Indian Renaissance occurred after the emergence of the British forces, when a mass religious and social awakening took place. The foremost reformists had undertaken the task with a lot of eagerness and enthusiasm. Renaissance stands for rebirth and Indian renaissance refers to that period which was marked by the quest of knowledge and development of science and arts. The incredible effects of Indian Renaissance were reflected in the quality of life and the new frontiers scaled by dance, music and other performing arts. Behind the famous creeds and ceremonials of the country, stand the [Bhagavad Gita](http://www.indianetzone.com/2/bhagavadgita.htm), the [Upanishads](http://www.indianetzone.com/23/upanishads.htm), the Tantra, the [Vedas](http://www.indianetzone.com/5/vedas.htm); these, though referable to receding ages as regards their rise, are living influences at the present era.

**Emergence of Indian Renaissance**
The period when the Hindu religious system was revived can be termed as Hindu renaissance, which was marked with the restoration of the Hindu deities and tradition. The Guptas, pioneer of the Golden age resuscitated all lost glory by setting up a tradition, which was very Indian, with developments in [Sanskrit literature](http://www.indianetzone.com/2/sanskrit_literature.htm), art forms and religion at its peak. The late 18th century marked the beginning of a new era with movements essential for a complete reformation. The reformists did never think of discriminating on the basis of caste or sub caste, gender, or race. Hindu nationalism also rose to a great extent during this period.

During the Renaissance in Europe, India witnessed a renaissance of its own; the [Taj Mahal](http://www.indianetzone.com/2/taj_mahal.htm) was built during this period; sacred texts were translated into different languages and there was development of overseas trade. Moreover, the Grand Trunk Road was constructed during this extensive period and many social reformers also had lived during this period. The most significant renaissance had occurred during the period of colonial rule in India. The British imperialists had ruled and dominated for the most prolonged period, during which both worse and beneficial incidents passed by, till the year 1947. The Indian Independence had earned the countrymen their vision of Swaraj and made them their own masters. Indian renaissance had rediscovered roots of economic and administrational stability. Renaissance was a solemn effort by a differentiated and higher class of people, who had made them distinguishable in every sphere of art, culture and education.

As a result, these native intellectuals earned themselves an opportunity to interact with the English class, when speaking, writing, or associations are being spoken about. And the territory of Bengal was absolutely leading in this Indian renaissance context, beginning from writers, politicians, historians, freedom fighters and religious saints. Such was their influence upon the then Indian society, that [Bengal renaissance](http://www.indianetzone.com/38/bengal_renaissance.htm) has now come to be coined as a cardinal element under British Indian episodes.

**Social Reformers in Indian Renaissance**
Indian Social Reformers had germinated mostly from Bengal, which was inclined towards a tendency to continuously produce luminaries in every field. Beginning from Raja [Ram Mohan Roy](http://www.indianetzone.com/18/ram_mohan_roy.htm) and perhaps ending in the last days of [Indian Freedom Struggle](http://www.indianetzone.com/39/indian_independence_movement.htm) with [Nirad Chaudhuri](http://www.indianetzone.com/5/nirad_chaudhari.htm), reformist movements had incessantly procured multi-faceted results. In this context, the Muslim League was also not left far behind. In the erstwhile undivided India, with the concept of brotherhood, Muslims made major contributions into Indian renaissance, making the English-native interface much facilitating. Muslim renaissance thus counts into a unique amalgamation of religious and nationalistic concepts, mingling well with British Indian history.

[Ramakrishna Paramahansa](http://www.indianetzone.com/1/ramakrishna_paramahansa.htm) was a religious teacher and his contributions were important for a traditional revival of Hinduism comparable to Chaitanya`s. [Swami Vivekananda](http://www.indianetzone.com/3/swami_vivekananda.htm) had established Ramakrishna Mission on May 1st, 1897, with a motto for assisting in welfare services with a spiritual point of view. He had advocated Vedanta philosophy and Yoga not only to India, but also the West. The Ramakrishna Math and Mission are the integral institutions of faith for the Hindus currently.

[Aurobindo Ghose](http://www.indianetzone.com/3/aurobindo_ghosh.htm) was a nationalist, scholar, poet and philosopher who preached a new spiritual path called the integral [Yoga](http://www.indianetzone.com/42/yoga.htm). He had contributed to [Hinduism](http://www.indianetzone.com/10/hinduism.htm) greatly with a new interpretation of Vedas concerned with inner spirituality. Ram Mohan Roy was founder of the [Brahmo Samaj](http://www.indianetzone.com/3/brahmo_samaj.htm) and among the pioneers of the Indian socio-religious reform movements. He had exerted supreme influence upon politics, social life, education and religion alike. [Swami Dayananda Saraswati](http://www.indianetzone.com/5/swami_dayanand_sarawati.htm) was the founder of [Arya Samaj](http://www.indianetzone.com/3/arya_samaj.htm).

Sir [Syed Ahmed Khan](http://www.indianetzone.com/3/sir_syed_ahmed_khan.htm) was a politician and a pioneer of modern education among the Muslim community in India. The founder of the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College, which later developed into the Aligarh Muslim University, his ideas were shaped by a strong aversion to the emerging nationalist movement.

Allama Iqbal is revered for his contributions for the revival of Islamic civilisation all over the world. He had penned about politics, religion and other topics envisaging the cause of the Muslims, conferring them status and identity at political level and achieving their unity widely.

**Reformist Groups during Indian Renaissance**
The religious reformers and reformists groups played an integral part in the ushering in of Indian renaissance, though they also functioned at regional levels. Brahmo Samaj was the society formed by the ideas of developing a universal religion, whose ideology to a large extent was derived from the [Isa Upanishad](http://www.indianetzone.com/14/isa_upanishad.htm), a monotheistic Hindu scripture. Ideas behind Raja Ram Mohan Roy`s Brahmo Movement included abolition of caste system, abolition of dowry, and abolition of Sati and improvement of the educational system.

There were many other groups that developed during this period. Hindu Dharma Sabha was founded in 1830 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy to limit the intrusion of English culture in India. Sanatan Singh Sabha was the original Singh Sabha formed in 1873 by Sikhs in [Amritsar](http://www.indianetzone.com/4/amritsar.htm) to recover a distinctive Sikhism. Tattvabodhini Sabha was an essential reformist organisation, which was founded by [Debendranath Tagore](http://www.indianetzone.com/37/debendranath_tagore_founder_brahmo_samaj.htm) to popularise Brahmo Dharma or Brahmo faith. Paramahansa Yogananda founded Yogoda Satsanga Society in 1917 on the banks of the [Ganga River](http://www.indianetzone.com/2/ganga_river.htm) at Dakshineswar Kali Temple. [Vinayak Damodar Savarkar](http://www.indianetzone.com/30/veer_savarkar_indian_freedom_fighter.htm) or Veer Savarkar formed the Ratnagiri Hindu Sabha in 1924, aiming to the preservation of Hindu social and cultural heritage. Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha was initially a Hindu nationalist organisation of [Manipur](http://www.indianetzone.com/3/manipur.htm), formed by Maharaja Churachand Singh.

[Keshab Chandra Sen](http://www.indianetzone.com/42/keshab_chandra_sen.htm) founded the Sangat Sabhas, Believer`s Associations in 1860. These Sabhas comprised small discussion groups that met on a weekly basis, but his energetic disciples soon showed an inclination for action rather than mere discussions. Hitaishini Ganga Dharma Sabha was founded in Haridwar for the benefit of the cow, social order and the holy River Ganges. The Radhasoami Satsang Beas, based in Northern India, is a philosophical organisation, following the spiritual teachings of all religions. Manav Dharma Sabha was one of the earliest socio-religious reform movements in Gujarat and British India, founded on 22nd June 1844. Prarthana Samaj, or the Prayer Society in Sanskrit, is a movement for religious and social reform in Maharashtra that was based on previous reform movements and traditions of the state.

Nowrozjee Furdoonjee and [Dadabhai Naoroji](http://www.indianetzone.com/24/dadabhai_naoroji.htm) founded the Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Sabha and put in considerable efforts. The Sabha was meant for the purification of Zoroastrian religion, which was being prejudiced by Hindu elements.

India did not merely stand still, while Europe had gone on towards some bright goal during the renaissance period. India had moved and carried its history with it as well, not merely in books but in its thoughts and evolution.

**India's Renaissance 1881-1905**

**by Sanderson Beck**

[**Reforms in India 1881-99**](http://www.san.beck.org/20-3-India1881-1905.html#a1)[**Curzon's Viceroyalty 1899-1905**](http://www.san.beck.org/20-3-India1881-1905.html#a2)[**Ramakrishna and Vivekananda**](http://www.san.beck.org/20-3-India1881-1905.html#a3)[**Theosophy and Blavatsky 1875-88**](http://www.san.beck.org/20-3-India1881-1905.html#a4)[**Besant and Theosophy 1889-1905**](http://www.san.beck.org/20-3-India1881-1905.html#a5)[**Indian National Congress 1885-1905**](http://www.san.beck.org/20-3-India1881-1905.html#a6)

This chapter has been published in the book [***SOUTH ASIA 1800-1950***](http://www.san.beck.org/EC20-cover.html).
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**Reforms in India 1881-99**

[**British India's Wars 1848-1881**](http://www.san.beck.org/14-2-BritishIndiaWars1848-81.html)

By 1881 India had 253,890,000 people. Viceroy Ripon's finance minister, Major Evelyn Baring, lowered the duty on salt and removed all import duties except on alcohol, salt, opium, arms and ammunition, thus allowing free trade. Because very few Indians had been able to pass civil service exams in England by the age of 19, Ripon raised the age limit back to 21. He added Oriental language as a subject, but the Secretary of State rejected these and other reforms. Ripon tried to ban employment of children under eight years, but Bengal's lieutenant governor Ashley Eden persuaded him to make it under seven; working hours were limited for children under twelve instead of fourteen.

In 1882 Prime Minister Gladstone told India to bear the £1.75 million cost of sending troops to Egypt, but Ripon got the Home Government to contribute £500,000. He appointed the Hunter Commission to look into educational reforms, but science was still preferred over literary and moral education. After consulting the provincial governments, in 1882 the Governor-General and his Council passed a resolution allowing much more self-government in local communities. Within three years all the provinces were allowing local elections. In 1882 the Sirhind Canal was completed with a length of 3,700 miles. During Ripon's four years railways were extended by 2,000 miles to more than 11,500 miles in India. In 1883 Law Minister Courtenay Ilbert introduced a controversial bill that allowed Indian judges to hear cases of Europeans. Planters were so upset that Ripon was insulted in the streets of Calcutta. Finally they agreed to let Europeans request a jury of which half were to be Europeans. Ripon retired at the end of 1884 so that the liberal Gladstone could choose his successor, the Earl of Dufferin (Frederick Temple Blackwood), who had served in Egypt.

In 1876 the British Resident had refused to remove his shoes and kneel before King Mindon in Upper Burma, and his visits ceased. Thibaw became king of Burma in 1878, and British merchants and residents sent complaints to India. After Resident R. B. Shaw died in Upper Burma in June 1879, his successor Col. H. A. Browne and his staff left Mandalay. Two British steamers complained they were mistreated by Burmese officials. In 1881 the British set boundary pillars between Burma and Manipur, which the Burmese Government did not accept. King Thibaw tried to mollify the British by abolishing his monopolies in February 1882, but the next year he sent a trade mission to Paris.

France made a treaty with Burma in January 1885, and later the British learned of secret arms importing from Tonkin. Thibaw demanded a loan of £220,000 from the Bombay-Burma Trading Company for a royal concession in teakwood. When the Company refused, the Government of Burma fined the Trading Company ten lakhs of rupees (£230,000) in August for having bribed the governor of Ningyan to harvest the timber. Burma prepared to grant the concessions to France. In October the British sent Burma an ultimatum demanding a permanent Resident at Mandalay, control over Burma's foreign policy, arbitration of the timber case, and Burma's help trading with Yunnan. King Thibaw rejected this on November 9, and General Prendergast with 10,000 men took over Mandalay on November 28. The Burmese army dispersed in the jungles and became robber bands. Thibaw had killed so many possible successors that on the first day of 1886 Viceroy Dufferin proclaimed the British annexation of Upper Burma into the Indian empire. As many as 30,000 troops and five years were needed to pacify the brigands. Six more years were spent trying to control the Shans and Chins on the borders.

The Russians occupied Merv in 1884, and General Komaroff drove the Afghans from Panjdeh with heavy losses in March 1885. The British mobilized for war, but Abdur Rahman was visiting Viceroy Dufferin and agreed to concede Panjdeh rather than precipitate an Anglo-Russian war in his country. Gladstone thus arranged to let the Russians keep Panjdeh in exchange for the Afghan Amir retaining the Zulfiqar Pass. In 1886 a commission agreed on an Afghan border running from the Oxus River to the Zulfiqar Pass. That year Dufferin replaced the license tax on trade with an income tax, and the age of admission to the Indian Civil Service was raised to 23.

Chandrakirtti ruled Manipur from 1850 until his death in 1886. He had ten sons by six queens. Sura-chandra became maharaja; Kula-chandra was named heir apparent; and after Jhala-kirtti died a few months later, Tikendrajit became Senapati (commander-in-chief). Tikendrajit was the only brother who knew Hindustani well and could converse with the British agent, F. S. C. Grimwood. At midnight on September 21, 1890 two other brothers, Angao Sena and Zilla Gumba, led several hundred men and took over the palace. The Maharaja gave no order for fighting, and the British political agent Grimwood had British sepoys disarm the Manipuri troops. The two brothers favored the popular Tikendrajit, but he waited for Kula-chandra to return and be crowned. Maharaja Sura-chandra went into exile but did not abdicate.

In February 1891 Viceroy Lansdowne and Chief Commissioner J. W. Quinton declared they would recognize Kula-chandra as maharaja of Manipur if he was advised by the British agent, deported Tikendrajit, and allowed 300 British soldiers in the Residency. Quinton went to Manipur with four hundred Gurkha soldiers under Col. Skene in March and planned to arrest Tikendrajit by inviting him to a durbar. Tikendrajit was kept waiting at the gate, learned of the extra soldiers, and returned home. A British attack on his house failed, but the British killed some people and burned down a dozen nearby houses. The Manipuris had four guns and began bombarding the Residency. During a truce Tikendrajit and his brother Angao Mingto met with Quinton, Grimwood, Col. Skene, and two others; but as the five were leaving, they were attacked by a mob, who killed Grimwood. While Tikendrajit was sleeping, Tongol General had the four Englishmen and their bugler beheaded. When he awoke, Tikendrajit was angry at Tongol General and freed the other British soldiers and subjects. In a trial before a special court Tikendrajit was convicted of abetting Tongol General. The Governor-General commuted the death sentences of Kula-chandra and his brother Angao Sena to transportation for life and confiscation of property, but both Tongol General and Tikendrajit were hanged on August 13. Accounts of Tikendrajit's trial indicate it was unfair, and his death had been called a judicial murder. The British recognized a five-year-old as maharaja and administered Manipur.

