xii) It allows its followers to participate freely in the religious ceremonies of all other religions.⁵⁵

The Ramakrishna Mission's lawyers argued that "Ramakrishnaism" was a new and minority religion, different from traditional Hinduism, but still Hindu. When the case reached the Supreme Court, India's judges decided in 1985 that

39. The fact that Sri Ramakrishna never expressly abjured Hindu religion and his disciples had sometimes described them (sic.) as Hindu monks would not be decisive . . .

41. . . . But it was Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples who gave concrete shape to the concept of Religion Universal covering not only different schools of Hindu faith but also other religions of the world.

47. Compared to the members of Arya Samaj the claim of the Ramakrishnaites (sic.) as religious minorities, in our view, stands on stronger footing. Ramakrishnaites, who are admittedly much less than fifty percent of the total population of the State, do not consider themselves as a reformed sect of Hindus and they profess and practice World Religion. They do not follow Hindu moral code or accept caste system. even non-Hindus could be followers of the faith . . . Hindu way of life requires obedience to and observance of Hindu code of life. Ramakrishnaism does not prescribe such code of life laid down by Hindu Religion . . .

48. The followers of Sri ramakrishna have a common faith. They have common organisation and they are designated by a distinct name. Therefore, they constitute a denomination or sect within the meaning of Article 26 of the Constitution of India . . . As a religious denomination ramakrishna Mission enjoys a right under Article 26(a) to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes. The Mission under Article 26(b) has also right to manage its own affairs in matters of religion.⁵⁶

On October 7, 1985, Judge Bandopadhyaya of West Bengal ruled that the "Ramakrishna Mission is a religious minority" and "the cult of Sri Ramakrishna [is] a new religion different from Hindu religion." Bandopadhyaya ruled that the Mission had protection under Article 30(1) of the Constitution, which meant that its own religious principles and standards would be the basis for contract disputes, as in a civil suit with its teachers, and that it would be shielded from most governmental interference.

Hinduism Today editorialized in March 1987 that "the formal declaration of Ramakrishnaism as a new religion is not surprising. The Mission has always been universalist, priding itself in multi-religious membership and resisting any attempt to be pigeon-holed."

(p.3) The paper went on to admit, a bit begrudgingly, that, "Practically speaking, the Mission's action points out a serious inequity in India—that minority institutions (Christian, Muslim, etc.) are free to operate as they wish, while institutions run by Hindus, (because they are the majority) must follow a different set of rules. Some analysts project that if the ruling is not overturned, other Hindu sects may take the same route. Ultimately, as stated Mr. J.N. Singhi of Calcutta, "If Government does not stop interference, a day may come when social organizations will not build schools and colleges." (*ibid.*)

Throughout the dispute Swamis and representatives maintained that the Ramakrishna Mission was still Hindu. Having minority status had nothing to do at all with being Hindu or not. Mysore, was exempted from certain state school requirements regarding appointment of staff and the admission of students.

To get these affirmative rulings the Ramakrishna Mission argued in the Bengal case that "The religion of Sri Ramakrishna is the religion separate and different from that of the Hindus . . . Ramakrishnaism has its separate God, separate name, separate church, separate worship, separate community, separate organization and above all, a separate philosophy . . . An attempt to equate the religion of Ramakrishna with the Hindu religion as professed and practiced will be to defeat the very object of Ramakrishnaism and to deny his gospel." (*Hinduism Today*, July 1989, p.20)

The Ramakrishna Order and Mission won. But it did not win its views that it could manage its educational institutions without state interference under Article 26(a), the majority religion clause. It had to win this freedom under Article 26(b) which places minority religious reform in the hands of the minorities themselves—and not a concern of the state. The Ramakrishna Order and Mission had abandoned the majority religion and the locus of reform of majority religion to protect its own interests. It won this right for itself—and other religious sects or denominations in India. A religious group simply needed to prove itself a sect or minority religion.

