



## HINDU PROTESTANTS:

### *A Comparative Analysis of Three Indian Reform Movements*

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## I

### INTRODUCTION:

THE term "reform movements" will be used to describe movements that sprang up in India prior to, or independent of the struggle for political liberation from Britain. There were many such movements, some of ephemeral duration and some of longer duration, but the focus of this paper will be on three rather influential ones: The Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Dravidian Movement. The former was founded by Rammohan Roy in Bengal and became a very influential movement in Northwestern India and provided the impetus for the founding of the Indian National Congress. The Arya Samaj, founded by Dayananda Saraswati was influential in the Punjab, and to some extent in Western India. The Dravidian Movement, consisting of three separate but connected organizations, the Justice Party, the Dravida Kalagam and the Dravida Munnetra Kalagam, had its base in Madras, in Southern India. In spite of the diverse origins of these three movements and in spite of the fact that the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj were interested in religious reformation, whereas the Dravidian Movement was essentially secular in its aims, it will be seen that they had a number of common elements. It is proposed then to examine these movements in a comparative light and see what these common elements were and discuss their significance.

The significance of these elements, it seems to us, is that all three were fundamentally responses to the colonial experience and these responses constituted an attempt to create a "rational" and secular India - rational in the sense in which Max Weber used the term in his many writings.

Gerth and Mills, Weberian scholars as well as his translators, assert categorically "the principle of rationalisation is the most general element in Weber's philosophy of history". This principle was supposed to have influenced the "rise and fall of institutional structures, the ups and downs of classes, parties and rulers that implement the general drift of secular rationalisation...The extent, and measure of 'rationalisation' is (thus) measured negatively in terms of the degree to which magical elements of thought are displaced or positively by the extent to which ideas gain in systematic coherence and naturalistic consistency." (1958 : 51) Weber tried to document this philosophy of social change by his monumental study of the religious, political and economic institutions of various cultural spheres in the history of the world. The application of this concept of rationalisation, though initially used to describe specific features of a culture like bureaucracy, eventually came to encompass a comprehensive array of phenomena. Herbert Luthy, though disposed to disagree profoundly with Weber on many aspects of his theses, gives us an admirably neat summary of the phenomena to which Weber's philosophy of history applies. Writing of the impact of this rationalisation process on Western society he observes :

"Not only its economical system, but also its juridical system, its political structure, its sciences and its institutionalised techniques, its music and its architecture impregnated with the mathematical spirit, its moral principles and its life styles, are all included. Economic calculation, work discipline, the depersonalisation of exchanges and social relationships are only the significant, the exterior signs which represent pars pro toto, the totality of this type of civilization. Weber's key word is 'rationality' : a rationality which pervades all spheres of social behaviour, the organization of work and the enterprise, as well as positive sciences, law, philosophy and art, the state and politics as well as the behaviour of the private individual. A rationality which was impelled forward by its own dynamism was able to shatter or overcome all the forms of resistance offered by the prerational elements of human nature: magic and tradition, instinct, and spontaneity". (1970 : 18—19) .

If it was such a comprehensive process, and came to full fruition with the Protestant Reformation in Europe—which according to Luthy "made a clean sweep of all the irrationalities, obscure magic, symbolic or mystical ingredients, superstitions, holy images, rites and traditions"—it was by no means a process that was completely novel or confined entirely to Europe. In discussing Hindu civilization, Weber also finds that latter day Hinduism was in many respects more "rational" than earlier forms and seems to detect that rationalisation as a process was occurring in India as well though the radical transformation represented by Protestantism and Capitalism and not to be India's lot. In the progressive decline of orgiastic practices, and in the rise of orthodox Brahminism Weber saw

consolidation of this process in so far as they represented a fundamental departure from animistic, magical and ecstatic forms. (Weber, 1958 : 137—162)

However, the question we want to raise in this study is the manner and style in which this process continued in the socio-religious sphere in the wake of the British conquest of India. This conquest, initially beginning in Eastern India—Bengal, finally worked itself to include the Southern region of India—Madras, the Western, and Northern regions as well. Though various segments of the interior also came under British suzerainty, these regions were the ones that came under the greatest cultural influence of the British. British administrative, educational and religious influence was keenly felt in these regions—an influence that was militant in its assertions of British supremacy and zealous and aggressive in its claims for Christianity as the one and only religion. The religious as well as the socio-political classes who were dispossessed by the arrival of the British were indeed waiting to be organized into some kind of response to the militancy of the foreigners.

Due to many reasons, this response came in the form of religious movements—the most important reason undoubtedly being that it was one area that the British political authorities were not likely to look upon with distrust. As such, it could take place without any need to be surreptitious and at the same time resist the attempt by the British—inspired missionaries to convert the Indians en masse into a populace of good Christians and loyal subjects. Scott, 1953 : 18) However that may be, religious movements of a pronouncedly reformist character and bearing the obvious influence of Christian and Western thought and constituting in many ways responsive correctives to the ridicule and criticism made of the local religion by the Christian missionaries, arose among the Hindus of Bengal and Punjab and Bombay, while a more or less secular movement—though with certain resemblances to the other two—arose in Madras. It is this response by the Hindus that we have called Protestantism, albeit Hindu Protestantism, because like the European form, they were essentially rationalising movements culminated to enhance and consolidate various tendencies that were set afoot by the British once they conquered India. Hence they could well be called Hindu Protestants; it does not refer to a body of theological doctrine however, but to a whole complex of phenomena that Max Weber included in the term in his work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Protestantism—in all its manifestations in Europe, then, was the embodiment of the spirit of rationality and the Hindu reformers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries represented then a kind of Hindu Protestantism.

It is proposed to give a brief sketch of the historical setting of these movements, their programmes, doctrines and organizational and leadership strategies separately and then provide an analysis of the way in which the elements common to the movements can be considered a departure from traditional Hinduism and represented radical moves towards rationality.

## II

## THE BRAHMO SAMAJ:

The Brahma Samaj emerged in the 1820's during a period of intense antagonism between the Hindus and Christian missionaries. Rammohan Roy was one of the founders of this movement. He was born to an orthodox Brahmin family and developed an early interest in Hindu thought, as well as in those of other religions. His study of the Hindu scriptures; particularly the Vedas, led him to conclude that Hinduism as practised by his compatriots was alien to the Vedas and that the latter day Hinduism was replete with many evil and corrupt practices. (Heimsath, 1964 : 11) The belief in a multiplicity of Gods and idolatry, he held, was alien to the religious doctrines of the ancient texts and advocated a return to a strict monotheism. These interests led him to seek the help of Christian missionaries (Pell, 1933 : 21), and initially established a kind of Hindu-Unitarian alliance which however did not prove a success. In 1828 Roy, along with some of his friends, started the Brahma Samaj.