After being governor-general of Canada for five years, the Marquess of Lansdowne became viceroy of India in December 1888. He extended British control into the Zhob Valley in northern Baluchistan in 1889 and into the Kurram Valley in 1892. Irrigation increased cultivated area, but the population of India was growing even faster, thirty million in a decade. The value of silver decreased almost in half as Germany demonetized silver, and Lansdowne closed down the free coinage of silver in Indian mints. Gold was made legal tender in India. Lansdowne enacted a law to prevent cruelty to animals. He encouraged the election of local councils, and an act in 1892 allowed legislative councils to discuss the budget and public issues. However, by authorizing separate representation for Hindus and Muslims they practiced the imperial method of divide and rule.

Communal conflicts between Hindus and Muslims increased between 1885 and 1893, breaking out in 1885 in Lahore and Karnal, in 1886 in Delhi, in 1889 in Hosiarpur, Ludhiana, Ambala, and Dera Ghazi Khan, and in 1891 in Madras. During six days of riots in 1893 in Bombay 65 people were killed, and more than five hundred were injured. In the spring of 1893 riots erupted in Bihar over the killing of cattle. When the Chief Commissioners of Assam raised land assessments by more than seventy percent in 1893, people spontaneously revolted. They were suppressed by force, and leaders were arrested. On January 10, 1894 several thousand people gathered at Rangiya and refused to disperse until in the evening they were fired on by the military and police. A similar incident occurred in Darrang on January 28, but the police charged with fixed bayonets instead. The Deputy Commissioner was transferred, and the land revenue was reduced.

The Russians claimed the Pamirs in 1892, and the next year Mortimer Durand negotiated the Afghanistan boundary. Amir Abdur Rahman was allowed to import arms, and his annual subsidy was increased from 12 to 18 lakhs. The British tried to assert their authority over the Afridis, Mahsuds, Waziris, Swats, and the chiefs of Chitral and Gilgit. The tribal chiefs had not been consulted, and the boundary divided the Mohmand tribal area in two parts. Dr. Robertson was sent to help the new Mehtar of Chitral and decided to stay because of the hostility of Umra Khan of Jandol. In January 1895 the Mehtar was murdered, and Umra Khan proclaimed a jihad in Dir, Swat, and Bajaur. The Chitralis and Pathans besieged Dr. Robertson at Fort Chitral in March. Col. Kelly marched 350 miles in 35 days from Gilgit in Kashmir, and Robert Low went by way of Malakand. Chitral was garrisoned, but Salisbury's government vetoed it in August. The boundary dispute was settled the next month. In June 1897 Dawaris in the Tochi Valley requested British aid, but the political officer's escort was attacked at Maizar. Sadullah Khan led an uprising in Swat and attacked Malakand and Chakdarra. Then the Mohmands led by Najm-ud-din revolted. The Orakzais and Afridis captured the Khyber forts, but a force of 35,000 men under Bruce Lockhart was used to subdue them. The British forward policy once again had provoked violence.

Victor Alexander Bruce (1894-99) was the ninth earl of Elgin and the son of a viceroy. He was inexperienced and depended on advice by telegraph from Whitehall. A five percent import duty was put on cotton in 1894, and the Lancashire interests quickly got a countervailing excise of five percent imposed on cotton manufactured in India. These were both reduced to 3.5 percent two years later. A drought began to spread in 1896, and sixty million people were affected in western and central India. By 1897 about 4,500,000 people had died. A meteorologist called it the worst drought in two centuries. Bubonic plague spread from Bombay in August 1896 and took another 193,000 lives by 1898. This was followed by a second famine in 1899; despite extensive Government relief efforts spending more than £6,000,000, estimates of the number of people who died ranged from the Government's 1,250,000 to William Digby's 3,250,000.

Shri Birsa revived the Munda faith in Chotanagpur and urged his followers to worship the one God he called Sing Bonga. They tried to purify their lives by being chaste and abstaining from intoxicants and animal food. Some of his followers were Christian converts, and they considered Birsa a prophet and an incarnation of God. Thousands of Mundas made the pilgrimage to his village Chalkad. The British government believed their goal of self-government was dangerous, and they arrested Birsa and many followers at night on August 24, 1895. Birsa and fifteen followers were sentenced to a fine and two years imprisonment while others only had to pay a small fine. After Birsa was released in January 1898, he began training his followers to use swords and bows and arrows. They were urged to fight against their oppressors and planned an uprising for Christmas 1898. They attacked mission houses and fought police. On January 7, 1899 about three hundred Mundas attacked the Khunti Police Station, killed a constable, and set houses on fire. Troops were called in and killed about two hundred Mundas, including women and children. Complaints were later made that some wounded also had been buried in deep trenches. Birsa's general Gaya Munda was shot dead, but Birsa was not captured until February 2, 1900. He died of cholera in jail four months later. About 450 followers of Birsa were arrested, and 87 were tried; two received capital sentences, and the rest were transported or imprisoned.

From 1881 the number of students increased over the next twenty years by 49% in primary schools and 180% in secondary schools. By 1902 about four million students were being instructed in 105,000 schools, plus 600,000 pupils in 43,000 private schools. The 145 arts colleges had 17,500 undergraduates. Yet with India's huge population this still meant that only one boy in six was in a primary school and only one out of forty girls. Twelve female colleges had only 177 students. Secondary schools had 9,800 girls, and primary schools had 380,000 girls.

Dayananda Saraswati (1824-83) objected to idol worship at the age of fourteen. Five years later he ran away from home to avoid being married and became a sannyasi in the Saraswati Order. After fifteen years of ascetic wandering, he studied the ancient *Vedas* under a blind old teacher who beat them into him. He learned that the *Vedas* did not sanction idol worship nor child marriage nor the subjection of women. He founded Arya Samaj in Bombay in 1875 to spread Hinduism in northern India, and he went to the Punjab in 1877. He took a more fundamentalist attitude toward the *Vedas* than the liberal Brahmo Samaj. His strict view of karma made forgiveness impossible. His Satyartha Prakash argued that Hinduism is better than other religions, and he founded the Cow Protection Association in 1882 to try to stop Muslims from slaughtering cattle. Dayananda stated that the primary purpose of Arya Samaj is to improve the physical, spiritual, and social conditions of humanity by treating everyone with love, justice, and a due regard for their merits. He was attacked by the orthodox and was eventually poisoned by a woman after he had criticized the loose living of a prince.

Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901) enrolled in the first class at Bombay University in 1859. Two years later he was the English editor of the *Indu Prakash*, and he began teaching history at Elphinstone College in 1866. Ranade was a judge for thirty years and served on the High Court of Bombay. He urged Hindus to embrace all humanity, and he criticized asceticism and contempt for the world. In his *Theist's Confession of Faith* he emphasized the unity of God, the reality of God's creation, and the spiritual nature of the human soul. Although he considered congregational worship and ceremonies helpful, he found asceticism, adoration of gurus, and belief in saviors and miracles unnecessary. Ranade led the Prarthana Samaj (Prayer Society), which began missionary work in 1882. He advised obeying conscience instead of expediency and urged social reforms because he believed that all humans are essentially equal. He justified reform as the work of liberation based on reason, and he emphasized the divine principle in everyone as more important than great and wise men.

Ranade founded the Indian National Social Conference in 1887. He advocated abolishing caste, recognizing inter-caste marriages, prohibiting child marriage, and legalizing widow's remarrying. He repudiated the seclusion of women, promoted female education, and opposed all irrational and cruel customs that degrade human beings. He argued that the law of karma could be controlled by making one's will serve the higher will and the law of duty (dharma). Ranade urged Hindus and Muslims to work together as they did in Akbar's time; he warned against the mistakes of Aurangzeb. In 1890 he inaugurated the Industrial Association of Western India. Two years later his essay on "Indian Political Economy" suggested that many economic functions such as education, postal service, telegraphs, railways, canals, and insurance could be discharged by the state. He noted that in India the state was the sole landlord and the largest capitalist in the country, being involved in iron and coal fields and experiments with cotton, tobacco, tea, coffee, and cinchona plantations. In 1900 his *Rise of the Maratha Power* was published.

**Curzon's Viceroyalty 1899-1905**

Viceroy George Nathaniel Curzon arrived at Calcutta on January 3, 1899, eight days before his 40th birthday. He was interested in every aspect of government and energetically worked for improvements. Sugar from imported European beets had increased tenfold in the previous decade, and so he imposed a duty on subsidized sugar-beet imports in order to protect Indian growers of sugar cane. The bill was passed in March, and Curzon, who believed in free trade, explained that the new duties made up for the sugar-beet bounties. He visited areas suffering from famine and pestilence. Three and a half million people were on Government relief, and he was severely criticized in the press for warning provincial governments against spending too much for famine relief. Curzon favored self-reliance and generally had a low opinion of Indians. Yet he felt he was the only official willing to punish soldiers for killing Indians. He asserted his authority by punishing officers and the regiment that obstructed justice after a Burmese woman was raped by British soldiers in Rangoon. The Indian press praised this justice. However, he antagonized the Indian nationalists when he curtailed the elected officials in the 1899 Calcutta Municipal bill in order to make administration more efficient. Curzon traveled the country and encouraged the rajas to do their duty. The silver rupee had stabilized at 1s 4d, and with less military spending the economy prospered during his years.

Curzon opposed forward defenses on the borders and saved six lakhs of rupees on fortifications. He reduced the 10,200 troops in the northwest to 5,000 by 1904. He limited the importation of arms and encouraged the tribes to maintain peace and stop crime by granting them allowances. His policy was to let tribal forces defend their own country, and he concentrated British troops in the rear as a safeguard and support. During the previous five years military operations on the northwest frontier had cost £4,584,000, but in his nearly seven years they would spend only £248,000. He organized this region and five districts from the Punjab into the new North-West Frontier Province under a chief commissioner. The old North-Western Provinces were renamed the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. In 1900 India sent over 8,000 British troops for the Boer War in South Africa along with 3,000 Indians for non-combatant service. In 1901 Abdur Rahman died. His oldest son Habibulla insisted that his agreements with the British be continued, though he did not draw the subsidy for a few years. After the Boer War ended in 1902, Curzon refused to permit Indians to be recruited as indentured laborers for the Transvaal gold mines. He confirmed the principle that when India loaned troops for a colonial war, the imperial Government must pay the expenses.

Curzon sent Col. Francis Younghusband to Tibet in July 1903, and they killed at least 600 Tibetans who tried to stop them before they reached Gyantse in April 1904. While Curzon was in England, Younghusband pushed on to Lhasa. The Dalai Lama fled, but Younghusband got Tibetan officials to agree to a British official residing at Gyantse with the right to visit Lhasa, and he imposed an indemnity of three lakhs of rupees per year for the next 25 years. This violated his own instructions, and the British Government changed it to 25 lakhs of rupees to be paid in three years. Then the British troops would be withdrawn. The British Government reprimanded Curzon for his aggressive policy that turned a trade mission into an armed invasion.

The Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900 limited the sale of land to agriculturalists so that moneylenders could not take over farms. In 1904 Curzon enacted Cooperative Credit Societies to address the problem of farmer's debts, and the next year he persuaded Henry Phipps to contribute £30,000 to establish the Agricultural Research Institute at Pusa in Bengal. In 1905 a report recommended that they spend £30,000,000 in the next twenty years to irrigate 6,500,000 acres. In the previous twelve years the area of food crops increased by only three percent while the area of non-food crops grew by 29 percent. As the population increased by fifteen million, the increased food was only half enough. The Suspension and Remissions Resolution of 1905 allowed for flexibility in collecting land revenue in hard times, and Curzon established the principle that land taxes should not exceed ten percent of all revenues.

In 1904 Viceroy Curzon appointed a commission that improved police training and increased their pay. The number of police expanded from 150,000 to 175,000. He also enacted a law to preserve and protect ancient monuments. However, his Universities Bill of 1904 aroused protests because they believed fixed fees would block new universities from starting. Curzon wanted to improve the teaching at institutions that had become primarily examining boards. In 1905 he created a Department of Commerce and Industry. He encouraged mining by removing obstructive regulations. During his viceroyalty more than 6,000 miles of railway lines were added to the 27,000 miles already in India.

Bengal contained 190,000 square miles, and the population had increased to 78 million. So in 1905 Curzon divided it into two parts, leaving Muslims the majority in the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Hindu political leaders in Calcutta protested this because the Biharis and Oriyas now outnumbered those speaking Bengali in the province Western Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. They began boycotting British textiles and promoted the Swadeshi cloth made in India. The partition took effect on October 16, 1905, and 50,000 people gathered at the Kali temple near Calcutta. They sang "Bande Mataram" and bathed in the Ganges. Sisters tied woolen threads around their brothers' wrists as they vowed to undo the partition of Bengal. This *rakhi-bandhan* ceremony became an annual ritual. Gurkha troops were stationed in East Bengal. Surendranath Banerji said that the agitation would not stop until the partition was cancelled.

Two British titans clashed when H. H. Kitchener became commander-in-chief. He wanted to eliminate the military member on the Council who administered the military department and also offered the Viceroy a second opinion. Viceroy Curzon objected to the change because he thought the current system worked well by relieving the commander-in-chief of much administrative work. When the British Government chose a compromise that favored Kitchener, Curzon resigned in August 1905, staying on for three more months.

Ananda Mohan Bose had first suggested at the 1898 Indian National Congress that India should be represented in the British Parliament, and in 1905 the Congress passed a resolution that each province should have at least two members in the House of Commons. That year Gokhale founded the Servants of India Society to promote the national interests of the Indian people. He noted that the death rate in India had risen from 24 per thousand in 1883 to the current 34 per thousand. The 1905 partition of Bengal provoked Tilak into advocating a boycott of British goods that grew into a movement that swept the nation.