By clarifying itself as a minority of 1400 monks and 100,000 lay followers, the Ramakrishna Order and Mission accepted an identity of something more than a numerical minority. It abandoned the role thrust upon the Order from its beginning in 1897, that of being the living example of purified Hinduism. If affirmed

that it was both a minority sect but still Hindu; its ontological claim for nearly a century had changed fundamentally.

Inferentially, the Ramakrishna Order and Mission had been forced to say that it was new. It was a reform religion. It affirmed Ramakrishna's circle of equality of all religions, but not unambiguously for radical transcendence, since Ramakrishna was still affirmed as the embodiment of the Religion Eternal. All religions were equal and true; none was superior. Ramakrishnaism was a minority sect.

Again inferentially, the Ramakrishna Order has been forced by the lawsuit to understand its own finitude. Legally, it was Ramakrishnaism. It was legally a particular religion. Perhaps that does not change the fundamental teaching of the Order: that it is both purified Hinduism and the living example on earth of the *sanātana dharma*, the Religion Eternal. That claim can still be made, even though "majority" Hindus have more justification in taking it as sectarian.

The few Swamis who would talk "off-the-record" about this crisis claimed that what the lawyers said in court does not represent the ideal nor has the ideal of the Mission been changed. There may be more truth to this position than meets the eye. Hinduism has always worked well philosophically with two-level ontologies—appearance and Reality, *māyā* and *Brahman*, *ajñāna* and *jñāna*, infinitum. But the Ramakrishna Mission's historical claims were nevertheless compromised—that the gospel of Ramakrishna embodies *Sanātana Dharma* in its universal form and as an institution it is a purified Hinduism which is not a sect nor sectarian.

Period Eight. The Ramakrishna Movement and the Future: Death or Rebirth?

The sixth stage of life can be extended for some time into and possibly beyond the 1980s. What can be said about the Ramakrishna movement's future? The extraordinary caliber of monks and nuns who have been attracted to and trained by the Ramakrishna Math will no longer meet the needs of the movement. The administration of the publishing, medical, relief, and educational operations will begin to buckle under the strain of its dependence on monastics as top decision-makers. Much as Roman Catholicism has already begun to experience, the Ramakrishna Mission will face an ever decreasing supply of monastic leadership.

But whereas the former has a large cadre of lay workers to rely on, the Ramakrishna Mission does not. Early on, it concluded that its laymen were not sufficiently interested in its mission nor sufficiently spiritual to be given real leadership. There are no age statistics available to document what must be stated as a general observation: the Order is aging faster than it is currently filling its ranks. How will the Order respond to the deaths which will strike drastically at its ascetics who are now over sixty? Without dramatic rejuvenation the Order will enter a marked decline in the number of svamis available to run its operations. It will face a dilemma: either allow lay volunteers or hired workers governance of many activities, or cease their operation. The latter alternative would mark a certain decline, while the former may not preserve the Order's hallmark: the incorruptibility of its spiritual leaders.

But its greatest crisis appears to be similar to that of the Brahma Samaj when merely speaking great ideals was not enough. The movement has served the poor and given relief to many millions in times of acute need, but now other movements who stress immediate action and the urgency of changing the social system are addressing reform and revolution in India. For the Ramakrishna movement to be reborn, it will need to re-experience and re-vision these nine descriptors in less narrow and less parochial terms.