This was a period of intense missionary activity and the Hindus were generally very defensive regarding their religion, social organization and educational system. Roy attempted to organize Hindu reaction to these trends without however surrounding either the self-respect or identity of the Hindus. The main objective of the Brahma Samaj was to "teach and to practise the worship of the one supreme, undivided, eternal God". It allowed entry to "all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction and rejected the offering of 'any sermon, preaching or discourse prayer or hymn...in worship' ". (Farquhar, 1967 : 35) In his attempt to counter the Christian offensive however he felt he had to develop a coherent intellectual stance on a number of issues and an examination of his thought reveals that he made a valiant attempt to come to grips with them. Mainly, it could be said now, that he attempted to synthesize the rational and ethical elements from all religions, particularly Christianity and Hinduism. Faced with the "superstitions" and the "immoral" practices of popular Hinduism on the one hand, and seeing distinctly how the basic tenets contained in the Hindu texts differed, he sought to find a plain man's solution. (Farquhar, : 36) He took the theistic elements common to all religions and declared them to be the original truths of Hinduism and the universal religion on which all men could unite. Prayer was abandoned in the Samaj of his day and a deistic conception of God was accepted. Another important element in Roy's teaching was the rejection of the notion of Karma and the transmigration of souls, though they are crucial to the entire Hindu system of thought (Farquhar, : 38), as depicted in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. It is in his attitude to the role of the Brahmin in Hindu religion and society, that Roy showed his true reformist bent: he rejected the Brahmin as a necessary intermediary between God

and devotee and further went on to repudiate all forms of idolatry, animal sacrifice and caste distinction. Writing in his Magazine, Rammohan Roy said :

“We reject idolatry in every form under whatsoever veil of sophistry it may be practised—either in the adoration of artificial or natural or imaginary object. The divine homage we offer consists solely in the practice of Daya or benevolence towards each other, and not in fanciful faith or in certain motions of bodily organisms in a pulpit or before a temple”.

He recommended that the Samaj accept a congregational form of worship instead of the standard Hindu practice of offering “pooja” through a priest. Besides these, Roy and his Brahma Samaj crusaded against the custom of Suttee (widow-suicide) and female infanticide. Roy believed that a new Hindu society must be created on the foundations of these social, political and religious reforms. (Heimsath, : 14)

After Roy’s death in 1833, the Samaj began to decline until 1842 When Debendranath Tagore took over. He soon reorganized the movement and became the Acharya or minister. A monthly called the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* was started along with a “Vedic School” to train Brahma missionaries. The latter were to combat the Christian missionaries who were winning numerous converts at this time in the Calcutta region. Tagore also drew up in 1843 *The Brahma Covenant*—a list of vows to be taken by everyone on becoming a member of the Samaj and introduced a brief form of prayer and adoration called *Brahmopasana*. Under the Tagore leadership, the Brahma Samaj moved away from the dry deism of Ram Mohan Roy. Great stress was placed on religious experience and though social reform was accepted, Tagore’s intense devotionism did not lead the Samaj, at this juncture of its history, into reformist activities with any urgency.

However, a group within the Samaj was getting restless with Tagore’s preoccupation with spiritualism. In 1862 a split occurred in the Samaj and the conservatives calling themselves the *Adi Brahma Samaj* broke away from the Radicals who retained the title *Brahma Samaj*. (Farquhar, : 89) The conservatives led by Tagore were afraid that spiritual religion would be sacrificed to the new passion for social reform. The radical Samaj was lead by Keshab Chandra Sen and contained many of the younger and Western educated segments of the Samaj. Sen was also deeply influenced by certain elements of Christianity. (Sen. 1904)

Since the newly formed Samaj of radical reformers lacked rules and procedures, Sen selected theistic texts from Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Chinese sources and published them under the title of *Slokasangraha* to be used in the services and proceedings of the Samaj. (Farquhar, : 46) A number of other new practices were introduced—some of them drawn from the *Bakhti* cults that were flowering in Bengal at this

time. For example, choral singing and singing in the streets in praise of God were introduced. This was designed to extend the influence of the Samaj to a section of the Hindus other than the Westernized and English-educated one. In addition, the Samaj sponsored various social reformist measures among which were moves to emancipate women and admit them to modern forms of education. They also invented a form of clothing that was considered more 'formal' and suitable for social intercourse. Keshab Chandra Sen consulted medical opinion about the appropriate age for marriage and advocated sixteen as the lower-age limit. This was, of course, meant to stop the widespread custom of child-marriage. He also invented a new form of the marriage ceremony, without an officiating Brahmin priest and this was given legal recognition in 1872. (Heimsath, : 92) Since the institution of marriage and its ceremonial initiation by a Brahmin was central to the Hindu conception of family, husbandly obligations and wifely duties, this was an important challenge not only to religious institutions, but also for the sanctity of the Brahmins and the institution of the caste system. The Brahmo Samaj rejected the caste system along with the religious primacy of the Brahmin and Sen even succeeded in persuading Brahmin members of the Samaj to abandon their "sacred thread". The abandonment of caste principles was further emphasized when the Samaj appointed Sen, a non-Brahmin as "Acharya". Sen in his address on Social Reformation in India in 1863 said :

"The Samaj does not seek to destroy caste as an institution distinct from Hinduism by setting up a purely secular movement to oppose its law and principles. It seeks to establish the equality of men on religious grounds and this indirectly abolishes caste distinctions". (Pal. 1930 : 82)

However, Sen insisted on a fundamental difference between the Hinduism as it was practised then and the true religion of the ancient Hindus which he found to be more acceptable insofar as it was neither "unscientific" or "irrational" in character. In pursuing these concerns, he advocated the acceptance of individual conscience and reason against imposed authority. He argued that individual reason and conscience should be able to determine what is true and rational, right or wrong, without the intervention of outside authority. In addition, Sen advocated that the principle of inherited authority and power in religious matters conferred on Brahmins be abandoned and that a democratic process be instituted for the management of religious matters.

In his later years Keshab Chandra Sen began to move further in the mystic direction and at one time tried to integrate the Hindu Trident, the Christian Cross and the Crescent of Islam as the symbol of a Church of the New Dispensation. By this time, many of the members of the Samaj were tired of Sen's oligarchic ways as well as his mysticism and broke away to form yet another organization called the Sadharana Brahmo Samaj (The ordinary Brahmo Samaj) (Farquhar, : 55). This organization tried

maintain a fidelity to the original philosophy of the Brahmo Samaj, though it found it difficult to overcome the presence of Sen in Bengal until his death in 1884.