[**India's Boycott 1905-07**](http://www.san.beck.org/14-4-India1905-18.html#a1)

**Ramakrishna and Vivekananda**

Gadadhar Chattopadhyaya (Chatterji) was born into a poor Brahmin family in a small village in western Bengal just before dawn on February 18, 1836. From the age of seven he had mystical experiences, often falling into trances. He attended school but preferred to spend his time with wandering *sadhus*. He went to Calcutta when he was seventeen, and three years later he began assisting his older brother Ramkumar at a temple devoted to the goddess Kali at Dakshineswar. There he had more mystical experiences and eventually took the name Ramakrishna Paramahansa. His life was devoted to God and searching continually for greater God realization. He spent long hours in prayer and meditation or singing and wailing to Kali. Because he had so many peculiar trances and visions, he was relieved of the usual priestly duties.

When Ramakrishna was 24, he was married to a girl who was only five years old. A Bhairavi yogi observed that Ramakrishna's odd behavior was similar to that of the famous Vaishnava Chaitanya, and she initiated him into Tantric *sadhana* (spiritual practice). He practiced this for two years, going through the stages. Then in 1863 he became a Vaishnava and had a vision of Krishna. For a while he dressed and acted like a woman, longing for Krishna. The nondualist guru Tota-puri taught him how to practice Vedanta. Bhairavi warned him that if he became a nondualist, he would lose his devotion; but Ramakrishna went ahead. He could easily experience Kali, and by destroying her image in his consciousness he could empty his mind and attained *nirvikalpa samadhi* in one day. Tota-puri was surprised because it took the guru forty years of ascetic practice. Ramakrishna believed that every religion is a path to God and proved it to himself by practicing the spiritual disciplines of various Hindu sects and other religions until he experienced God by their methods. When Ramakrishna was initiated as a Sufi, he ate and dressed like a Muslim and prayed to Allah. After three days he had a vision of God. Another three days of Christian practice resulted in his vision of Jesus Christ.

When Ramakrishna's wife Sarada Devi came to Dakshineswar, he worshipped her as his mother. They were celibate. She accepted this, served him, and asked him to teach her how to realize God. In 1867 Ramakrishna went on a pilgrimage for four months. He served as a sweeper and scavenger to clean up after outcastes and Muslims, and he became known as a saint.

Keshab Chandra Sen, the influential leader of the Brahmo Samaj, visited him. In 1875 Ramakrishna went to see him and his disciples, speaking in parables. Keshab was won over and published an influential sketch of Ramakrishna's life and teachings. Keshab agreed that his daughter could marry the wealthy Maharaja of Cooch-Behar before she was fourteen years old. A split emerged in the Brahmo Samaj because Vijay Krishna Goswami and others accused Keshab of hypocrisy. They adamantly opposed child marriage and formed General Samaj. Ramakrishna said he opposed hard and fast rules but remained friendly with both sides. Keshab liked Ramakrishna's universality and was impressed by his vision of Jesus. Keshab worked on integrating the teachings of Hinduism and Christianity as a way forward, and in 1879 he declared a "New Dispensation, the Religion of Harmony." He hoped that Europe would enter the heart of Asia, and Asia the mind of Europe in a universal synthesis. He suggested they include and absorb all humanity without hating or excluding anyone. He wanted to unite East and West in one undivided and universal church of God in order to reconcile faith and modern science, philosophy and inspiration, and asceticism and civilization. On October 27, 1883 Keshab invited Ramakrishna on a chartered steamer, and he brought Vijay with him. In this way the two leaders were reconciled, though, as Ramakrishna predicted, their followers still continued the feud.

Many spiritual seekers came to see Ramakrishna, and he conversed with them. He accepted neither money nor expensive gifts. He could not even bear the touch of silver or gold coins. When he was asked how to eliminate passion, Ramakrishna asked why it should be eliminated. He recommended directing one's passion toward God. He taught that God is both with form and formless. He warned against setting limits to God's nature, and he found by experience that various ways of worshipping God can be successful. He said that to gain a vision of God one must practice spiritual discipline because one "cannot see him just by wishing." Kristodas Pal, editor of the *Hindu Patriot* newspaper, said that Ramakrishna's renunciation was an escape, and he believed in working to improve social conditions. Ramakrishna detected a note of egotism in "helping the world" and suggested that "serving the world" with less sense of self came from doing what the Divine Mother gave one to do.

Ramakrishna practiced exceptional devotion; but he also emphasized that one must always speak the truth to find God because God is truth. He taught the golden rule of doing what you wish others to do to you. He warned that people are quick to blame or praise, and so you should not be concerned about what others say of you. He noticed that people tend to develop the propensities of those around them, and they seek the company of those with similar propensities. Ramakrishna often taught in parables. He compared religion to the rain from heaven that becomes dirty depending on the medium through which it manifests. He said that as long as one lives, one may learn every day of the mysteries of love and devotion. He advised that the best course is to renounce desire and work unattached. Ramakrishna recognized Narendranath Datta as the one who would spread his teachings, but Ramakrishna himself never started a new religion or sect. He got cancer and finally departed from his body on August 16, 1886.

Narendranath Datta was born into a wealthy Kshatriya family in Calcutta on January 12, 1863. His family tried to get him to marry, but Narendra resolved to remain celibate and refused. He attended English schools and graduated from Calcutta University in 1883. He studied the writings of John Stuart Mill, David Hume, and Herbert Spencer. Narendranath liked Spencer's ideas on evolution, corresponded with him, and translated his book *Education* into Bengali. He attended the Brahmo Samaj and made contact with Keshab Chandra Sen.

When Narendranath first visited Ramakrishna in 1881, the saintly mystic told him that he was an incarnation of Narayana (Vishnu). Ramakrishna said that one can communicate with God. He asked Narendra to promise to come back soon. At the second visit Ramakrishna put his foot on him, and Narendra had an unusual experience. His consciousness changed so much that he thought he was dying and asked the master to stop it. Ramakrishna put his hand on Narendra's chest, and he returned to his normal awareness. On another occasion the master touched him, and Narendra realized that everything is part of God, that there is nothing in the universe but God. He was impressed how Ramakrishna combined the devotion of *bhakti* with the knowledge of Vedanta. He once said that Ramakrishna was a *bhakt* outwardly and a *jnani* (knower) inwardly while he was a *jnani* outwardly and a *bhakt* inwardly. While Ramakrishna emphasized the devotion of *bhakti*, Narendra would practice the karma yoga of working. They both taught that human misery would continue until human character changed. Thus lasting social reform depends on spiritual and ethical culture.

Narendra's father liked to spend money, and at his death in early 1884 he left behind more debts than assets. Narendra had to give up his clerkship and was suddenly poor. He was studying law and asked Ramakrishna to pray so that he would get a job. Ramakrishna said he did not make such requests, but he urged the educated Hindu to pray to Kali. Despite his reluctance to worship an idol, Narendra did so and came to accept the Divine Mother. As he experienced her, he too only prayed for detachment, devotion, and knowledge. A few days before he died, Ramakrishna passed his energy to Narendra. Though other disciples went back to school or work, Narendra and a few others started a fraternity of monks in a dilapidated house in Baranagar near Kasipur. They barely survived on rice and salt, but eventually others joined.

In July 1890 Narendra began a pilgrimage and traveled around India for three years. The rajas of Ramnad and Khetri urged him to represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions meeting at the World Exposition at Chicago in 1893 in commemoration of Columbus, and they offered to pay his expenses. While meditating on the rock at Cape Comorin, the southern tip of India, Narendra realized that India needed food and the West needed spirituality. The Raja of Khetri suggested he call himself Swami Vivekananda, and he sailed from Bombay on May 31, 1893, stopping at Colombo, Hong Kong, and Japan before reaching Vancouver. Vivekananda arrived at Chicago in mid-July but learned the Parliament was delayed until September. So he went to Boston, where he gave talks and became a local celebrity. The Swami spoke five times to the Chicago conference and was very well received. His comments before reading his paper on Hinduism were widely reported in the American press. He criticized the English Christians for putting their foot on the neck of 250 million Asians, and he reminded them of the Spanish conquest of America. He warned that the Muslim sword could destroy India, and he said, "Blood and sword are not for the Hindu, whose religion is based on the laws of love."1

Swami Vivekananda suddenly became a world figure, and his intelligent interpretation of Hinduism lifted its philosophy to a new level of recognition in India and the world. A lecture tour was quickly organized for him, and in the next two years he spoke often in Chicago, Detroit, Boston, New York, and other cities. He preached self-reliance and individual effort. Scriptures can be a guide until one is strong enough to do without them. He believed that only the spiritually aware could be great teachers of humanity. In the summer and fall of 1895 he visited London and Paris, and he inspired Max Müller to publish *Ramakrishna - His Life and Teachings*. He went back to New York and then returned to England in April 1896 on his way home. He had gained some western disciples who worked for Indian education and freedom in various ways. Vivekananda believed that education is the key to the development of equality and democracy. When people develop their own inner powers, they will become free.

Vivekananda observed that the western world especially had become very materialistic and so needed the spiritual understanding that India could offer. He combined the need for spiritual awakening with patriotic Indian nationalism. Yet he went beyond nationalism, which he considered an incomplete stage of development, to international solidarity with international laws as a more lasting solution to human conflicts. He believed that India is immortal because she persists in searching for God; but he warned that if they went in for politics and caused social conflicts, she would die. Just as hatred cannot be conquered by hatred but by love, materialism cannot conquer materialism. When armies try to conquer others, armies multiply and make brutes of humanity. He suggested that spirituality will conquer the West. Western civilization since the Greeks has sought happiness, but the Hindus seek spiritual liberation. Vivekananda observed how human societies had first been dominated by priests (Brahmins) and then by the nobility (Kshatriyas). In modern times the merchants (Vaishyas) had taken control. In 1896 he prophesied that the fourth epoch would bring domination by the workers (Sudras), and he predicted that the first proletarian state in the world would be Russia or China. He criticized the social Darwinism of competition, saying,

The attempts to remove evil from the world
by killing a thousand evil-doers,
only adds to the evil in the world.
But if the people can be made to desist from evil-doing
by means of spiritual instruction,
there is no more evil in the world.
Now, see how horrible the Western struggle theory becomes!2

In Vivekananda's idea of spiritual evolution the highest level is attained through sacrifice. He found that fighting put back human progress fifty years rather than moving it forward. He urged the other monks to become Christs themselves in order to aid in redeeming the world. They could deny themselves to realize God as Jesus had done.

Vivekananda landed on Ceylon in January 1897 and then returned to Calcutta. They had founded the Ramakrishna Order, and Brahmananda (Rakhal Chandra Ghosh) welcomed him home to the Alambazar monastery. Vivekananda handed him all the money he had raised and had to borrow pennies to take the ferry back across the Ganges. On May 1 Vivekananda spoke to the monks and announced his plans for the Ramakrishna Mission to teach the masses what they need for material and spiritual welfare. Their goals would be spiritual and humanitarian rather than political. The Ramakrishna Mission was instituted four days later, and monasteries were established throughout India. They immediately began working on famine relief and plague relief, founding hospitals and schools.

Vivekananda urged that the nation, like an individual, must learn to help itself. He said, "Modern India admits spiritual equality of all souls-but strictly keeps the social difference."3 He denounced untouchability and worked on raising the status of women and the masses. He recommended beginning slowly and working from the ground up. He believed that India needed to go beyond recalling her past by improving upon it. Vivekananda lectured tirelessly and published a book on Ramakrishna as well as *Jnanayoga*, *Rajayoga*, *Karmayoga*, and *Bhaktiyoga*. He believed that removing poverty was more important than preaching. He found God in the poor, the miserable, and the weak. He suggested that everyone should be treated equally because God is in everyone. Every individual and nation must work out their own salvation. Having power in the world does not necessarily make one happy, but by conquering oneself one may find happiness. Vivekananda taught that God unifies the variety of the universe. In God all humans are one, though every person is different. In the summer of 1899 Vivekananda visited California. There his health improved, and he began Vedanta centers in Los Angeles and San Francisco. After touring Europe he returned to India in December 1900. His health declined, but he taught a class and walked two miles on the day (July 4, 1902) he died with an expression of ecstasy on his face.

Brahmananda had succeeded Vivekananda as president of the Mission in February 1901, and he continued to serve in that position for the next 21 years. He emphasized that more time should be spent on learning how to know God than on serving humanity.

**Theosophy and Blavatsky 1875-88**

Helena Petrovna von Hahn was born on August 12, 1831 in the Ukraine. Her mother was an excellent novelist, but she died at the age of 28. When her governess told Helena that because of her fiery temperament she could not even marry an old man she considered ugly, the 17-year-old got him to propose to her. Helena tried to get out of marrying the elderly Nikifor Blavatsky but could not and after two months of resisting his "conjugal rights" she escaped to her grandmother. Helena traveled to Turkey, Greece, Egypt, and France, and in London she met her Hindu master. In 1852 Madam Blavatsky went to America and India but could not get into Tibet. She got the idea of combining science and religion and continued to travel around the world, sometimes dressing as a man. She participated in spiritualist experiments and astounded people by willing or evoking tapping sounds across a room that answered questions. In 1860 she began answering questions verbally or by writing. She volunteered to help Garibaldi, and at the battle of Mentana on November 3, 1867 she suffered five wounds. Blavatsky claimed that she spent three years in Tibet studying with her masters, but this has been questioned. She lived in Cairo in 1871 and went to New York in 1873.

On September 7, 1875 the Theosophical Society (TS) was founded in New York with Col. Henry Steel Olcott as chairman and William Quan Judge as secretary. At the first meeting the next day HPB (Blavatsky) agreed to be corresponding secretary. The main purposes are 1) to promote universal brotherhood without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color; 2) to study ancient and modern religion, philosophy, and science; and 3) to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the divine powers latent in humanity. Blavatsky published *Isis Unveiled* in September 1877 in two long volumes entitled *Science* and *Theology*. The first volume explores the occult sciences as an important part of psychology, and the second volume takes on traditional Christian theology as an obstacle to free thought in a society of "increasing materialism, worldliness and hypocrisy." In the last chapter HPB outlined the fundamental propositions of Oriental philosophy in ten points that are summarized as follows:

1. A “miracle” occurs because of eternal and immutable laws.
2. Nature has visible objectivity and an inner vital principle and above them eternal and indestructible spirit.
3. Humans have a physical body and an astral body but are sovereign and immortal spirits.
4. Magic is a science and an art for applying knowledge to control nature’s forces.
5. Arcane knowledge may be misapplied as sorcery or be used beneficently as wisdom.
6. Mediums are passive, but adepts actively control inferior powers.
7. All things are recorded and can be known by an adept.
8. People differ in spiritual gifts.
9. Adepts can withdraw the inner person from the physical body consciously, but mediums do so unconsciously.
10. Magic is based on knowing how magnetism and electricity affect humans and animals.