Notes

1. The Ramakrishna movement designates this religious movement in its entirety. Its monastic order is known as the Ramakrishna Math, while its humanitarian concerns are administered by the Ramakrishna Mission.
2. Of the hundreds of works concerned with the Ramakrishna movement and its leaders, only a few deserve special mention. Until recently only one history has emerged, Svami Gambhirananda's *History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1957), which often lacks objectivity. Many svamis have studied the lives and teachings of Ramakrishna and his direct disciples. The bibliographies in Christopher Isherwood's or John Yale's books provide an adequate listing of these in-house works. Although her study centers on the work of Svami Vivekananda in America, Marie Louise Burke's contributions are noteworthy: *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1958), and *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the*

West: *New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978), Harold W. French's *The Swan's Wide Waters* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1974) deals with the Ramakrishna movement in the West. Svami Nirvedananda's essay, "Sri Ramakrishna and Spiritual Renaissance," appears in the four-volume *The Cultural Heritage of India*, ed. Haridas Bhattacharyya, rev. ed. (Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956). Minor assessments of its own work have been published in its journals, *Prabuddha Bharata*, and *Vedanta Kesari*.

The work of Jeffrey Kripal is a historic breakthrough, a masterpiece of research. It presents a non-mythologized figure, struggling to overcome a dark secret. This Ramakrishna is believable and admirable in what he has endured and how he struggled to transform himself from a victim to a liberated person. This work demonstrates how a saint might come to be so perceived. Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Kālī's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna Paramhansa* (University of Chicago doctoral dissertation, 1993), 509 pp; "Revealing and Concealing the Secret: A Textual History of Mahendranath Gupta's *Srisriramakrishnakathamrta*," in Clinton B. Seely (ed.), *Calcutta, Bangladesh, and Bengal Studies*, South Asia Occasional Papers, no. 40 (Lansing: Michigan State University, 1991); "Ramakrishna's Foot: Mystical Homoeroticism in the *Kathāmṛta*," in Michael L. Stenmeler and José Cabezon (eds.), *Religion, Homosexuality and Literature* (Las Colinas: Monument Press, 1992), pp. 31-74.

Narasingha P. Sil's essay is also noteworthy and foundational: "Vivekananda's Ramakrishna: An Untold Story of Mythmaking and Propaganda." *Numen* (1993). pp. 38ff.)

3. Nalini Devdas, *Svāmi Vivekānanda* (Bangalore, India: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1968), p. 6.
4. Cf. George M. Williams, "Svami Vivekananda: Archetypal Hero or Doubting Saint?" in this volume, and *The Quest for Meaning of Svāmi Vivekānanda* (Chico, CA: New Horizons Press, 1974), pp. 22-37.
5. At first he was content to wander with Svami Akhandananda, but then he even needed total solitude. By late 1890 he had severed all connections with his brother monks (cf. Williams, *Svāmi Vivekānanda*, pp. 54f). Before he left for America several accidental meetings occurred and each time he restated his separation from them. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples, 4th ed. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), pp. 191, 205, 282 (hereafter LVK).
6. For the struggle prior to his return read his letters in Svami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 6th ed. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964) (hereafter CW), 6: 250, 6: 263,

5: 33, 5: 42, 6: 278, 6: 287, 6: 289, 7: 475, 7: 480, 7: 483, 6: 296, 6: 304, 6:310, 6: 314, 6: 321, 6:326, 6: 350, 6: 362, 6: 369, 7: 488, 5:111, 6:503; LVK, 504-9; French, *The Swan's Wide Waters*, pp. 81ff.