The sphere of influence of the Brahmo Samaj extended from Peshawar in the North to Travancore in the South of India, from Baluchistan in the West to Assam and Burma in the East. In the first ten years after Ram-mohan Roy's death, (1834—1843) under the leadership of Pandit Vidyavargish, there was only one unit in the Samaj. In the next fourteen years (1844—1857) under the leadership of Debendranath Tagore, the number rose to 14, all in Bengal. In the next twenty years, under the joint leadership of Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen (1866—77), 72 Samajas were established all over India. In the next eighteen years after the establishment of the Sadharana Brahmo Samaj, the number rose to 197. (Farquhar, : 71)

### III

#### THE ARYA SAMAJ

The Arya Samaj differs both in style and to some extent in philosophy as well, from the Brahmo Samaj. The sphere of influence of the Arya Samaj included the Northwest Frontier Province, Oudh, Punjab and the United Provinces of pre-partition India. It was founded in 1875 by Dayananda Saraswati (Heimsath, : 113) and wielded a substantial influence for a long time after that. The Arya Samaj, was under the direct influence of one leader—Dayananda Saraswati, for a long time, and bore the stamp of his biography and personality very deeply, that one way of sketching the philosophy of the movement is to examine the life of Dayananda Saraswati. (Singh, : 1903) Born in 1824 in the princely state of Kathiawar, he had no exposure to Western education. From a very early age however, he had begun to question idol worship and the significance of orthodox Hindu rites which finally resulted in his leaving the home in search of a Vedic teacher with a critical approach to orthodoxy and doctrine. In 1860 Dayananda Saraswati became a disciple of a blind guru named Virajananda who was the source of most of Dayananda Saraswati's latter teachings. His teacher and he himself came to regard the Vedas of ancient India as the true version of Hindu philosophy and the fundamental source of Hindu wisdom. This in effect challenged the existing Hindu practices in many ways and Dayananda Saraswati was not reticent in denouncing the latter, as superstitious and priest-ridden nonsense. (de Bary, et al, 1960 : 629) He abandoned various rituals and habits that went with his earlier Siva-worship and declared himself a devotee of God, recognizing Siva as only one of the many names of the Supreme Being. By 1866, he launched a campaign against idolatry, religious rituals like bathing in holy water, pilgrimages, etc., and denounced various religious texts as either immoral

or irrelevant, for example *The Bhagavata Purana* of the Vaishnavites. (Farquhar, : 115) He considered it his duty to engage the defenders of Hindu orthodoxy in public debates and following the practice of the Christian missionaries, opened schools to teach Vedic scriptures and Sanskrit, but neither of these was successful. Consequently, he began to appeal to the people directly, both by means of lectures and books, stressing repeatedly the utter futility of idol worship and pointed out that there was no sanction for it in the Vedas. (de Bary, et. al., : 635) In 1872, Dayananda Saraswati came into contact with certain Brahmo Samaj leaders, including Keshab Chandra Sen and made two alterations in his approach : he began to speak in the everyday language of his audiences—Hindi, and began to clothe himself in normal clothes instead of the yellow robes of a holy man that he had adopted a few years earlier. (Farquhar, : 109)

Soon after, his fame and influence began to spread, especially in the Punjab. He had also, by 1870, begun to have his ideas systematised and organized after the initially confusing attempts to confront orthodox Hinduism. Following the example of the Brahmo Samaj, he established the Arya Samaj, but with a view to propagating what he believed to be the true Vedic religion. What were the elements of this purported Vedic religion, in Dayananda Saraswati's view? Central to his religious thought was his belief in a dualistic universe, recognizing a dichotomy between mind and matter and a separation between God and the human soul. (Bharadawaja, 1915) The advaita philosophy of Sankaracharya, as well as the neo-vedantist one propagated the view that the physical world is an illusion (Maya) and the objective of all should be to achieve the Mayanegating consciousness "Moksha"—the final release from worldly desires and cares, and union with the omniscient Brahman. (de Bary, : 277) Dayananda Saraswati attacked all facets of this doctrine and held that the world we know by sense perception is real and that the objects and matter existed independently of our consciousness of them and that any attempt to establish the contrary was futile. The separation between mind and matter was real because "had He not created the world separate from Himself, how could He have been able to award souls their desires and how could they reap the fruits of their deeds—good and evil—done in previous cycles of creation?" (Dayananda Saraswati, 1882, : 250) According to Dayananda, matter existed before the creation in an elementary and eternal form and human souls were not part of God but were separate and had unique destinies in terms of their deeds in earlier incarnations. (Upadyaya, 1955 : 384—93) Thus, man could not escape confronting the reality of the world as well as the reality of good and evil by taking refuge in a philosophy which claimed worldly existence and the world itself as illusory. Dayananda Saraswati however accepted the doctrine of transmigration and Karma with the proviso that emancipation could be achieved by "obedience to the will of God, disavowal of sin, bad company, the



promotion of public good, even-handed justice, righteousness" (Bharadwaja, : 279), and not by sublimating bodily needs and existing in a state of pure consciousness. Predestination was now rejected and emancipation as a release from the cycle of incarnation became a matter of the human soul striving in the "right direction".

Having established the reality of this world and the way in which it had to be confronted, Dayananda Saraswati added a new dimension to his teachings. Individual virtues - social work, charitable activities, were expected of his followers and a concept of ethics was introduced in the conduct of everyday activities which were hitherto governed by custom and tradition. (Bharadwaja, : 317) For example, many such customs related to caste, marriage, food, clothing, etc., and they were all denounced and their abandonment recommended. In their place "good conduct," "reasonable activity," that would produce the public good was recommended. The basis of conduct, Dayananda Saraswati stressed, should be reason and not blind adherence to ancient tradition.

On the issue of caste, Dayananda Saraswati attempted a compromise as well as to make a departure from the current thinking and practices. His acceptance of a Hinduism based on the Vedas led him also to accept the fourfold classification of the people - the Varna System- but he insisted that it was not birth that entitled one to membership in any given varna, but life-style and conduct. (Heimsath, : 120) This was a firm, but subtle rejection of the existing caste system with its numerous sub-divisions and its hierarchy and rigidity. Dayananda Saraswati in effect wanted an open class system and argued that anyone, provided he could achieve the necessary qualifications could enter any caste. Various other aspects of Hindu social order came under his scrutiny. He denounced child marriage and supported equal rights and educational opportunities for all, including women. (Farquhar, : 121) He also advocated that widows be permitted to remarry, denounced animal sacrifice at temples as an absurd and degrading practice. He also suggested that Western science and the scientific approach be learnt and cultivated. He encouraged foreign travel and contact with foreigners, which was contrary to the position of the orthodox Hindu leadership at this time. (Bharadwaja, : 317) Dayananda Saraswati denounced the latter, mostly priests, as hypocrites who wanted to keep their followers in ignorance because their own livelihood and power depended on such ignorant followers. He recommended that instead of being frightened by the Westerners and their customs and religion or being taken over completely into a conversion, Hindus should accept the liberal and rational aspects of Western civilization on a selective basis. Dayananda Saraswati himself admitted to an admiration for the Englishman's "energy" and work habits and argued that if the Hindu religion was not willing to be reformed, it was going to be overwhelmed. Nevertheless, he was fanatically opposed to any surrender to alien religions, Christianity or Islam, and made no secret of his antagonism. He scoffed at the claims

of the Bible and the Koran as revealed testaments and upheld the Vedas as timeless revelations from a divine source. (Heimsath, 1964 : 122)

During all this intellectual and organizational work, Dayananda Saraswati, it should be noted, rarely commented on the political situation in India, although he favoured the transfer of power to Indians. His main concerns were in the social and religious areas and he attributed political subjugation to the degenerate and weakening practices of Indian society.