Blavatsky concluded,

Magic is spiritual wisdom;
nature, the material ally, pupil and servant of the magician.
One common vital principle pervades all things,
and this is controllable by the perfected human will.4

Madam Blavatsky became a citizen of the United States in July 1878. She and Olcott went to Bombay in January 1879 and announced that they were being guided spiritually by the mahatmas who live in the Himalayas. They recommended abstinence from alcohol and pure living in order to develop psychic and spiritual abilities. They taught occult science and considered clairvoyant intuition more important than rational analysis. The British secret service put HPB under surveillance because they thought she might be a Russian spy. She was the first editor of the monthly *Theosophist*, which began in October. Alfred Percy Sinnett was the editor of *The Pioneer*, the most influential newspaper in India that was a mouthpiece for the Government. The Theosophists visited him and his wife Patience in Allahabad, and Allan Hume became interested in Theosophy.

Blavatsky and Olcott first visited Ceylon in May 1880. The Sinnetts visited England and published *The Occult World* in June. Correspondence from Master KH helped Sinnett write *Esoteric Buddhism*. HPB said she met Master M in Lahore, and he told her to tour northern India. After that tour the Theosophists moved their headquarters from Bombay to Adyar in Madras in December 1882. Theosophy has a special appeal in India because of its primary doctrines of karma and reincarnation that are universally accepted by Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains. Thousands of educated Indians joined the Theosophical Society. Olcott helped Ceylon increase the number of Buddhist schools there from two in 1880 to two hundred by 1900. He did so much to revive Buddhism in Burma that a national committee of Japanese priests sent a representative to escort him to Japan.

HPB and Olcott traveled in Europe for seven months in 1884. Alexis Coulomb and his wife Emma had been expelled from the Theosophical Society in May for extortion, slander, and misuse of TS funds. In October 1884 HPB replied to a scandalous article in the *London Times* based on their accusations of fraud saying that she never tried to gain money for herself or the Society by means of her psychic gifts. In December 1885 Richard Hodgson issued a report for the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) based on the Coulombs' charges and incriminating letters. This scandal was widely believed at the time. Olcott persuaded Blavatsky to accept the recommendation of the Theosophists committee not to sue her defamers because a trial might ridicule the sacred names of the Masters. Blavatsky nearly died from an illness, and in March 1885 she resigned as corresponding secretary of the TS. Ironically this scandal gave Theosophy so much publicity that many more people joined. In 1884 the Theosophical Society had 104 chartered branches in the world, but by 1890 this had increased to two hundred. A century later handwriting expert Dr. Vernon Harrison made a thorough investigation for the SPR of the letters and concluded that the Coulombs had forged letters, that Hodgson was biased, and that the SPR had not checked his report critically. He also found that the letters attributed to the mahatmas were not written by HPB.

From 1885 to 1888 Blavatsky worked on writing *The Secret Doctrine* while she was living in Germany and then in London. Letters were given to Dr. William Hübbe-Schleiden, president of the TS in Germany, from the masters M and KH saying that they wrote *The Secret Doctrine* with HPB. The two long volumes on *Cosmogenesis* and *Anthropogenesis* contain many long quotations from other books that HPB copied and cited by psychic perception. Dr. Bertram Keightley had a typed copy of the manuscript made, looked them up in the British Museum, and found that most were accurate word for word. The first volume was published in October 1888, and the second volume came out three months later. HPB based her work on three premises: 1) that an "omnipresent, eternal, boundless, and immutable principle" is the basis "of all that was, is, or ever will be;" 2) that the eternal universe is a boundless plane in which the universal Spirit as souls (monads) experience a cycle of incarnations; and 3) that the souls are one with the universal over-soul.

*The Secret Doctrine* elucidates the mysteries and essential teachings of various religions in order to show their unity. Blavatsky also intended to reveal the occult side of Nature that modern science was not approaching. For HPB evolution is spiritual and mental as well as physical. She wrote of the one Universal Life, and she perceived that matter and force are two sides of the same substance. She explained karma as action and the universal law of cause and effect or ethical causation that governs the world of being. This law of retribution is unerring; but it does not predestine because humans plan and create the causes. Destiny is self-made. The doctrine of karma explains the origin of evil, but all actions are resolved into universal harmony by the law of justice. Science by being too materialistic has left out the inner, spiritual, psychic, and moral aspects of human nature. The aggregate of individual karma becomes national karma, and the world is the total of national karma. Because of the principle of Harmony we reward and punish ourselves for our own actions. HPB wrote,

With right knowledge,
or at any rate with a confident conviction
that our neighbors will no more work to hurt us
than we would think of harming them,
two-thirds of the World’s evil would vanish into thin air.
Were no man to hurt his brother,
Karma-Nemesis would have neither cause to work for,
nor weapons to act through.5

When one breaks the laws of harmony and life, one falls into the chaos that is produced. Avenging angels only represent the reaction. The doctrines of karma and reincarnation explain the apparent injustices in life. When humans learn to act from their inner spiritual intuitions with real altruism instead of by the impulses of the selfish body, then brotherhood will become actual. Humans are their own destroyers but their own saviors as well. HPB warned that Europe was on the eve of a cataclysm because of its racial karma. In other writings she warned of future wars and an instantly devastating new weapon.

Mohandas Gandhi discovered Theosophy and met HPB in 1889 while he was studying law in London. He first read the *Bhagavad-Gita* in Edwin Arnold’s English translation, and he joined the Blavatsky lodge in March 1891. In her last years HPB began a secret Esoteric Section for more than a thousand people. From *The Book of Golden Precepts* she wrote *The Voice of the Silence* and “The Seven Portals” with its seven keys of love (charity), harmony in word and action, patience, detachment, courage to find truth, meditation, and wisdom. She published *The Key to Theosophy* to answer basic questions. The motto of the Theosophical Society is “There is no religion higher than truth.” The Wisdom-Religion has been known since ancient times and is passed on by initiates, profound seekers of truth, in all cultures. HPB divided human nature into seven levels: 1) physical body *(rupa)*, 2) vital principle *(prana)*, 3) astral body *(linga sharira)*, 4) animal desires *(kama rupa)*, 5) mind *(manas)*, 6) soul *(buddhi)*, and 7) Spirit *(atman)*. However, in Indian traditions *buddhi* usually means intuition; *atma* is soul, and *Brahman* is God or Spirit. Blavatsky rejected the dangerous doctrine of atonement, that the sacrifice of Jesus can wipe out the enormous crimes against human and divine laws. Yet she described God’s mercy as boundless. She opposed retaliating against evil and advised leaving people to their karma. Because others do evil is no reason for doing evil oneself.

Blavatsky died on May 8, 1891, and her body was cremated. *The Theosophical Glossary* she wrote was published after her death.

**Besant and Theosophy 1889-1905**

Annie Wood was born October 1, 1847 in London. She married the Anglican priest Frank Besant in 1867. They had two children, but he abused her. When he said that she must accept Church dogma to stay with him, she left him and Christianity in 1873. Annie Besant joined the National Secular Society the next year, wrote for the *National Reformer*, and worked for woman suffrage, penal reform, trade unions, birth control, and against vivisection. She lectured on the political status of women and called for "equality before the law for all in public and in private." She said,

The man shall bring his greater strength
and more sustained determination,
the woman her quicker judgment and purer heart,
till man shall grow tenderer, and woman stronger,
man more pure, and woman more brave and free.6

She was secretary of the Malthusian League and educated people about birth control. In 1877 she and her mentor Charles Bradlaugh were prosecuted for republishing *The Fruits of Philosophy* by Charles Knowlton, and their acquittal allowed information on contraception. Because of her work for birth control, she lost custody of her daughter. Besant wrote *The Law of Population: Its Consequences and Its Bearing upon Human Conduct and Morals*. She argued that celibacy is not natural to men or women, and bodily needs require legitimate satisfaction. She suggested that by limiting population they would deprive the capitalists of their crowded labor market. Workers would have more opportunities with limited families. She was threatened with prosecution but not indicted, and the book eventually sold 175,000 copies. In February 1878 she helped organize the International Labor Union.

Annie worked to stop the imminent war in Afghanistan by writing the pamphlets *Rushing into War* and *England, India, and Afghanistan*. During the elections of 1879 she published "The Story of Afghanistan: or, Why the Tory Government Gags the Indian Press: A Plea for the Weak Against the Strong." This excellent summary of British interventions in Afghanistan boldly criticized the crimes of the Tory Government that murdered men and froze women and children by burning villages. She accused Disraeli of bullying, boasting, and imperialism. She noted that Amir Sher Ali's delayed response in the summer of 1877 was because of the forty-day mourning period for his son Abdulla Jan. Public opinion in England was misled, and the Indian press was gagged. She concluded that the defeat of the Tory party would mean peace, liberty, and hope for South Africa, India, and Afghanistan.

Becoming a friend of George Bernard Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Annie Besant joined the socialist Fabian Society in January 1885. She and Shaw were also on the executive committee of the Social Democratic Federation. She agreed with the Fabians' gradual approach to reform as evolution instead of revolution. Besant wrote pamphlets on why she was a socialist and on the socialist movement. During her atheistic phase she also wrote several pamphlets criticizing the Christian religion and in 1887 *Why I Do Not Believe in God*. She formed the short-lived Law and Liberty League in November 1887 with Jacob Bright and William Morris.

She was one of the leaders of the Social Democratic Federation that organized a march in Trafalgar Square with 10,000 people on November 13. Two thousand police and four hundred troops beat people, and one was killed on this “Bloody Sunday.” Two leaders and hundreds of others were arrested, but police refused to detain Besant.

In 1888 Besant and Willam T. Stead began editing *The Link* for humanitarian purposes. The Government issued an order against collecting money at public meetings; but Besant defied it in June 1888, and the rule was rescinded. She was in love with the socialist Herbert Burrows, and they helped organize a strike by women who worked at the Bryant and May match factory in East London and suffered terribly from starvation wages and phosphorus fumes that caused cancer. Shaw explained why Annie was different than himself and the Fabians when he wrote, "Injustice, waste, and the defeat of noble aspirations did not revolt her by way of irony and paradox; they stirred her to direct and powerful indignation and to active resistance."7 In 1889 Besant was elected to the London School Board, and her reforms included free meals and medical examinations for children in the elementary schools.

Annie Besant discovered Theosophy in 1889 when William Stead asked her to write a review of *The Secret Doctrine*. Like Shaw, she became a vegetarian. He asked her if she knew that Madam Blavatsky had been exposed by the Society for Psychical Research, and Blavatsky herself asked her to read the SPR report. Annie found that the allegations were not credible, and even if true they did not affect the teachings of Theosophy. She studied *The Secret Doctrine* and wrote a favorable review. In May 1889 she became a Fellow of the Theosophical Society and was blessed by Blavatsky and her master KH (Kuthumi). Besant became his disciple and soon was co-editing the magazine *Lucifer* (Light-bringer). She spoke on "Why I Became a Theosophist" and published it as a pamphlet, explaining that materialism had failed and that she was trying to follow the truth. In 1890 she published "The Trades Union Movement" pamphlet in which she wrote,

Now Trades Unionism is spreading among women,
and large and powerful unions
are springing up among unskilled workers;
so that there is hope that at last
all workers will be enrolled in disciplined hosts,
and there will be no stragglers from the army of labor.
When each Trade Union comprises
the majority of the workers in its Trade,
and when these unions are united
in a National Trade Federation,
then will come the time for the International Federation,
which will mean the triumph of labor
and the freedom of the workers everywhere.8

Besant gave her farewell speech to the secularists on August 30, 1891. She defended Blavatsky and said she had letters from the mahatmas in the same handwriting after her death. Besant, G. R. S. Mead, and Herbert Burrows emphasized that the principles of Theosophy were more important than occultism, but people still wanted to hear more about the mahatmas than brotherhood. Besant succeeded Blavatsky as head of the Esoteric Society in Europe, and she went on a speaking tour in the United States in 1892. She and her guru Gyanendra N. Chakravarti spoke at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago the next year.

After spending a week in Ceylon and visiting a Theosophical college there, Besant arrived with Olcott in India on November 16, 1893. Many Indians joined the Theosophical Society because they did not have to give up their religion. Some Hindu women came out of purdah to attend a convention, but Muslim women were more reluctant. Besant spoke to three thousand people in Madras on "India and Its Mission." Olcott gave her the Hindu name Annabai, and she followed most Hindu customs. Olcott had been reviving Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, and she hoped to do the same for Hinduism. She gave several lectures in Calcutta and stayed with Dr. Bhagavan Das. The *London Times* quoted her as telling Bengalis, "If the youths of India would act up to the traditions of their past, instead of fawning on a foreign power, they would not long remain under a foreign yoke."9 However, she explained in a letter that she came to India as a spiritual and educational worker rather than for political work. In four months she gave 121 lectures to audiences ranging from 600 to 6,000. Besant would spend the rest of her life as a resident of India, but she would travel to England annually for conferences and occasionally to America.

Besant learned from her own master that the mahatma letters she had found had been written by W. Q. Judge, who engaged in a struggle for power in the TS with Olcott and her. Judge was suspended and then reinstated as the head of the American TS. Besant widened her base of support by traveling to Australia and New Zealand in 1894. On October 29 the *Westminster Gazette* began a series of articles on "Isis Very Much Unveiled: The Truth about the Great Mahatma Hoax." The Theosophical Society in America declared itself the original and genuine TS. President Olcott in India expelled Judge and cancelled the American charters. Many branches in America formed independent associations. Besant learned Sanskrit and translated the *Bhagavad-Gita* in 1895. In *The Ancient Wisdom* she explained that on the higher planes whether a motive is good or bad can be even more important than whether the action is beneficial or not because one can learn from the results. She worked with the clairvoyant Charles W. Leadbeater and published books on thought forms and other spiritual studies. Judge died on March 21, 1896, and the spiritualist Katherine A. Tingley became Besant's rival by traveling to Europe and India. Leadbeater got into trouble by advising boys to use sexual self-gratification and for having close relations with them. Besant repudiated these, and they continued to work together.

In 1898 Besant founded the Central Hindu College, which became Benares Hindu University. She believed that the spiritual wisdom in India's philosophies could help the entire world. Theosophists started 250 schools that included women and the poor. They opposed caste restrictions and child marriage while helping outcasts and widows. To discourage child marriage she refused to admit married boys to the elementary departments and doubled the fees for boys who married in college. In 1903 Besant said that India must be governed by Indians and Indian ideas. However, in 1905 she refused to allow students to attend the college without shoes as part of the Swadeshi protest.