7. The documentation is so extensive in the chapter on Svami Vivekananda in this volume that one is referred there for citations of his usage of the descriptors in CW.
8. Devdas, *Svāmi Vivekānanda*, p. 32.
9. There are a number of histories of the World's Parliament of Religions: Walter R. Houghton, ed., *Neely's History of the Parliament of Religions and Religious Congresses at the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: F.T. Neely, 1893); John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Parliament Publishing Co., 1893); J.W. Hanson, ed., *The World's Congress of Religions* (Chicago: International Publishing Co., 1894). Marie Louise Burke in *Swāmi Vivekānanda in America: New Discoveries*, 2nd re. ed. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1966) details some of the times he identified himself as a "Brahmin monk" and defends it as being "due to expediency" and thus "a careless but forgivable error" (p. 69). "Later, however, Swamiji's enemies made capital out of these casual and typically American errors, imputing to him a deliberate misrepresentation of his status" (p. 70).
10. LVK, p. 504.
11. CW, 7: 98.
12. CW, 5:12, 292, 455; 8:152.
13. *Raja-Yoga* (CW, 1: 119ff.) taught methods of "psychic control" for "the liberation of the soul through perfection" (124, 122). Its textual basis was Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras*. This comprised his major exposition of the mystical path. In *Jnana-Yoga* (CW 2:55ff.) Vivekananda defined the way of philosophy (knowledge). Yet both of these paths utilized as the highest *pramāna* direct realization.
14. LVK, p. 507.
15. Agehananda Bharati, *Journal of Asian Studies*, (February 1970): 207.
16. One should note that Vivekananda's reconciliation of both science and humanitarian work required an epistemological shift from *advaita's* posture towards science which would assign it to *vivārta* while *viśiṣṭadvaita* would find science and knowledge about God compatible.
17. Swami Satprakashananda, *Swami Vivekananda's Contribution to the Present Age* (St. Louis: Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1978), p. 132; French, *The Swan's Wide Waters*, pp. 162, 211.
18. Satprakashananda, *Swami Vivekananda*, pp. 178ff.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.
20. This training period still exists today. Gerald B. Cooke in *A Neo-Hindu Ashrama in South India* (Bangalore: Christian Institute for

- the Study of Religion and Society, 1966) describes this in some detail (pp. 1-5).
21. Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (New York: Simons and Schuster, 1965), p. 328.
 22. Quoted from French, *The Swan's Wide Waters*, p. 94.
 23. *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, p. 457.
 24. Swami Vivekananda, *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960), p. 117.
 25. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, July 7, 1902, quoted in *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers, 1893-1902*, eds. Sankari Prasad Basu and Sumil Bihari Ghosh (Calcutta: Basu Bhattacharyya and Co., 1969), pp. 324-325.
 26. *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, Swami Lokeshwarananda's "Ramakrishna Order of Monks: New Orientation of Monasticism," pp. 439ff, and C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar's "New Type of Monasticism by Swami Vivekananda", pp. 453ff.
 27. Satprakashananda, *Swami Vivekananda*, p. 128.
 28. *The Ramakrishna Math and Mission Convention—1926* (Belur: The Math, 1926). Hereafter, *RMMC*.
 29. *Ibid.*, pp. 7f.
 30. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 31
 38. This metaphor refers to the work of Sidney Mead.
 39. Swami Tejasananda, *The Ramakrishna Movement: Its Ideal and Activities*, 2nd ed. (Belur: Belur Math, 1956), pp. 12-13.
 40. *Ibid.*
 41. *Ibid.*
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. Cooke, *A Neo-Hindu Ashrama in South India*, p. 42.
 44. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
 46. David M. Miller and Dorothy C. Wertz, *Hindu Monastic Life: The Monks and Monasteries of Bhubaneswar* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976).
 47. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
 48. Cooke, *A Neo-Hindu Ashrama in South India*, p. 52.
 49. *Ibid.*
 50. Interviews by author in India, December 1979 through February 1980.
 51. French, *The Swan's Wide Waters*, p. 155.

52. An example is Nirenjan Dhar's *Vedanta and Bengal Renaissance* (Calcutta: Minerva, 1977).
53. Bharati, *Journal of Asian Studies* (February 1970): 207.
54. As reported in "R.K. Mission Leaving Hinduism," *Hinduism Today* (March/April 1987). See also "Kerala's Ramakrishna Mission Granted 'Non-Hindu' Status," *Hinduism Today* (March/April 1987).
55. Affidavit filed by R.K. Mission, District: 24-Parganas, High Court at Calcutta, C.O. No. 12837 (W) of 1980.
56. Madhab Bandopadhyaya v. State of West Bengal (Oct. 1985).