In tune with his reformist attitude, Dayananda Saraswati adopted modern techniques of spreading his philosophy. He emulated the Brahmo Samaj leaders and organized a Samaj of his own, used newspapers and periodicals, schools and study groups as the instruments of his propaganda. However, he could not make common cause with the Brahmo Samaj because of the latter's denial of the authority of the Vedas and their closeness to Christianity. (Heimsath, : 125) Hence, a separate organization was called for and it was created in 1875 in Rajkot. Following this, many other Samajes were created in Ahemadabad, Bombay, Patna, Ranchi and even Calcutta. An Arya Samaj emerged in practically every city that Dayananda Saraswati visited and presented his challenge to Hindu orthodoxy. In the next decade, branch organizations erupted in Lahore, Amritsar, Surdasapur, Rawalpindi, Mulkan, Meerut, Delhi, Roorki, Cawnpore and Lucknow. (Singh, : 363—66) During this period, the tenets of the Samaj were simplified and reorganized, and a great deal of freedom was given to the local chapters.

The official creed of the Samaj followed closely the teaching of its founder. It rejected all orthodox rites and rituals, idol worship, etc. but retained the Vedic custom of fire-sacrifice as a means of purifying the air! The Hindu form of ancestor worship known as Sraddha was condemned (Farquhar, : 121) as were pilgrimages to the holy places of India as superstitious and worthless practices.

The Arya Samaj also developed a more or less coherent system of ethics and among the usual stress on truthfulness, honesty, courage and steadfastness, it also stressed hard work. On the question of widow remarriage, the Arya Samaj was not willing to go as far as its leader : they permitted widows to remarry if their marriages were not consummated. This was designed to help the many children who were married off and then became widowed before beginning to live with their husbands. The other widows however were not permitted to marry by the Samaj, but very considerably, it allowed them a sexual life outside of legal marriage! (Farquhar, : 122)

Hindu social and religious life is to a very great extent dominated by ceremony and in the case of the domestic affairs, ceremonies presided over by the Brahmin was mandatory. The Arya Samaj made attempts to either do away with some of the ceremonies or simplify them. A Vedic ceremony

was resuscitated and recommended to the faithful: the Havana ceremony, consisting of the "offering" of butter and incense to a fire and singing of a verse from the Vedas and a sermon in the Hindu language. An observer of the time who witnessed such a ceremony declared "It was just like a Protestant Service and totally unlike any Vedic observance". (Farquhar, 1967 : 123) The women had their own separate, but equal service conducted by a lady and it was claimed that the women attended in large numbers.

The death of Dayananda Saraswati dealt a serious blow to the work of the Samaj, but the movement had sufficiently institutionalised itself and it survived. However, it began to acquire a conservative and intolerant attitude in the aftermath of his death. The Samaj's relationship with the other religions began to deteriorate, to finally emerge as a militant hostility, particularly towards the Muslims. (Jones, 1967 : 44) The modern methods of propaganda and communication introduced by the leadership was skillfully used to arouse mass interest in the goals of the Samaj and it began to attract a large following, though of a somewhat diluted nature.

The leadership of the Arya Samaj passed on to Guru Datta who stressed the religious nature of the movement and elevated Dayananda Saraswati to the position of a saint and his writing to that of sacred texts. (Lajpat Rai, 1891 : 29) He made his own contribution to the Arya philosophy by a reinterpretation of the past of the "Aryans"—an interpretation much at variance with Western scholarly opinion. An upadeshak Samaj to train "Arya Ministers" and a Vedic journal to publicise Arya views were started in 1888 (Lajpat Rai, : 34) During this period, another leader of the Samaj Munshi Ram also started active proselytising and propaganda, (Jambunathan, 1961) street processions accompanied by devotional singing and challenges to the Christian missionaries to participate in public debates, etc. It was also during this period that active converts from Islam were sought by the doctrine of "Suddhi" or "purification". (Jones, : 47) It was argued that the contemporary Muslims were after all descendents of Hindus who were forcibly converted and hence they could be brought back to the true religion after the proper rites of purification. This, of course, was to anger the Muslims and was destined to be a bone of contention for years to come. This was later broadened to include the reconversion of Christians to Hinduism as well as "purify" the out-castes and bring them into the fold of the caste system. All of this, of course, was contrary to the tenets of traditional Hinduism and was anathema to the Hindu orthodoxies of the day. The conversion ceremony had obviously been introduced to counter the work of proselytization by the Christians, Muslims and Sikhs, though at this time the Christians were the main proselytizers. From 1891 onwards, regular reports of Suddhi ceremony began to appear in the Samaj periodicals. Initially Brahmin priests were used to perform these rites, but soon the Samaj developed its own purificatory ceremony to legitimise conversion. (Jones, : 48)

Tension and conflict between the conservatives and radicals in the Samaj came to head in 1893, with the former gaining control of the educational institutions, while the radicals captured the provincial organization and numerous branch offices. (Lajpat Rai, 1965 : 46—72) The radicals reorganized themselves as the Arya Prathinidhi Sabha and set about the business of converting people—particularly Muslims, outcastes and Christians, to its faith. It withdrew its support of the educational work of the Samaj and used its funds to systematically organise missionary work. Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan were geographically divided into circles with officers in charge and salaried ministers. The ministers were to aid the local Samajes in holding public debates, and in conducting Suddhi ceremonies. Another leader of the Samaj at this time Pandit Lekh Ram added another dimension to this anti-Islamic stance: he organized cow protection societies—(Jambunathan, 1961 : 24) (since the Muslims were beef-eaters it was not calculated to bring harmony between Hindus and Muslims)—and mounted a propaganda against the Ahamadiya Movement of the Muslims. This was indeed a very curious move, because the Ahamadiyas were essentially trying to achieve the same modernisational goals for the Muslims that the Arya Samaj was trying to do for the Hindus. In fact, from 1888 onwards, the Arya Samaj's self-conscious militancy and proselytizing intolerance brought about a great deal of tension among the various religious groups—the Samaj was, in fact unsparing in its attacks against the Christians, Muslims, Orthodox Hindus and Sikhs.

This aggressive policy, however, brought about a split in the Arya Samaj with various radicals advocating this spirit of militancy and the conservatives stressing the religious and educational responsibilities of the Samaj. In keeping with these views, Lajpat Rai and Hans Raj took charge of the Dayananda Anglo-Vedic college movement. They followed closely the techniques used by the Christian missionaries and there is no doubt that these activities greatly enhanced the popularity of the Samaj.