In her book *A Study in Consciousness*, which was first published in 1904, Besant observed that our knowledge of right and wrong comes from many experiences; but it can be guided by ideals. She suggested that studying divine teachers such as Krishna, Buddha, and Christ could be helpful. Evil desires will fall away if good desires are fostered. One way to avoid bad desires is to imagine the likely consequences that bring misery. The emotion of love directed to a living being is virtue, and vices springing from hate can be eradicated. What is right is in harmony with the great law and brings bliss, but what is wrong brings unhappiness. Love draws people together, whether it be a family, tribe, or nation. Right reason works actions of love into permanent obligations or duties. The will expressing as desire is not free but bound by those impulses. When the will is directed as love, the self-determined person is free. She served as the president of the Theosophical Society from 1907 until her death in 1933.

[**Besant, Krishnamurti, and Bhagavan Das**](http://www.san.beck.org/14-3-India1905-29.html#a6)

**Indian National Congress 1885-1905**

Surendranath Banerjea (1848-1926) was one of only a handful of Indians who qualified for the Indian Civil Service, but he was dismissed for failing to correct the false report of a subordinate. He went to London to appeal and was not even allowed to take the bar examinations. He decided to dedicate his life to redressing wrongs and protecting rights, both personal and collective. When he was arrested for criticizing a judge, he began the Indian tradition of welcoming imprisonment in order to expose the injustice of the Government's policies. In 1876 he founded the Indian Association of Calcutta to work for a united India. The next year he launched a national campaign against the reduction of the age limit for the Civil Service Examination, holding large meetings in Calcutta, Agra, Lahore, Amritsar, Mirat, Allahabad, Delhi, Kanpur, Lakhnau, Aligarh, and Benares. They petitioned for a higher age and exams in India as well as England, and they sent the Bengali barrister Lalmohan Ghosh to England as their representative.

In 1878 Banerjea urged college graduates to dedicate their lives to helping their country. He argued that violence was not necessary to redress grievances. He believed that under the British they could secure their rights by constitutional agitation. He noted that Nanak, who founded the Sikh empire, did much to unite Hindus and Muslims, and he preached good will between all religions. By living worthy, honorable, and patriotic lives they could live and die happily while making India great. Their next protest was against the oppressive Vernacular Press Act. During the debate over the controversial Ilbert Bill in 1883 they formed an All-India National Fund and the Indian National Conference.

Allan Octavian Hume had been secretary to the Government of India, but in 1879 Viceroy Lytton removed him for asserting his independent views. After he retired from the Indian Civil Service in 1882, Hume worked on forming a political organization that would unite the efforts of Indians. His idea was to have leading Indian politicians meet annually to discuss issues and plan strategies. He founded the Indian National Union in March 1885, and they planned a conference for the last week of December. Because of a cholera epidemic in Poona, the conference was moved to Bombay, and 72 volunteer delegates to the first Indian National Congress met on December 28. Bengali barrister W. C. Bonnerjea presided, and they passed nine resolutions that called for a royal commission to investigate the Indian administration, abolishing the Secretary of State's Indian Council, creating more legislative councils and allowing more elected members and discussion of budgets, reducing military spending, and simultaneous public service examinations in England and India with older candidates. They also protested the annexation of Upper Burma as part of India and sent the resolutions to political associations. Coincidentally in 1885 the second session of the Indian National Conference was meeting in Calcutta. This group merged with the Indian National Congress, which met annually the last week in December in various cities, followed by second and third sessions in Calcutta and Madras. Hume served as general secretary of the Congress for 21 years, and he often went to England to promote their causes.

The second annual Congress at Calcutta was attended by 434 delegates, 230 of them from Bengal. Dadabhai Naoroji presided and called for unity on the political program even though communities have social differences. They wanted India to have the same representative institutions as the British colonies of Canada and Australia. Madan Mohan Malaviya made his first speech and said there should be "no taxation without representation." Viceroy Dufferin invited members of Congress to a garden party as did the Governor of Madras the next year. In 1886 Dufferin appointed six Indians among the fifteen members of the Public Service Commission. The Civil Service was reorganized, and more Indians were recruited into the provincial and subordinate services. However, before leaving office in December 1888, Viceroy Dufferin objected to the methods of the Indian Congress and called them a "microscopic minority" of educated Indians.

In 1888 the Congress demanded that the minimum taxable income be raised to 1,000 rupees. The fifth annual Congress in 1889 was attended by 1,502 delegates, including 254 Muslims. Congress used constitutional agitation, and they published the journal *India*. Its editor William Digby established the Congress Agency in London, and William Wedderburn was elected chairman of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress and served in that position until his death in 1918. In 1890 Charles Bradlaugh introduced a bill in the House of Commons to expand the legislative councils. When an eleven-year-old bride died after intercourse in Calcutta, agitation increased to raise the age of marriage for girls from ten to twelve or fourteen. Behramji Merwanji Malabari was a Parsi and had published *Notes on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood* in 1884. This reform campaign led in 1891 to the Age of Consent Act that prohibited marriage before the age of twelve. In 1892 Naoroji was elected as a Liberal to the British House of Commons, and he argued that Europeans were not natural leaders of India because they did not belong to the people.

Malaviya noted at the eighth Congress that it was unjust to compel Indians to travel 10,000 miles to take an examination for service in their own country. In 1893 the House of Commons favored simultaneous exams in India and England for the Civil Service, but all the governments of India except Mysore opposed this, believing it would exclude Muslims and Sikhs. In the Congress that year Malaviya spoke about the miserable poverty of fifty million Indians because of British exploitation. In 1894 a delegate from Natal persuaded the Congress to pass a resolution asking the British Government to veto a law disenfranchising the Indians in South Africa. In 1895 "Surrender-not" Banerjea suggested that they could transplant the spirit of free institutions that made England a great nation. Never before had an ancient civilization been so influenced by modern ideas. Civilization had moved, like the sun, from east to west, and the west owes a great debt to the east. He hoped that the debt would be repaid by the enfranchisement of their people. In 1896 the Congress sponsored an Industrial Exhibition and a Social Conference.

Although they encouraged Muslims to attend and chose Badruddin Tyabji as president for their third annual meeting, only a few Muslims joined the Congress. Tyabji urged all educated and public-spirited citizens to work together for reforms to benefit all. He tried to persuade Muslims that Congress would not interfere with their religion. Sayyid (Syed) Ahmad Khan emphasized education and had founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1877. He advocated working with Hindus to support each other; but he generally opposed the Indian National Congress because he believed the Hindus and Muslims had conflicting interests. He trusted the British more than the Hindus. He formed the Annual Muslim Educational Congress in 1886, and they held their sessions at the same time of year as the Indian Congress.

Theodore Beck was the first principal of the Aligarh College, and he devoted his career to serving the Muslims in India. He was instrumental in forming the United Indian Patriotic Association in 1888 and the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association of Upper India in 1893. These organizations were parallel to the Indian National Congress and were intended to protect the political rights of Muslims by strengthening British rule in India. Sayyid Ahmad was concerned that Muslims as only one-fourth of the population of India would be outvoted by Hindus in a democratic government. His writings in Urdu in a clear style were influential. Beck died in 1899, and Theodore Morison was the principal of Aligarh College until 1905. He continued the hostility toward the Indian Congress, emphasizing educational and economical development rather than political agitation. Sayyid Ahmad died in 1898, and his policies were also followed by his successor, Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915) was strongly influenced by his teacher Ranade and carried on his work. When he graduated from Elphinstone College in 1885 he joined the Deccan Education Society in Poona, taking a vow of poverty for twenty years and dedicating his life to public service. That year Fergusson College was founded, and he began teaching English and mathematics. Gokhale first spoke at the Indian National Congress in 1889 and his annual speeches at Calcutta on the budget began in 1902. They called for self-government in the central and provincial governments, abolishing the India Council, spreading education, reducing military expenditures and military training for Indians, separating the judicial and executive functions in criminal justice, employing more Indians in higher public offices, reducing taxes, and using surpluses to promote medical relief, scientific agriculture, and industrial education. He argued that the large annual surpluses of the Government did not indicate success but that taxes on the people were much too high.

In 1903 Gokhale spoke about how they must improve the conditions of the low-caste Hindus by helping them get education and employment to improve their social standing and self-respect. He said it was monstrous that a class of people should be condemned to utter wretchedness, servitude, and degradation by permanent barriers that were impossible for an individual to overcome. He recalled how Gandhi had reported on the discrimination Indians were suffering in South Africa and how Ranade became an advisor to Gandhi. Ranade pointed out that Indians should correct the disgraceful oppression and injustice in their own country. Modern civilization is making greater equality a priority over the privilege and exclusiveness of the old world. Gokhale asked how they could realize their national aspirations if so many of their countrymen remained in ignorance and degradation. He served on the Bombay Legislative Council from 1902 until his death, and Gandhi considered him his political guru. Gokhale declined a position on the Secretary of State's Council and a knighthood. He urged the Parliament to pass mandatory education for boys and educational provisions for girls.

In 1905 Gokhale founded the Servants of India Society for those willing to take vows of poverty to serve the poor and help India to achieve self-government. Their five goals were to create love of the motherland, organize political education and agitation, promote goodwill and cooperation among different communities, assist in educating women and the poor, and lift up the depressed classes. Each member joining the Society took a vow to think of one's country first, serve it without seeking personal advantage, regard all Indians as brothers, be content with provisions provided by the Society, lead a pure life, quarrel with no one, and always work for the aims of the Society.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born on July 23, 1856 as a Maratha Brahmin. He earned a university degree and taught mathematics in Poona. He founded the Deccan Education Society and Fergusson College in 1884; but he resigned in 1890 after his associates gave up the ideal of selfless service by keeping their outside earnings. Tilak advocated action for political reforms and published two weekly newspapers - *Kesari* (which means "The Lion") in Marathi and *The Mahratta* in English. He argued that no alien government has the right to interfere in social customs no matter how worthy the cause. As a Hindu nationalist he opposed all British laws that restricted their religion, including banning the marriage of young girls. Yet he led by example and did not allow his own daughters to marry until they were at least sixteen. Tilak suggested self-help and national revival. He considered untouchability a cancer in the body of Hindu society and said it must be eradicated at all costs. He was so opposed to the Indian National Congress letting the Indian National Social Conference use their tent that he threatened to burn it down.

Tilak began organizing Ganapati festivals in 1893 to worship the popular Hindu god Ganesha. Tilak admired the Maratha warrior Shivaji and began the annual Shivaji festival in 1895. Rabindranath Tagore wrote a famous poem about the 17th-century hero of Maharashtra. Tilak urged civil disobedience for political change years before Gandhi began his experiments in South Africa; but he was a freedom fighter and considered nonviolence only a strategy, not a moral principle. Gandhi would later call Tilak the "maker of modern India." Tilak favored revolutionary action in politics but moderate evolution in social reforms. When the famine occurred in 1896, he demanded that victims receive the benefits mandated by the Famine Relief Code.

In May 1897 Tilak wrote in *Kesari* that Shivaji was justified in murdering the Mughal general Afzal Khan, and he suggested that it was not wrong to kill "for the good of others." He objected to the destruction of Hindu property as a means to prevent the bubonic plague from spreading. The Plague Commissioner W. C. Rand ordered stringent inspections and measures in Poona, and the next week on June 22 he and his assistant were shot after celebrating Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. Both died, and two Natu brothers were detained. Tilak was tried in September, and six Europeans on the jury found him guilty of sedition while the three Indian jurors voted not guilty; the judge sentenced him to eighteen months. The Indian newspapers censured the Government and praised Tilak. Eventually Balkrishna Chapekar and his brother Damodar Chapekar confessed and were hanged. Because of public pressure, Tilak was released early on September 6, 1898. The two Dravid brothers who informed on the Chapekar brothers were murdered on February 8, 1899 by a third brother, Vasudev Chapekar, and his friend, and they were also hanged. Going to prison made Tilak a hero, and he was given the name Lokamanya, which means "leader of the people." He demanded self-government *(swaraj)* and coined the slogan, "*Swaraj* is my birthright, and I will have it."

Using Government records, William Digby calculated that the capital drained out of India in the 19th century was £6,080,172,021. This figure represents how much the Europeans were exploiting the natural and human resources of India. India's public debt increased from 94 crores of rupees in 1860 to 312 crores by 1901.

Arabinda Ghose (later called Sri Aurobindo) was born on August 15, 1872 in Calcutta. His father was a barrister, and in 1879 he sent him to Manchester, where he was taught English, Latin, and French by Mr. and Mrs. Drewett. In 1884 Aurobindo went to St. Paul's in London and then to King's College at Cambridge in 1890 on a classics scholarship. He learned more languages and liked writing poetry. He passed his examination in only two years but did not apply for the degree he had earned. Not wanting to be in the Indian Civil Service nor disobey his father, he failed the examination by not showing up for the horse-back riding test.

Aurobindo returned to India at the beginning of 1893. When his father heard that the ship his son was sailing on had sunk, he died of heart failure; but Aurobindo had taken another ship. He taught college in Baroda and was described as speaking little, being desireless, self-controlled, and always given to study. In his series of articles "New Lamps for Old" in Induprakash he ridiculed those who talked about "the blessings of British rule." He criticized the Congress for being too middle-class and selfish without being a popular organization. Ranade warned the editor that he might be prosecuted for sedition, and young Aurobindo had to tone down his rhetoric. He and others began to form secret societies dedicated to Indian freedom such as the Lotus and Dagger Society. His poetry was published as *Songs to Myrtilla* in 1895. No press would publish his pamphlet "No Compromise" in 1903, but the Maratha revolutionary Kulkarni printed a few thousand copies at night and freely distributed them. Aurobindo became vice principal of the college in 1904 and began yoga. By practicing breath control *(pranayama)* five hours a day he found his mind worked much better, enabling him to write two hundred lines of poetry in a half hour.

Aurobindo tried to remain hidden behind the scenes. During the time of the Bengal partition, he wrote the revolutionary booklet *Bhawani Mandir* arguing that India needed to be reborn by developing the Shakti power of the Divine Mother. He wrote that we are all gods and creators with the energy of God within us. He noted that Ramakrishna came, and Vivekananda preached. Now it was up to them to work for progress. Influenced by Bankim Chandra's novel *Anandamath* and the "Bande Mataram" anthem, he devised rules for a new Order of Sannyasis that would practice strict discipline and work to instruct and help the poor, educate the middle class, and persuade the rich to benefit the public for the general welfare of the country.

## The Renaissance in India

There has been recently some talk of a Renaissance in India. A number of illuminating essays with that general title and subject have been given to us by a poet and subtle critic and thinker, Mr. James H. Cousins, and others have touched suggestively various sides of the growing movement towards a new life and a new thought that may well seem to justify the description. This Renaissance, this new birth in India, if it is a fact, must become a thing of immense importance both to herself and the world, to herself because of all that is meant for her in the recovery or the change of her time-old spirit and national ideals, to the world because of the possibilities involved in the rearising of a force that is in many respects unlike any other and its genius very different from the mentality and spirit that have hitherto governed the modern idea in mankind, although not so far away perhaps from that which is preparing to govern the future. It is rather the first point of view that I shall put forward at present: for the question what India means to make of her own life must precede the wider question what her new life may mean to the human race. And it is besides likely to become before long an issue of a pressing importance.

There is a first question, whether at all there is really a Renaissance in India. That depends a good deal on what we mean by the word; it depends also on the future, for the thing itself is only in its infancy and it is too early to say to what it may lead. The word carries the mind back to the turning-point of European culture to which it was first applied; that was not so much a reawakening as an overturn and reversal, a seizure of Christianised, Teutonised, feudalised Europe by the old Graeco-Latin spirit and form with all the complex and momentous results which came from it. That is certainly not a type of renaissance that is at all possible in India. There is a closer resemblance to the recent Celtic movement in Ireland, the attempt of a reawakened national spirit to find a new impulse of self-expression which shall give the spiritual force for a great reshaping and rebuilding: in Ireland this was discovered by a return to the Celtic spirit and culture after a long period of eclipsing English influences, and in India something of the same kind of movement is appearing and has especially taken a pronounced turn since the political outburst of 1905. But even here the analogy does not give the whole truth.

We have to see moreover that the whole is at present a great formless chaos of conflicting influences with a few luminous points of formation here and there where a new self-consciousness has come to the surface. But it cannot be said that these forms have yet a sufficient hold on the general mind of the people. They represent an advance movement; they are the voices of the vanguard, the torchlights of the pioneers. On the whole what we see is a giant Shakti who awakening into a new world, a new and alien environment, finds herself shackled in all her limbs by a multitude of gross or minute bonds, bonds self-woven by her past, bonds recently imposed from outside, and is struggling to be free from them, to arise and proclaim herself, to cast abroad her spirit and set her seal on the world. We hear on every side a sound of the slow fraying of bonds, here and there a sharp tearing and snapping; but freedom of movement has not yet been attained. The eyes are not yet clear, the bud of the soul has only partly opened. The Titaness has not yet arisen.

Mr. Cousins puts the question in his book whether the word renaissance at all applies since India has always been awake and stood in no need of reawakening. There is a certain truth behind that and to one coming in with a fresh mind from outside and struck by the living continuity of past and present India, it may be especially apparent; but that is not quite how we can see it who are her children and are still suffering from the bitter effects of the great decline which came to a head in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Undoubtedly there was a period, a brief but very disastrous period of the dwindling of that great fire of life, even a moment of incipient disintegration, marked politically by the anarchy which gave European adventure its chance, inwardly by an increasing torpor of the creative spirit in religion and art, -- science and philosophy and intellectual knowledge had long been dead or petrified into a mere scholastic Punditism, -- all pointing to a nadir of setting energy, the evening-time from which according to the Indian idea of the cycles a new age has to start. It was that moment and the pressure of a superimposed European culture which followed it that made the reawakening necessary.

We have practically to take three facts into consideration, the great past of Indian culture and life with the moment of inadaptive torpor into which it had lapsed, the first period of the Western contact in which it seemed for a moment likely to perish by slow decomposition, and the ascending movement which first broke into some clarity of expression only a decade or two ago. Mr. Cousins has his eye fixed on Indian spirituality which has always maintained itself even in the decline of the national vitality; it was certainly that which saved India always at every critical moment of her destiny, and it has been the starting-point too of her renascence. Any other nation under the same pressure would have long ago perished soul and body. But certainly the outward members were becoming gangrened; the powers of renovation seemed for a moment to be beaten by the powers of stagnation, and stagnation is death. Now that the salvation, the reawakening has come, India will certainly keep her essential spirit, will keep her characteristic soul, but there is likely to be a great change of the body. The shaping for itself of a new body, of new philosophical, artistic, literary, cultural, political, social forms by the same soul rejuvenescent will, I should think, be the type of the Indian renascence, -- forms not contradictory of the truths of life which the old expressed, but rather expressive of those truths restated, cured of defect, completed.

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What was this ancient spirit and characteristic soul of India? European writers, struck by the general metaphysical bent of the Indian mind, by its strong religious instincts and religious idealism, by its other-worldliness, are inclined to write as if this were all the Indian spirit. An abstract, metaphysical, religious mind overpowered by the sense of the infinite, not apt for life, dreamy, unpractical, turning away from life and action as Maya, this, they said, is India; and for a time Indians in this as in other matters submissively echoed their new Western teachers and masters. They learned to speak with pride of their metaphysics, of their literature, of their religion, but in all else they were content to be learners and imitators. Since then Europe has discovered that there was too an Indian art of remarkable power and beauty; but the rest of what India meant it has hardly at all seen. But meanwhile the Indian mind began to emancipate itself and to look upon its past with a clear and self-discerning eye, and it very soon discovered that it had been misled into an entirely false self-view. All such one-sided appreciations indeed almost invariably turn out to be false. Was it not the general misconception about Germany at one time, because she was great in philosophy and music, but had blundered in life and been unable to make the most of its materials, that this was a nation of unpractical dreamers, idealists, erudites and sentimentalists, patient, docile and industrious certainly, but politically inapt, -- "admirable, ridiculous Germany''? Europe has had a terrible awakening from that error. When the renascence of India is complete, she will have an awakening, not of the same brutal kind, certainly, but startling enough, as to the real nature and capacity of the Indian spirit.

Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinite is native to it. India saw from the beginning, -- and, even in her ages of reason and her age of increasing ignorance, she never lost hold of the insight, -- that life cannot be rightly seen in the sole light, cannot be perfectly lived in the sole power of its externalities. She was alive to the greatness of material laws and forces; she had a keen eye for the importance of the physical sciences; she knew how to organise the arts of ordinary life. But she saw that the physical does not get its full sense until it stands in right relation to the supra-physical; she saw that the complexity of the universe could not be explained in the present terms of man or seen by his superficial sight, that there were other powers behind, other powers within man himself of which he is normally unaware, that he is conscious only of a small part of himself, that the invisible always surrounds the visible, the suprasensible the sensible, even as infinity always surrounds the finite. She saw too that man has the power of exceeding himself, of becoming himself more entirely and profoundly than he is, -- truths which have only recently begun to be seen in Europe and seem even now too great for its common intelligence. She saw the myriad gods beyond man, God beyond the gods, and beyond God his own ineffable eternity; she saw that there were ranges of life beyond our life, ranges of mind beyond our present mind and above these she saw the splendours of the spirit. Then with that calm audacity of her intuition which knew no fear or littleness and shrank from no act whether of spiritual or intellectual, ethical or vital courage, she declared that there was none of these things which man could not attain if he trained his will and knowledge; he could conquer these ranges of mind, become the spirit, become a god, become one with God, become the ineffable Brahman. And with the logical practicality and sense of science and organised method which distinguished her mentality, she set forth immediately to find out the way. Hence from long ages of this insight and practice there was ingrained in her her spirituality, her powerful psychic tendency, her great yearning to grapple with the infinite and possess it, her ineradicable religious sense, her idealism, her Yoga, the constant turn of her art and her philosophy.

But this was not and could not be her whole mentality, her entire spirit; spirituality itself does not flourish on earth in the void, even as our mountaintops do not rise like those of an enchantment of dream out of the clouds without a base. When we look at the past of India, what strikes us next is her stupendous vitality, her inexhaustible power of life and joy of life, her almost unimaginably prolific creativeness. For three thousand years at least, -- it is indeed much longer, -- she has been creating abundantly and incessantly, lavishly, with an inexhaustible many-sidedness, republics and kingdoms and empires, philosophies and cosmogonies and sciences and creeds and arts and poems and all kinds of monuments, palaces and temples and public works, communities and societies and religious orders, laws and codes and rituals, physical sciences, psychic sciences, systems of Yoga, systems of politics and administration, arts spiritual, arts worldly, trades, industries, fine crafts, -- the list is endless and in each item there is almost a plethora of activity. She creates and creates and is not satisfied and is not tired; she will not have an end of it, seems hardly to need a space for rest, a time for inertia and lying fallow. She expands too outside her borders; her ships cross the ocean and the fine superfluity of her wealth brims over to Judaea and Egypt and Rome; her colonies spread her arts and epics and creeds in the Archipelago; her traces are found in the sands of Mesopotamia; her religions conquer China and Japan and spread westward as far as Palestine and Alexandria, and the figures of the Upanishads and the sayings of the Buddhists are reechoed on the lips of Christ. Everywhere, as on her soil, so in her works there is the teeming of a superabundant energy of life. European critics complain that in her ancient architecture, sculpture and art there is no reticence, no holding back of riches, no blank spaces, that she labours to fill every rift with ore, occupy every inch with plenty. Well, but defect or no, that is the necessity of her superabundance of life, of the teeming of the infinite within her. She lavishes her riches because she must, as the Infinite fills every inch of space with the stirring of life and energy because it is the Infinite.

But this supreme spirituality and this prolific abundance of the energy and joy of life and creation do not make all that the spirit of India has been in its past. It is not a confused splendour of tropical vegetation under heavens of a pure sapphire infinity. It is only to eyes unaccustomed to such wealth that there seems to be a confusion in this crowding of space with rich forms of life, a luxurious disorder of excess or a wanton lack of measure, clear balance and design. For the third power of the ancient Indian spirit was a strong intellectuality, at once austere and rich, robust and minute, powerful and delicate, massive in principle and curious in detail. Its chief impulse was that of order and arrangement, but an order founded upon a seeking for the inner law and truth of things and having in view always the possibility of conscientious practice. India has been preeminently the land of the Dharma and the Shastra. She searched for the inner truth and law of each human or cosmic activity, its dharma; that found, she laboured to cast into elaborate form and detailed law of arrangement its application in fact and rule of life. Her first period was luminous with the discovery of the Spirit; her second completed the discovery of the Dharma; her third elaborated into detail the first simpler formulation of the Shastra; but none was exclusive, the three elements are always present.

In this third period the curious elaboration of all life into a science and an art assumes extraordinary proportions. The mere mass of the intellectual production during the period from Asoka well into the Mahomedan epoch is something truly prodigious, as can be seen at once if one studies the account which recent scholarship gives of it, and we must remember that that scholarship as yet only deals with a fraction of what is still lying extant and what is extant is only a small percentage of what was once written and known. There is no historical parallel for such an intellectual labour and activity before the invention of printing and the facilities of modern science; yet all that mass of research and production and curiosity of detail was accomplished without these facilities and with no better record than the memory and for an aid the perishable palm-leaf. Nor was all this colossal literature confined to philosophy and theology, religion and Yoga, logic and rhetoric and grammar and linguistics, poetry and drama, medicine and astronomy and the sciences; it embraced all life, politics and society, all the arts from painting to dancing, all the sixty-four accomplishments, everything then known that could be useful to life or interesting to the mind, even, for instance, to such practical side minutiae as the breeding and training of horses and elephants, each of which had its Shastra and its art, its apparatus of technical terms, its copious literature. In each subject from the largest and most momentous to the smallest and most trivial there was expended the same all-embracing, opulent, minute and thorough intellectuality. On one side there is an insatiable curiosity, the desire of life to know itself in every detail, on the other a spirit of organisation and scrupulous order, the desire of the mind to tread through life with a harmonised knowledge and in the right rhythm and measure. Thus an ingrained and dominant spirituality, an inexhaustible vital creativeness and gust of life and, mediating between them, a powerful, penetrating and scrupulous intelligence combined of the rational, ethical and aesthetic mind each at a high intensity of action, created the harmony of the ancient Indian culture.

Indeed without this opulent vitality and opulent intellectuality India could never have done so much as she did with her spiritual tendencies. It is a great error to suppose that spirituality flourishes best in an impoverished soil with the life half-killed and the intellect discouraged and intimidated. The spirituality that so flourishes is something morbid, hectic and exposed to perilous reactions. It is when the race has lived most richly and thought most profoundly that spirituality finds its heights and its depths and its constant and many-sided fruition. In modern Europe it is after a long explosion of vital force and a stupendous activity of the intellect that spirituality has begun really to emerge and with some promise of being not, as it once was, the sorrowful physician of the malady of life, but the beginning of a large and profound clarity. The European eye is struck in Indian spiritual thought by the Buddhistic and illusionist denial of life. But it must be remembered that this is only one side of its philosophic tendency which assumed exaggerated proportions only in the period of decline. In itself too that was simply one result, in one direction, of a tendency of the Indian mind which is common to all its activities, the impulse to follow each motive, each specialisation of motive even, spiritual, intellectual, ethical, vital, to its extreme point and to sound its utmost possibility. Part of its innate direction was to seek in each not only for its fullness of detail, but for its infinite, its absolute, its profoundest depth or its highest pinnacle. It knew that without a "fine excess'' we cannot break down the limits which the dull temper of the normal mind opposes to knowledge and thought and experience; and it had in seeking this point a boundless courage and yet a sure tread. Thus it carried each tangent of philosophic thought, each line of spiritual experience to its farthest point, and chose to look from that farthest point at all existence, so as to see what truth or power such a view could give it. It tried to know the whole of divine nature and to see too as high as it could beyond nature and into whatever there might be of supradivine. When it formulated a spiritual atheism, it followed that to its acme of possible vision. When, too, it indulged in materialistic atheism, -- though it did that only with a side glance, as the freak of an insatiable intellectual curiosity, -- yet it formulated it straight out, boldly and nakedly, without the least concession to idealism or ethicism.