#### THE DRAVIDIAN MOVEMENT:

Another important secularising force in the religious and social life of India was the Dravidian Movement in which is included a number of different organizations. Its initial, and at times principal goal was to challenge the supremacy of the Brahmins in the social, economic and political life of Southern India. This movement did not begin however till the second decade of the twentieth century. South India was relatively free of the social ferment that was created in Bengal and the Punjab by the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj and Heimsath argues that the "true reason for less social rebellion in Madras was the caste structure in peninsular India, which provided for a distinct social dominance of the Brahmin caste over low castes comprising the bulk of the population." (Heimsath, 1964 : 111) The Brahmins took advantage of their background in learning and intellectual pursuits to pursue the new English education that had become available and once this was achieved, scrambling for positions in

government service. Heimsath observes that the Brahmins who comprised the majority of university graduates could scarcely afford to advocate any fundamental social change since this would undermine their own power and position. In Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra, it was precisely these segments of the Western educated population that generated the religious and intellectual ferment that created the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj. In Madras, however, they were mostly concerned with producing loyal and capable administrative and professional men—and they were also mostly Brahmins. These segments then were dominant in the traditional social order and were also vying to become dominant in the newly emerging colonial order. The non-Brahmins began to resent this development and felt that they were being shunted from positions of authority and power rather arbitrarily by a strongly entrenched Brahmin hegemony. The drive for political power, administrative position and economic security produced then a serious breach in relations between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins. This breach was exacerbated by Annie Besant's insistence on the greatness of the Hindu Brahminical past. This made her, and the movement she was to found, the movement that was to be the root of the Indian National congress in the south, suspect in the eyes of the non-Brahmins. (Irschick, : 51) They saw in all her work - particularly with regard to the demand for Home Rule - a maneuvering for the establishment of Brahmin supremacy. If Home Rule was granted, what part would the non-Brahmin Tamils play in the future administration of Madras Presidency? In the view of the non-Brahmins, only a small part, if at all. The movement for Home Rule was mainly in the hands of Brahmins and this led to the formation of the South Indian Liberal Federation to challenge the activities of the Home Rule movement. This later changed its name to that of the Justice Party. This was indeed the beginning of what could be termed the Dravidian Movement—it would later develop schisms and splinter into different sections, though maintaining a certain ideological integrity. In the early days, the movement was supported by the non-Brahmin landowners, educated middle classes of Madras and some untouchable groups. They maintained a pro-British stand in politics insofar as the anti-British movement in Madras at this time too was led by Brahmins. It is significant that both those who benefitted educationally and politically from the British rule as well as the leaders of the early anti-British movement were Brahmins.

However, it is not so much the political history of the Justice Party and its offshoots that we want to focus on, but the reformist tendencies that were touched off by the anti-Brahmin movement. It did not take the Dravidian leadership long to see that it was the magico-religious ideological and institutional base of South Indian society which enabled a Brahmin to claim and exercise special powers. (Hardgrave, 1966 : 214) The Dravidian leadership then launched a massive attack on these bases and produced numerous documents and argumentations against the Brahminical version of Hinduism. Some parts of this were pure conjecture, some fact, but all

were contrived to de-mythologize the Brahmin and identify him as an intruder from the North who came with an alien and essentially non-rational philosophy and seduced the South. (Chetty, 1932) In place of the alien Sanskrit tradition and "Aryan" religion, the Dravidian leadership posited Tamil tradition and a Dravidian religion which was monotheistic and had no place for the caste system: polytheism and the caste system, along with many other religious practises were identified with the Brahminical Hinduism imported from North India. European scholars and researchers into Tamil - its history and tradition, G. U. Pope, Father Beschi, and Rev. Robert Caldwell lent considerable support to these claims. Among the Dravidian scholars, Somasundaram Pillai (1855—1897) claimed "most of what is ignorantly called Aryan philosophy, Aryan civilization, is literally Dravidian or Tamilian at bottom". (Irschick, 1969 : 283) He went on to challenge the authenticity and the interpretation of the **Ramayana** and regarded it as a biased work written with a view to glorify Aryan culture and debase Dravidians by casting them in the role of enemies of the righteous Rama. This questioning of a sacred text was very significant and was really the harbinger of several other such challenges to come. The leadership of the Justice Party rapidly incorporated the prevailing cultural theories about the Dravidian civilization into their platform. Addressing the Justice Party confederation in Madras in 1917, Tyagaraja Chetty said "the genius of Dravidian civilization does not recognize the difference between man and man by birth.....It is the Aryans who have introduced this birth distinction, which they have elaborated into the system of Varnashrama Dharma with its concomittant evils". (1932) Another early leader of the movement, Tangavelu Pillai refused to employ Brahmin priests and asserted the superiority of the ancient Tamil to Aryan civilization (*Hindu*, Madras, December 21, 1925).

In the course of the reinterpretation of history, tradition and literature, current religious practises also come under scrutiny. The Dravidian leadership sought to substitute Saiva Siddhanta philosophy for the Brahminical religion and idolatry. This philosophy was contrary to that of Sankaracharya's advaita view and insisted on the separations between the Supreme Spirit and the human soul, whereas, as indicated earlier, Sankaracharya defined the human soul as a part of the supreme one. A Saiva Siddhanta Society was established in 1886 to popularise the Dravidian religion. The attempt to regenerate the religion of South India was extended eventually to the social sphere. It was claimed that the Dravidians "are outside the fourfold division of the Aryan caste" and the Tamils were exhorted to reexamine their identity. Irschick observes that "the Tamil Vellalas were indeed of all the non-Brahmin caste Hindu groups, the ones most anxious to shed the Sudra designation. And since they formed the backbone of the Justice Party, their social and political resentment were closely intertwined". (1969 : 295) It is apparent that the caste-ridden society of South India was responsible for the emergence of caste-politics. The entire movement, although provincial and in the main committed to-

existing political realities, nevertheless through its ideological and institutional challenge to the Brahmin order unleashed a variety of forces that were to become significant in the years to come. However, with its eminently parochial platform and program, the Justice Party, the forerunner of the Dravidian Movement, was soon submerged in the great wave of Indian nationalism.