Everywhere we find this tendency. The ideals of the Indian mind have included the height of self-assertion of the human spirit and its thirst of independence and mastery and possession and the height also of its self-abnegation, dependence and submission and self-giving. In life the ideal of opulent living and the ideal of poverty were carried to the extreme of regal splendour and the extreme of satisfied nudity. Its intuitions were sufficiently clear and courageous not to be blinded by its own most cherished ideas and fixed habits of life. If it was obliged to stereotype caste as the symbol of its social order, it never quite forgot, as the caste-spirit is apt to forget, that the human soul and the human mind are beyond caste. For it had seen in the lowest human being the Godhead, Narayana. It emphasised distinctions only to turn upon them and deny all distinctions. If all its political needs and circumstances compelled it at last to exaggerate the monarchical principle and declare the divinity of the king and to abolish its earlier republican city states and independent federations as too favourable to the centrifugal tendency, if therefore it could not develop democracy, yet it had the democratic idea, applied it in the village, in council and municipality, within the caste, was the first to assert a divinity in the people and could cry to the monarch at the height of his power, "O king, what art thou but the head servant of the demos?'' Its idea of the golden age was a free spiritual anarchism. Its spiritual extremism could not prevent it from fathoming through a long era the life of the senses and its enjoyments, and there too it sought the utmost richness of sensuous detail and the depths and intensities of sensuous experience. Yet it is notable that this pursuit of the most opposite extremes never resulted in disorder; and its most hedonistic period offers nothing that at all resembles the unbridled corruption which a similar tendency has more than once produced in Europe. For the Indian mind is not only spiritual and ethical, but intellectual and artistic, and both the rule of the intellect and the rhythm of beauty are hostile to the spirit of chaos. In every extreme the Indian spirit seeks for a law in that extreme and a rule, measure and structure in its application. Besides, this sounding of extremes is balanced by a still more ingrained characteristic, the synthetical tendency, so that having pushed each motive to its farthest possibility the Indian mind returns always towards some fusion of the knowledge it has gained and to a resulting harmony and balance in action and institution. Balance and rhythm which the Greeks arrived at by self-limitation, India arrived at by its sense of intellectual, ethical and aesthetic order and the synthetic impulse of its mind and life.

I have dwelt on these facts because they are apt to be ignored by those who look only at certain sides of the Indian mind and spirit which are most prominent in the last epochs. By insisting only upon these we get an inaccurate or incomplete idea of the past of India and of the integral meaning of its civilisation and the spirit that animated it. The present is only a last deposit of the past at a time of ebb; it has no doubt also to be the starting-point of the future, but in this present all that was in India's past is still dormant, it is not destroyed; it is waiting there to assume new forms. The decline was the ebb-movement of a creative spirit which can only be understood by seeing it in the full tide of its greatness; the renascence is the return of the tide and it is the same spirit that is likely to animate it, although the forms it takes may be quite new. To judge therefore the possibilities of the renascence, the powers that it may reveal and the scope that it may take, we must dismiss the idea that the tendency of metaphysical abstraction is the one note of the Indian spirit which dominates or inspires all its cadences. Its real key-note is the tendency of spiritual realisation, not cast at all into any white monotone, but many-faceted, many-coloured, as supple in its adaptability as it is intense in its highest pitches. The note of spirituality is dominant, initial, constant, always recurrent; it is the support of all the rest. The first age of India's greatness was a spiritual age when she sought passionately for the truth of existence through the intuitive mind and through an inner experience and interpretation both of the psychic and the physical existence. The stamp put on her by that beginning she has never lost, but rather always enriched it with fresh spiritual experience and discovery at each step of the national life. Even in her hour of decline it was the one thing she could never lose.

But this spiritual tendency does not shoot upward only to the abstract, the hidden and the intangible; it casts its rays downward and outward to embrace the multiplicities of thought and the richness of life. Therefore the second long epoch of India's greatness was an age of the intellect, the ethical sense, the dynamic will in action enlightened to formulate and govern life in the lustre of spiritual truth. After the age of the Spirit, the age of the Dharma; after the Veda and Upanishads, the heroic centuries of action and social formation, typal construction and thought and philosophy, when the outward forms of Indian life and culture were fixed in their large lines and even their later developments were being determined in the seed. The great classical age of Sanskrit culture was the flowering of this intellectuality into curiosity of detail in the refinements of scholarship, science, art, literature, politics, sociology, mundane life. We see at this time too the sounding not only of aesthetic, but of emotional and sensuous, even of vital and sensual experience. But the old spirituality reigned behind all this mental and all this vital activity, and its later period, the post-classical, saw a lifting up of the whole lower life and an impressing upon it of the values of the spirit. This was the sense of the Puranic and Tantric systems and the religions of Bhakti. Later Vaishnavism, the last fine flower of the Indian spirit, was in its essence the taking up of the aesthetic, emotional and sensuous being into the service of the spiritual. It completed the curve of the cycle.

The evening of decline which followed the completion of the curve was prepared by three movements of retrogression. First there is, comparatively, a sinking of that superabundant vital energy and a fading of the joy of life and the joy of creation. Even in the decline this energy is still something splendid and extraordinary and only for a very brief period sinks nearest to a complete torpor; but still a comparison with its past greatness will show that the decadence was marked and progressive. Secondly, there is a rapid cessation of the old free intellectual activity, a slumber of the scientific and the critical mind as well as the creative intuition; what remains becomes more and more a repetition of ill-understood fragments of past knowledge. There is a petrification of the mind and life in the relics of the forms which a great intellectual past had created. Old authority and rule become rigidly despotic and, as always then happens, lose their real sense and spirit. Finally, spirituality remains but burns no longer with the large and clear flame of knowledge of former times, but in intense jets and in a dispersed action which replaces the old magnificent synthesis and in which certain spiritual truths are emphasised to the neglect of others. This diminution amounts to a certain failure of the great endeavour which is the whole meaning of Indian culture, a falling short in the progress towards the perfect spiritualisation of the mind and the life. The beginnings were superlative, the developments very great, but at a certain point where progress, adaptation, a new flowering should have come in, the old civilisation stopped short, partly drew back, partly lost its way. The essential no doubt remained and still remains in the heart of the race and not only in its habits and memories, but in its action it was covered up in a great smoke of confusion. The causes internal and external we need not now discuss; but the fact is there. It was the cause of the momentary helplessness of the Indian mind in the face of new and unprecedented conditions.

It was at this moment that the European wave swept over India. The first effect of this entry of a new and quite opposite civilisation was the destruction of much that had no longer the power to live, the deliquescence of much else, a tendency to the devitalisation of the rest. A new activity came in, but this was at first crudely and confusedly imitative of the foreign culture. It was a crucial moment and an ordeal of perilous severity; a less vigorous energy of life might well have foundered and perished under the double weight of the deadening of its old innate motives and a servile imitation of alien ideas and habits. History shows us how disastrous this situation can be to nations and civilisations. But fortunately the energy of life was there, sleeping only for a moment, not dead, and, given that energy, the evil carried within itself its own cure. For whatever temporary rotting and destruction this crude impact of European life and culture has caused, it gave three needed impulses. It revived the dormant intellectual and critical impulse; it rehabilitated life and awakened the desire of new creation; it put the reviving Indian spirit face to face with novel conditions and ideals and the urgent necessity of understanding, assimilating and conquering them. The national mind turned a new eye on its past culture, reawoke to its sense and import, but also at the same time saw it in relation to modern knowledge and ideas. Out of this awakening vision and impulse the Indian renaissance is arising, and that must determine its future tendency. The recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendour, depth and fullness is its first, most essential work; the flowing of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge is the second; an original dealing with modern problems in the light of the Indian spirit and the endeavour to formulate a greater synthesis of a spiritualised society is the third and most difficult. Its success on these three lines will be the measure of its help to the future of humanity.

The Spirit is a higher infinite of verities; life is a lower infinite of possibilities which seek to grow and find their own truth and fulfilment in the light of these verities. Our intellect, our will, our ethical and our aesthetic being are the reflectors and the mediators. The method of the West is to exaggerate life and to call down as much -- or as little -- as may be of the higher powers to stimulate and embellish life.(1) But the method of India is on the contrary to discover the spirit within and the higher hidden intensities of the superior powers and to dominate life in one way or another so as to make it responsive to and expressive of the spirit and in that way increase the power of life. Its tendency with the intellect, will, ethical, aesthetic and emotional being is to sound indeed their normal mental possibilities, but also to upraise them towards the greater light and power of their own highest intuitions. The work of the renaissance in India must be to make this spirit, this higher view of life, this sense of deeper potentiality once more a creative, perhaps a dominant power in the world. But to that truth of itself it is as yet only vaguely awake; the mass of Indian action is still at the moment proceeding under the impress of the European motive and method and, because there is a spirit within us to which they are foreign, the action is poor in will, feeble in form and ineffective in results, for it does not come from the roots of our being. Only in a few directions is there some clear light of self-knowledge. It is when a greater light prevails and becomes general that we shall be able to speak, not only in prospect but in fact, of the renaissance of India.

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1. Mr. Cousins' distinction between invocation and evocation.

## The Renaissance in India - 2

The process which has led up to the renaissance now inevitable, may be analysed, both historically and logically, into three steps by which a transition is being managed, a complex breaking, reshaping and new building, with the final result yet distant in prospect, -- though here and there the first bases may have been already laid, -- a new age of an old culture transformed, not an affiliation of a new-born civilisation to one that is old and dead, but a true rebirth, a renascence. The first step was the reception of the European contact, a radical reconsideration of many of the prominent elements and some revolutionary denial of the very principles of the old culture. The second was a reaction of the Indian spirit upon the European influence, sometimes with a total denial of what it offered and a stressing both of the essential and the strict letter of the national past, which yet masked a movement of assimilation. The third, only now beginning or recently begun, is rather a process of new creation in which the spiritual power of the Indian mind remains supreme, recovers its truths, accepts whatever it finds sound or true, useful or inevitable of the modern idea and form, but so transmutes and Indianises it, so absorbs and so transforms it entirely into itself that its foreign character disappears and it becomes another harmonious element in the characteristic working of the ancient goddess, the Shakti of India mastering and taking possession of the modern influence, no longer possessed or overcome by it.

Nothing in the many processes of Nature, whether she deals with men or with things, comes by chance or accident or is really at the mercy of external causes. What things are inwardly, determines the course of even their most considerable changes; and timeless India being what she is, the complexity of this transition was predestined and unavoidable. It was impossible that she should take a rapid wholesale imprint of Western motives and their forms and leave the ruling motives of her own past to accommodate themselves to the foreign change as best they could afterwards. A swift transformation scene like that which brought into being a new modernised Japan, would have been out of the question for her, even if the external circumstances had been equally favourable. For Japan lives centrally in her temperament and in her aesthetic sense, and therefore she has always been rapidly assimilative; her strong temperamental persistence has been enough to preserve her national stamp and her artistic vision a sufficient power to keep her soul alive. But India lives centrally in the spirit, with less buoyancy and vivacity and therefore with a less ready adaptiveness of creation, but a greater, intenser, more brooding depth; her processes are apt to be deliberate, uncertain and long because she has to take things into that depth and from its profoundest inwardness to modify or remould the more outward parts of her life. And until that has been done, the absorption completed, the powers of the remoulding determined, she cannot yet move forward with an easier step on the new way she is taking. From the complexity of the movement arises all the difficulty of the problems she has to face and the rather chaotic confusion of the opinions, standpoints and tendencies that have got entangled in the process, which prevents any easy, clear and decided development, so that we seem to be advancing under a confused pressure of circumstance or in a series of shifting waves of impulsion, this ebbing for that to arise, rather than with any clear idea of our future direction. But here too lies the assurance that once the inner direction has found its way and its implications have come to the surface, the result will be no mere Asiatic modification of Western modernism, but some great, new and original thing of the first importance to the future of human civilisation.

This was not the idea of the earliest generation of intellectuals, few in number but powerful by their talent and originative vigour, that arose as the first result of Western education in India. Theirs was the impatient hope of a transformation such as took place afterwards with so striking a velocity in Japan; they saw in welcome prospect a new India modernised wholesale and radically in mind, spirit and life. Intensely patriotic in motive, they were yet denationalised in their mental attitude. They admitted practically, if not in set opinion, the occidental view of our past culture as only a half-civilisation and their governing ideals were borrowed from the West or at least centrally inspired by the purely Western spirit and type of their education. From mediaeval India they drew away in revolt and inclined to discredit and destroy whatever it had created; if they took anything from it, it was as poetic symbols to which they gave a superficial and modern significance. To ancient India they looked back on the contrary with a sentiment of pride, at least in certain directions, and were willing to take from it whatever material they could subdue to their new standpoint, but they could not quite grasp anything of it in its original sense and spirit and strove to rid it of all that would not square with their Westernised intellectuality. They sought for a bare, simplified and rationalised religion, created a literature which imported very eagerly the forms, ideas and whole spirit of their English models, -- the value of the other arts was almost entirely ignored, -- put their political faith and hope in a wholesale assimilation or rather an exact imitation of the middle-class pseudo-democracy of nineteenth-century England, would have revolutionised Indian society by introducing into it all the social ideas and main features of the European form. Whatever value for the future there may be in the things they grasped at with this eager conviction, their method was, as we now recognise, a false method, -- an anglicised India is a thing we can no longer view as either possible or desirable, -- and it could only, if pursued to the end, have made us painful copyists, clumsy followers always stumbling in the wake of European evolution and always fifty years behind it. This movement of thought did not and could not endure; something of it still continues, but its engrossing power has passed away beyond any chance of vigorous revival.

Nevertheless, this earliest period of crude reception left behind it results that were of value and indeed indispensable to a powerful renaissance. We may single out three of them as of the first order of importance. It reawakened a free activity of the intellect which, though at first confined within very narrow bounds and derivative in its ideas, is now spreading to all subjects of human and national interest and is applying itself with an increasing curiosity and a growing originality to every field it seizes. This is bringing back to the Indian mind its old unresting thirst for all kinds of knowledge and must restore to it before long the width of its range and the depth and flexible power of its action; and it has opened to it the full scope of the critical faculty of the human mind, its passion for exhaustive observation and emancipated judgment which, in older times exercised only by a few and within limits, has now become an essential equipment of the intellect. These things the imitative period did not itself carry very far, but it cast the germ which we now see beginning to fructify more richly. Secondly, it threw definitely the ferment of modern ideas into the old culture and fixed them before our view in such a way that we are obliged to reckon and deal with them in far other sort than would have been possible if we had simply proceeded from our old fixed traditions without some such momentary violent break in our customary view of things. Finally, it made us turn our look upon all that our past contains with new eyes which have not only enabled us to recover something of their ancient sense and spirit, long embedded and lost in the unintelligent practice of received forms, but to bring out of them a new light which gives to the old truths fresh aspects and therefore novel potentialities of creation and evolution. That in this first period we misunderstood our ancient culture, does not matter; the enforcement of a reconsideration, which even orthodox thought has been obliged to accept, is the fact of capital importance.