The most notable Dravidian leader to emerge in the aftermath of the Justice Party was E. V. Ramasamy Nair who gave a different twist to the advocacy of Dravidian regeneration. In 1925 he organized the "self-respect movement", designed for the upliftment of the Dravidians and seeking to expose the tyranny of the Brahmins and the deceptive methods by which they controlled all spheres of south Indian life. (Hardgrave, 1965 : 26) He publicly ridiculed the Puranas (Hindu scriptures) as fairy tales, not only imaginary and irrational, but grossly immoral as well. Influenced in his philosophy by Robert Ingersoll and having translated much of his writing into Tamil, Nair attacked religion in India as a tool of Brahminical control. He carried on an active campaign in an effort to rid the people of orthodox Hinduism and wean them away from religious ceremonies requiring the priestly services of a Brahmin. He denounced caste observances, child marriage, enforced widowhood and attacked the laws of Manu, the entire Hindu social fabric of caste, and described it as "totally inhuman." The Laws, Nair pointed out were designed to secure the supremacy of the Brahmins and ensure their unquestioned authority. (Hardgrave, 1965 : 26) In order to spread his views, he founded a journal in Tamil called *Kudiarasu*, which was followed soon after by many others. In 1937 when an attempt was made to impose Hindi as a required subject in the schools, an opportunity was provided for Nair to become a popular leader of the anti-Hindi campaign. (Devanandan, 1960 : 9) He followed this by forming a political party called the Dravida Kalagam. The object of the DK was proclaimed to be the achievement of a sovereign, independent "Dravidian Republic" which would create casteless society - an egalitarian society of Dravidians. Nair severed his ties with the British (which had been assiduously cultivated until now) and the DK openly declared itself to be opposed to the political subjugation by the British. Most of the philosophical doctrines of the earlier Dravidian movements found expression in the new DK and it sought to actively propagate these views. Campaigns to advocate widow remarriage, inter-caste marriages, abandonment of religious practices calling for Brahmin priests, idolatry and other orthodox ceremonies, belief in sacred texts, etc., were carried out throughout Madras. The members and leaders of the DK cultivated a public atheism and were vehement in their denunciation of organized religion and its socially oppressive features.

The movement grew and prospered under Nair's leadership and attracted a number of talented young men, among whom were many actors and playwrights, as well as a number of scholars. (Hardgrave, : 221)

Yet, the DK continued to be organized along quasi-military lines, with Naiyakar, now called with the appellation "Periyar," "The Big One," as a sort of demi-God of the Movement. Many of the younger men began to resent this and soon intellectual differences began to manifest themselves as well. The most noteworthy such difference was the attitude towards Indian independence and the attitude the DK was to adopt towards the newly established Congress government in New Delhi. Naiyakar had asked Jinnah for assistance in establishing a Dravidistan along with Pakistan but the latter had merely brushed it aside. (Baliga, 1957 : 117.) Naiyakar started an agitation against the transfer of power to the Indian National Congress and the progressive wing of the DK under the leadership of C. N. Annadurai broke away and formed the Dravida Munnetra Kalagam — the Dravidian Progressive Federation in 1944. (Harrison, 1960 : 123)

The DMK was, in many ways, a continuation of the broad Dravidian Movement and hence inherited the basic philosophy and program of the progenitors, particularly from Naiyakar's DK. It also introduced a number of changes in all areas of policy and organization. Annadurai's first move was to weld the DMK into an effective political movement greatly expanding the activities of branch organizations and by 1960 the membership jumped to 175,000. The base of the party had been expanded to include lower class city-dwellers, the rural proletariat as well as many segments of the middle classes and students. The Justice Party and the DK were mainly supported by the prosperous landowning class, the newly emergent civil servants of the British government and various commercial interests. The DMK however began to appeal to the masses and oriented its entire program and propaganda to enlist the support of the common man, including the outcastes and the untouchables. The leadership of the party remained in the hands of the writers and journalists, who, according to Hardgrave, used the communication media as the catapult to political power. He further observes that "through its broadly-based and hierarchically structured organization, its series of anti-Hindi agitations and through its propaganda and political campaigns, the DMK sought power through exploitation of the symbolic paraphernalia of language and nationalism which is bringing a new awareness of wider association and common interest to the formerly inert masses of Madras." (Hardgrave, : 31) Annadurai himself was a writer, actor, playwright and producer of plays and used his dramaturgical talents with great ingenuity and effectiveness to bring the masses to the feet of the DMK. He politicised the theatre and claimed that "A revival in the theatre is very, very essential. It is a good index to the new awareness in the country. A good theatre will indicate how people shall live in the future". (Sivathamby, 1971 : 212-2) The thematic content of the plays glorified Tamil culture and held Brahminism as the cause of all political, social, cultural evils of the day. The political plays of the DMK excoriated "the North Indian," "Aryans" and Brahminical "conspiracy" and suggested solutions that were favourable



to the DMK's program, while the plays which took religion as a theme showed the ineffectiveness of idol-worship and religious devotion. In addition to the theatre, the Tamil film industry also threw its support to the DMK. (Perinbanayagam, 1971 : 201—211)

Annadurai and his associates were quite willing to work in the film industry: apart from the larger financial rewards, the cinema permitted them to take their philosophy to a much larger public. Throughout the early fifties and sixties, the DMK provided much needed talent to the South Indian cinema and in turn, the party acquired a powerful new medium for the propagation of its views. The medium of the cinema—to which many of the earlier plays of the DMK were also converted, became a cheap and readily available instrument to reach the remotest corner of Madras and it played a vital role in popularising the DMK philosophy.

In fact, an examination of a few of the plays reveals clearly the social content of the DMK philosophy. (Sivathamby, 1971) The plays ostensibly dealt with the usual themes of love, loyalty, betrayal, etc., but the underlying thrust of the development of the plays was to assert some definitive aspect of a philosophy. An obvious example of this was the rewriting of the epic poem Ramayana, where the roles of heroines and villains were reversed. The demon Ravana of the earlier version, now identified as a Dravidian, becomes a just and noble king, traduced by "Aryan" power. However, it is in the treatment of contemporary themes in the plays that the DMK's attitude to the caste-system, the Hindu scriptures, idol-worship, women's emancipation became evident. In the celebrated works of Annadurai called *Velaikari*, *Kathal Jothi* and many others, caste lines were disregarded in love and marriage, widows not only remarried, but asserted their personalities and took roles of leadership. The villains were not only unscrupulous Brahmins, but also landlords. Another of the DMK leader-writers, Karunanidhi also wrote plays with similar themes. These themes were not confined to plays however. In the daily activities of the party, women were encouraged to take leading parts and widows were encouraged to remarry with the DMK leaders often officiating at the "Reformed" ceremonies. The other aspects of the DMK philosophy were realised in the organization of the party and the untouchables even began to refer to themselves as the "original Dravidians" thus openly attributing their degradation in caste-status to Aryan influence and denying the validity of the Brahminical system that relegated them to outcaste status. These aspects of the DMK philosophy constituted parts of a common theme that will be taken up for analysis later.

#### COMMENTARY:

These three movements were widely separated in geographical terms and in the case of one, the Dravidian Movement, separated also in terms of time. Nevertheless, all of them could be considered in a comparative framework and their similarities and differences examined. Perhaps the

first aspect that strikes one about these movements is that they were in many ways unique in the recent history of India: they were systematic attempts to change religious doctrine, ritual practices as well as the norms and patterns of social relationships between members of different castes, different religions and between the sexes. The impact of European ideas and institutions was very pronounced in leading to this development. Chandavarkar, a prominent leader of the Prarthana Samaj, an offshoot of the Brahmo movement, established in Bombay, observed that English education "was accomplishing silently what no law could have accomplished—unsettling people's minds, raising controversies—and thus forwarding the cause of social progress." The ideas that were being disseminated through the medium of the English language were those of the then nascent English liberalism—Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. In particular, the notion of a rationally ordered society and some of the concepts of utilitarianism—reasoned inquiry and social contentment seem to have found their way into the philosophies of these movements. A second influence, and certainly of equal importance, on these movements was that of the Christian missionaries. Ronald Scott, writing on the Indian reform movements observed that modern Indian religious and social reform has been in large part a response to the challenge of Christian doctrine and to "the conception of human personality as expressed primarily in the Christian religion". (1953 : 18) Chandavarkar, interestingly enough, observed that the Christian missionaries were the cause of the religious and social awakening of which "the school of 'Hindu Protestantism' of the present day is the result." (1911 : 43—45) Lajpat Rai, commenting on the Arya Samaj observed that its network of social service organization, as well as the very structure of the Arya Samaj itself was an imitation of the Christian missionaries.

These comments provide testimony to the fact that the members and leaders of these movements were themselves aware of the sources of the changes they were advocating, as well as the implication of these changes. Whatever the sources of the changes advocated by these movements, how best can we prosecute our thesis that they were all part of a general movement towards a more rational social, religious and institutional order in Indian society? In a very broad sense, the many changes that began to emerge and then accelerate in the Indian subcontinent after the arrival of the British—from the administrative machinery, the system of railways, the political framework to the more recent thrust towards economic development, as well as socialism can be subsumed under the rubric of rationalism. However, we are interested in the rational content of the three movements that we have sketched.

### RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE:

Let us examine the developments in thought and action that the three movements represented. The disenchantment with Hinduism and the traditional mode of life raised numerous questions about the manner in which both could be transformed. The survey of movements presented

earlier reveal that the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj and the Dravidian Movement rejected the orthodox interpretation of Hinduism and sought to establish a new system of ideas based on some notion of rationality. In the Brahma Samaj, this meant intergration of Upanishadic philosophy with Christian notions of individual responsibility, in the Arya Samaj, it became a complete rejection of institutional Hinduism and a revival of Vedic Hinduism, while in the South, this meant the rejection of Brahminism, and the resurrection of the Dravidian past, defined by its advocates as more rational a system. The official statement of the Brahma Samaj declared that there is only one God, who is spirit, infinite in power, omnipresent, eternal and blissful. The human soul is immortal and responsible to God for its doing. This was a fundamental departure from the traditional advaita school of Sankara. Maharishi Tagore of the Brahma Samaj turning away in despair from the Upanishads commented "If the worshipper and the object of worship are one, how can there be any worship?" If as advaita philosophy believed "I am he" and "Thou art That," then how was individual progress to be achieved? How can one prescribe a code of individual morality, equality and responsibility? He concluded therefore that "this universe was not dream stuff, neither is it an illusion, but it exists in reality."

Dayananda Saraswati's notions were indeed strikingly similar to these views. He, too, asserted that the world we knew was real and not an illusion and had to be confronted. The final emancipation of the soul, he held, could be achieved only by disassociating from sin and the moral conduct of the personal life. In the case of the Dravidian Movement, it was completely atheistic and swept away in one large step, the doctrines of the advaita that were the substance of contemporary Hinduism: the world was real enough for them and it was the individual's responsibility to face it and make it work for him. What did this mean in the terms of the thesis of our paper?

The thesis of advaita philosophy was that one should experience identity with the Universal Being, since one was a part, along with others, of the universal self. However, once the principle of separate identity between God and self was accepted, they were no longer to be known as mere aspects of a single entity, but could be regarded as distinct and separate. This was in essence a discovery of the individual and he or she was, in fact, released to an existence of his own and endowed with freedom of will and made to confront God on his own. He or she also has to establish the proper relationship with the universe and God and on the basis of individual reason, instead of predetermined caste duties. In fact, Roy and the leaders of the Brahma Samaj had rejected even the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, as well as that of Karma. This meant that the individual was in control of his own destiny and by living righteously and striving continuously, he could achieve meaning and fulfilment in life.

Dayananda Saraswati however did not go so far as to reject the doctrine of transmigration, though he had released the individual from the grips of destiny. The fierce antagonism that the Dravidian Movement, particularly its later phases, adopted towards organized Hinduism manifested itself also in the assertion of individual responsibility and personal rights. In their plays and tracts, a constant theme was the overcoming of adversity and misfortune, by defying religious prescriptions and predestined roles. Hence, they did not have to fashion a subtle creed, as their northern brethren did, to combat the prevailing *advaita* philosophy: they merely burnt the religious texts and wrote anti-religious substitutes. In all, however, the attempt to convert what Weber called an other-worldly orientation to a this-worldly orientation was evident. (Weber, 1922 : 262—274)

A further aspect of the philosophical content of these movements was to assert insistently that the individual was the unit of society and that ultimately he was responsible for his own conduct and destiny. The implications of this—and the stress on this-worldly asceticism, to the thesis of this paper are obvious. However, to what extent these views took hold of the masses—or at least of influential elites and the consequences to the socio-economic and political life of India after these movements gained their influence, must remain for investigation on another occasion.

#### **RITUAL: TEMPLE AND DOMESTIC :**

Hinduism, as it was practised then (and now and for long centuries), was bound with innumerable details of observance that ritual can be said, generally speaking, to have taken the place of conviction. Even before the modern movements sprang up to eradicate it, there were many earlier attempts to modify Hinduistic rituals. The most noteworthy of them, of course, was Buddhism. In fact, the daily round of life of the Hindu was a pattern of involvement with various rites from morning till evening, and these rights were in turn intermeshed with the structure of the social and economic life of the people. Hence, a change in these rituals was essentially an attempt to alter the pattern of power and activity in the society. The simplification of the marriage ceremony was accomplished by eliminating the Brahmin from the ceremony and eliminating the Brahmin meant challenging the hierachical arrangement of castes that was represented in Hindu domestic rituals. Besides the change in ceremony of marriage, various other changes in domestic life were recommended by the various reform movements. The Brahma Samaj was perhaps rather extreme in this regard, but in their programmes were included changes in the eating habits and relationships between men and women and changes in the general Hinduistic character of family life. This kind of family life was more or less minutely organized as stages in an individual's life—sixteen in all, if he survived to old age. These were called *Samskaras* and each stage represented a transition from one set of goals, duties and obligations to another. To live according to these prescriptions was enjoined on the Hindu; it was his *Dharma*. However, for us, the important aspect of

this phenomenon is that the system was sanctioned by Brahminical ideology and a Brahmin priest performed officiated at each of the sixteen transitional ceremonies. The challenge to Brahminism meant an abandonment of these rites of transition and the corresponding liberation of the individual from the obligation—duty structure established for a different socio-economic order. For example, Hindu males were now free to postpone marriage, the creation of a family, etc., until such time as they were graduated from the new schooling system and obtain gainful employment, instead of having to do it at the time prescribed by Brahminical edict.

In the temple, too, the Arya Samaj in particular advocated many changes in the ritual structure—all in the direction of simplification or rationalisation, while the Brahmo Samaj of course accepted a religion without idols and hence the elaborate ceremonialism of Hindu ritual was abandoned. The Dravidian Movement on the other hand, being atheistic, was by definition opposed to religion and religious ritual and advocated its complete abandonment, while at the same time recommending the desecralisation, and at times even the profanation of the Brahmin and his books. The Brahmin, in his dealings with the people as an intermediary to God, was secure in his position as usually the only one who knew Sanskrit.—Sanskrit being the language in which Hindu rites were performed. The movement to accept the vernacular as a medium of religious discourse as well as the language of choice by various reformers—particularly by Dayananda Saraswati and the Dravidian movement—once again tended to desecralise the Brahmin and dissolve his special claims to religious power as well as for secular power and prestige. In the same vein, one may mention that the three movements preached the futility of such standard Hindu practises as pilgrimage to sacred centers and ancestor worship.

Besides being rationalising activities by themselves, the denial of the efficacy of such practises also tended to minimise the significance of the Brahmin priests, because these rites required their services. In fact, nearly all the anti-ritual activities of the reformers seemed calculated to end priestcraft in the everyday life of the Hindus. Needless to emphasize here, such an attitude could only result in at least initiating an erosion in the strength of the hierarchy that was implicit in the larger and smaller aspects of Hindu civilization. The final emblem, so to speak, of all these tendencies was the adoption by the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj of the congregational form of worship—a form that stressed the Community of the membership and had no inherited priestcraft. This is not to say, of course, that the Samaj did away with all ritual: for example, they had the Sudhi ceremony (where an ex-Hindu was “purified” and brought into the Samaj) and the Havana ritual of feeding the fire. However, these ceremonies were not performed by a Brahmin priest and any Samaj member could do it: the social structure of the ceremony had changed.

**SOCIAL REFORM:**

The orthodox Hindu philosophy had very little to say with regard to the organization of society—except for the Laws of Manu, which were essentially codification and legitimation of Brahminical rights and privileges, as well as the Brahminical vision of the good society. This philosophy had very little to say about individual rights and responsibilities and everything was ordered by an appeal to tradition, codified or not. This also meant that neither the elite nor the others were to be held accountable for their actions, evil, exploitative or not. The Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Dravidian Movement issued direct challenges to this view. Intellectual self examination—and the example of the Christians brought home to the leaders the importance of taking measures to change inimical and exploitative institutions and to render help to those in need and adopt a creed of equality of all individuals. The doctrinal acceptance of individual responsibility also meant that a public standard other than the traditional wisdom of Brahminism, was available to judge people's accountability. In any case, all these considerations lead to all three movements engaging their efforts towards the abolition of caste duties and privileges and initiating moves to emancipate women. The woman's lot in India was certainly no better than it was in various other patriarchal societies and in many respects worse. The compulsory suicide of widows was considered an essential duty of a woman and many women were indeed persuaded to die on their husband's funeral pyre. However, the Brahma Samaj and the Arya Samaj declared their opposition to it, and was able to persuade its adherents to abandon it, just as the British were persuaded to make it illegal. Along with this came the advocacy of widow remarriage—widows were not permitted to remarry, even if they survived the attempts to make them commit suicide—child marriage was prohibited and the practice of female infanticide abolished. Interestingly enough, the Brahma Samaj consulted western medical opinion before recommending sixteen as the proper age for girls to marry. The example of Christian missionaries prompted the reformers in Bengal and some in the Punjab to open up schools of their own since the schools started by the Christians had become an insidious instrument to conversion. The schools also became avenues for the emancipation of women and ostensibly of the lower castes—they were both rendered eligible for modern education. However, in the case of the lower castes, this programme was not carried out in full—it was a programme more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Theoretically, in any case, the three movements professed and to a large extent enforced a belief in personal conduct and individual responsibility as the essential criterion by which power and privilege in the society was to be conferred.

**ORGANIZATION :**

In developing a programme and movement designed to challenge the traditional forms of religion and society, the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Dravidian Movement, often found that they were unable to totally liberate themselves from certain traditionalist aspects. For example, in the case of the former two, most of the leadership did come from a Brahminical elite and all three movements had to often contend with autocratic elders who were unwilling to share their power and responsibility with younger members. Nevertheless, it could be asserted that a decisive attempt was made by all three movements to develop bureaucratic type and more or less democratically based organizations. Rules, constitutions, covenants and declarations of principles were created and lists of membership and ceremonies of initiation into membership were common. These organizations purporting to be substitutes to religious ones, as well as constituting a challenge to them, were to be managed by rules and regulations arrived at by means of reasoning and pragmatic considerations. In addition to being a rational step in itself, this meant also an attempt to substitute personal qualities as a means to success and position in these organizations rather than caste-membership or inherited claims to wisdom and knowledge.

In personal life, too, rules of conduct—"ethics"—were introduced and these were intended as substitutes for caste and religious principles. These rules were to govern interpersonal relationships between men, between men and women, between members of different castes, with foreigners, etc., as well as in the discipline and conduct of everyday life.

The methods of propaganda and prosetysing adopted by the movements were also novel and certainly a deliberate imitation of the successful Christian missionaries. Public meetings, prosetysing tracts, debates with those opposed to the views of the respective organizations, parades, and in the case of the Dravidian Movement, the burning of sacred Hindu texts, and most impressively, the creation of an entire medium of propaganda through the theatre and later on of the cinema. The decision to adopt these techniques as well as the choice of an every day prose form, as opposed to the literary Sanskrit of traditional Hindu texts were factors of great relevance to our theme. These items—the plays, the movies, were in form and content direct challenges to the classical literature which were, of course, interpreted and held in awe by the Brahmin as unchanging vehicles of inherited wisdom. The use the Dravidian Movement made of the prose form in countless tracts, as well as the literary items it produced—novels, stories, movie and play scripts, also gave a great impetus to the emergence of a modern and flexible prose in the Tamil language. (Sivathamby, 1971 : 212—220)

## CONCLUSION:

It will be seen that the three movements that we have discussed were making attempts, deliberately and thoughtfully to change Hindu India in a direction that is consistent with the notion of rationality as described by Max Weber in various of his works and summarised in an earlier part of this study by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, and Herbert Luthy. However, it must be pointed out that the impact of these movements was not massive and that the full benefits of more rational religious life and personal life were reaped by an elite, though, of course, the masses did enjoy some of the benefits. The striking aspect of these three movements though was that none of them, despite their advocacy of this-worldly orientations and personal achievement, was able to promote the spirit of capitalism and entrepreneurship among its members to any substantial degree; at least, there is no evidence of members of these movements becoming capitalists and entrepreneurs: they rather became political leaders in social and civic matters. The entrepreneurship remained in the hands of the traditional merchant groups and castes—the Parsis and the Marvaris who were not really touched by the reform movements in any substantial way.

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