The second period of reaction of the Indian mind upon the new elements, its movement towards a recovery of the national poise, has helped us to direct these powers and tendencies into sounder and much more fruitful lines of action. For the anglicising impulse was very soon met by the old national spirit and began to be heavily suffused by its influence. It is now a very small and always dwindling number of our present-day intellectuals who still remain obstinately Westernised in their outlook; and even these have given up the attitude of blatant and uncompromising depreciation of the past which was at one time a common pose. A larger number have proceeded by a constantly increasing suffusion of their modernism with much of ancient motive and sentiment, a better insight into the meaning of Indian things and their characteristics, a free acceptance more of their spirit than of their forms and an attempt at new interpretation. At first the central idea still remained very plainly of the modern type and betrayed everywhere the Western inspiration, but it drew to itself willingly the ancient ideas and it coloured itself more and more with their essential spirit; and latterly this suffusing element has overflooded, has tended more and more to take up and subdue the original motives until the thought and spirit, turn and tinge are now characteristically Indian. The works of Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Tagore, the two minds of the most distinctive and original genius in our recent literature, illustrate the stages of this transition.

Side by side with this movement and more characteristic and powerful there has been flowing an opposite current. This first started on its way by an integral reaction, a vindication and reacceptance of everything Indian as it stood and because it was Indian. We have still waves of this impulse and many of its influences continuing among us; for its work is not yet completed. But in reality the reaction marks the beginning of a more subtle assimilation and fusing; for in vindicating ancient things it has been obliged to do so in a way that will at once meet and satisfy the old mentality and the new, the traditional and the critical mind. This in itself involves no mere return, but consciously or unconsciously hastens a restatement. And the riper form of the return has taken as its principle a synthetical restatement; it has sought to arrive at the spirit of the ancient culture and, while respecting its forms and often preserving them to revivify, has yet not hesitated also to remould, to reject the outworn and to admit whatever new motive seemed assimilable to the old spirituality or apt to widen the channel of its larger evolution. Of this freer dealing with past and present, this preservation by reconstruction Vivekananda was in his life-time the leading exemplar and the most powerful exponent.

But this too could not be the end; of itself it leads towards a principle of new creation. Otherwise the upshot of the double current of thought and tendency might be an incongruous assimilation, something in the mental sphere like the strangely assorted half-European, half-Indian dress which we now put upon our bodies. India has to get back entirely to the native power of her spirit at its very deepest and to turn all the needed strengths and aims of her present and future life into materials for that spirit to work upon and integrate and harmonise. Of such vital and original creation we may cite the new Indian art as a striking example. The beginning of this process of original creation in every sphere of her national activity will be the sign of the integral self-finding of her renaissance.

## The Renaissance in India - 3

To attempt to penetrate through the indeterminate confusion of present tendencies and first efforts in order to foresee the exact forms the new creation will take, would be an effort of very doubtful utility. One might as well try to forecast a harmony from the sounds made by the tuning of the instrument. In one direction or another we may just detect certain decisive indications, but even these are only first indications and we may be quite sure that much lies behind them that will go far beyond anything that they yet suggest. This is true whether in religion and spirituality or thought and science, poetry and art or society and politics. Everywhere there is, at most, only a beginning of beginnings.

One thing seems at any rate certain, that the spiritual motive will be in the future of India, as in her past, the real originative and dominating strain. By spirituality we do not mean a remote metaphysical mind or the tendency to dream rather than to act. That was not the great India of old in her splendid days of vigour, -- whatever certain European critics or interpreters of her culture may say, -- and it will not be the India of the future. Metaphysical thinking will always no doubt be a strong element in her mentality, and it is to be hoped that she will never lose her great, her sovereign powers in that direction; but Indian metaphysics are as far removed from the brilliant or the profound idea-spinning of the French or the German mind as from the broad intellectual generalising on the basis of the facts of physical science which for some time did duty for philosophy in modern Europe. It has always been in its essential parts an intellectual approach to spiritual realisation. Though in later times it led too much away from life, yet that was not its original character whether in its early Vedantic intuitional forms or in those later developments of it, such as the Gita, which belong to the period of its most vigorous intellectual originality and creation. Buddhism itself, the philosophy which first really threw doubt on the value of life, did so only in its intellectual tendency; in its dynamic parts, by its ethical system and spiritual method, it gave a new set of values, a severe vigour, yet a gentler idealism to human living and was therefore powerfully creative both in the arts which interpret life and in society and politics. To realise intimately truth of spirit and to quicken and to remould life by it is the native tendency of the Indian mind, and to that it must always return in all its periods of health, greatness and vigour.

All great movements of life in India have begun with a new spiritual thought and usually a new religious activity. What more striking and significant fact can there be than this that even the new European influence, which was an influence intellectual, rationalistic, so often antireligious and which drew so much of its idealism from the increasingly cosmopolitan, mundane and secularist thought of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, precipitated in India from the very first an attempt at religious reformation and led actually to the creation of new religions? The instinct of the Indian mind was that, if a reconstruction of ideas and of society was to be attempted, it must start from a spiritual basis and take from the first a religious motive and form. The Brahmo Samaj had in its inception a large cosmopolitan idea, it was even almost eclectic in the choice of the materials for the synthesis it attempted; it combined a Vedantic first inspiration, outward forms akin to those of English Unitarianism and something of its temper, a modicum of Christian influence, a strong dose of religious rationalism and intellectualism. It is noteworthy, however, that it started from an endeavour to restate the Vedanta, and it is curiously significant of the way in which even what might be well called a protestant movement follows the curve of the national tradition and temper, that the three stages of its growth, marked by the three churches or congregations into which it split, correspond to the three eternal motives of the Indian religious mind, Jnana, Bhakti and Karma, the contemplative and philosophical, the emotional and fervently devotional and the actively and practically dynamic spiritual mentality. The Arya Samaj in the Punjab founded itself on a fresh interpretation of the truth of the Veda and an attempt to apply old Vedic principles of life to modern conditions. The movement associated with the great names of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda has been a very wide synthesis of past religious motives and spiritual experience topped by a reaffirmation of the old asceticism and monasticism, but with new living strands in it and combined with a strong humanitarianism and zeal of missionary expansion. There has been too the movement of orthodox Hindu revivalism, more vigorous two or three decades ago than it is now. The rest of India has either felt vibrations of some of these great regional movements or been touched with smaller ones of their own making. In Bengal a strong Neo-Vaishnavic tendency is the most recent development of its religious mind and shows that the preparatory creative activity has not yet finished its workings. Throughout India the old religious sects and disciplines are becoming strongly revitalised, vocal, active, moved to a fresh self-affirmation. Islam has recently shared in the general stirring and attempts to return vitally to the original Islamic ideals or to strike out fresh developments have preceded or accompanied the awakening to life of the long torpid Mussulman mass in India.

Perhaps none of these forms, nor all the sum of them may be definitive, they may constitute only the preparatory self-finding of the Indian spiritual mind recovering its past and turning towards its future. India is the meeting-place of the religions and among these Hinduism alone is by itself a vast and complex thing, not so much a religion as a great diversified and yet subtly unified mass of spiritual thought, realisation and aspiration. What will finally come out of all this stir and ferment, lies yet in the future. There has been an introduction of fresh fruitful impulses to activity: there has been much revival of the vitality of old forms, a new study, rehabilitation, resort to old disciplines and old authorities and scriptures, -- we may note that Vedanta, Veda, Purana, Yoga, and recently the same thing is being initiated with regard to the Tantra, have each in their turn been brought back into understanding, if not always yet to a perfect understanding, to practice, to some efficacy on thought and on life; there has been an evolution of enlarging truth and novel forms out of ancient ideas and renewed experience. Whatever the last upshot may be, this spiritual and religious ferment and activity stand out as the most prominent feature of the new India; and it may be observed that while in other fields the tendency has been, until quite recently, more critical than constructive, here every impulse has been throughout powerfully creative. Especially, we see everywhere the tendency towards the return of the spirit upon life; the reassertion of a spiritual living as a foundation for a new life of the nation has been a recognisable impulse. Even asceticism and monasticism are rapidly becoming, no longer merely contemplative, self-centred or aloof, but missionary, educative, humanitarian. And recently in the utterances of the leaders of thought the insistence on life has been growing marked, self-conscious and positive. This is at present the most significant immediate sign of the future. Probably, here lies the key of the Indian renaissance, in a return from forms to the depths of a released spirituality which will show itself again in a pervading return of spirituality upon life.

But what are likely to be the great constructive ideas and the great decisive instruments which this spirituality will take to deal with and govern life, is as yet obscure, because the thought of this new India is still inchoate and indeterminative. Religions, creeds and forms are only a characteristic outward sign of the spiritual impulsion and religion itself is the intensive action by which it tries to find its inward force. Its expansive movement comes in the thought which it throws out on life, the ideals which open up new horizons and which the intellect accepts and life labours to assimilate. Philosophy in India has been the intellectual canaliser of spiritual knowledge and experience, but the philosophical intellect has not as yet decidedly begun the work of new creation; it has been rather busy with the restatement of its past gains than with any new statement which would visibly and rapidly enlarge the boundaries of its thought and aspiration. The contact of European philosophy has not been fruitful of any creative reaction; first because the past philosophies of Europe have very little that could be of any utility in this direction, nothing of the first importance in fact which India has not already stated in forms better suited to her own spiritual temper and genius, and though the thought of Nietzsche, of Bergson and of James has recently touched more vitally just a few minds here and there, their drift is much too externally pragmatic and vitalistic to be genuinely assimilable by the Indian spirit. But, principally, a real Indian philosophy can only be evolved out of spiritual experience and as the fruit of the spiritual seeking which all the religious movements of the past century have helped to generalise. It cannot spring, as in Europe, out of the critical intellect solely or as the fruit of scientific thought and knowledge. Nor has there been very much preparing force of original critical thought in nineteenth century India. The more original intellects have either turned towards pure literature or else been busy assimilating and at most Indianising modern ideas. And though a stronger thought tendency is now beginning, all is yet uncertain flux or brilliantly vague foreshadowing.

In poetry, literature, art, science there have, on the contrary, been definite beginnings. Bengal in these, as in many other directions, has been recently the chief testing crucible or the first workshop of the Shakti of India; it is there she has chosen to cast in the greatest vivacity of new influences and develop her initial forms and inspirations. In the rest of India there is often much activity of production and one hears here and there of a solitary poet or prose-writer of genius or notable talent; but Bengal has already a considerable literature of importance, with a distinct spirit and form, well-based and always developing; she has now a great body of art original, inspired, full of delicate beauty and vision; she has not only two renowned scientists, one of the two world-famous for a central and far-reaching discovery, but a young school of research which promises to count for something in the world's science. It is here therefore that we can observe the trend of the Indian mind and the direction in which it is turning. Especially the art of the Bengal painters is very significant, more so even than the prose of Bankim or the poetry of Tagore. Bengali poetry has had to feel its way and does not seem yet quite definitively to have found it, but Bengal art has found its way at once at the first step, by a sort of immediate intuition.

Partly this is because the new literature began in the period of foreign influence and of an indecisive groping, while art in India was quite silent, -- except for the preposterous Ravi Varma interlude which was doomed to sterility by its absurdly barren incompetence, -- began in a moment of self-recovery and could profit by a clearer possibility of light. But besides, plastic art is in itself by its very limitation, by the narrower and intense range of its forms and motives, often more decisively indicative than the more fluid and variable turns of literary thought and expression. Now the whole power of the Bengal artists springs from their deliberate choice of the spirit and hidden meaning in things rather than their form and surface meaning as the object to be expressed. It is intuitive and its forms are the very rhythm of its intuition, they have little to do with the metric formalities devised by the observing intellect; it leans over the finite to discover its suggestions of the infinite and inexpressible; it turns to outward life and nature to found upon it lines and colours, rhythms and embodiments which will be significant of the other life and other nature than the physical which all that is merely outward conceals. This is the eternal motive of Indian art, but applied in a new way less largely ideaed, mythological and symbolical, but with a more delicately suggestive attempt at a near, subtle, direct embodiment. This art is a true new creation, and we may expect that the artistic mind of the rest of India will follow through the gate thus opened, but we may expect it too to take on there other characteristics and find other ways of expression; for the peculiar turn and tone given by the Calcutta painters is intimate to the temperament of Bengal. But India is great by the unity of her national coupled with the rich diversity of her regional mind. That we may expect to see reflected in the resurgence of her artistic creativeness.

Poetry and literature in Bengal have gone through two distinct stages and seem to be preparing for a third of which one cannot quite foresee the character. It began with a European and mostly an English influence, a taking in of fresh poetical and prose forms, literary ideas, artistic canons. It was a period of copious and buoyant creation which produced a number of poets and poetesses, one or two of great genius, others of a fine poetic capacity, much work of beauty and distinction, a real opening of the floodgates of Saraswati. Its work was not at all crudely imitative; the foreign influences are everywhere visible, but they are assimilated, not merely obeyed or aped. The quality of the Bengali temperament and its native aesthetic turn took hold of them and poured them into a mould of speech suitable to its own spirit. But still the substance was not quite native to the soul and therefore one feels a certain void in it. The form and expression have the peculiar grace and the delicate plastic beauty which Bengali poetical expression achieved from its beginning, but the thing expressed does not in the end amount to very much. As is inevitable when one does not think or create freely but is principally assimilating thought and form, it is thin and falls short of the greatness which we would expect from the natural power of the poet.

That period is long over, it has lived its time and its work has taken its place in the past of the literature. Two of its creators, one, the sovereign initiator of its prose expression, supreme by combination of original mentality with a flawless artistic gift, the other born into its last glow of productive brilliance, but outliving it to develop another strain and a profounder voice of poetry, released the real soul of Bengal into expression. The work of Bankim Chandra is now of the past, because it has entered already into the new mind of Bengal which it did more than any other literary influence to form; the work of Rabindranath still largely holds the present, but it has opened ways for the future which promise to go beyond it. Both show an increasing return to the Indian spirit in fresh forms; both are voices of the dawn, seek more than they find, suggest and are calling for more than they actually evoke. At present we see a fresh preparation, on one side evolving and promising to broaden out from the influence of Tagore, on the other in revolt against it and insisting on a more distinctively national type of inspiration and creation; but what will come out of it, is not yet clear. On the whole it appears that the movement is turning in the same direction as that of the new art, though with the more flexible utterance and varied motive natural to the spoken thought and expressive word. No utterance of the highest genius, such as would give the decisive turn, has yet made itself heard. But some faint promise of a great imaginative and intuitive literature of a new Indian type is already discernible in these uncertain voices.

In the things of the mind we have then within however limited an area certain beginnings, preparatory or even initially definitive. But in the outward life of the nation we are still in a stage of much uncertainty and confusion. Very largely this is due to the political conditions which have ceased in spirit to be those of the past, but are not yet in fact those of the future. The fever and the strain born from the alternation of waves of aspiration with the reflux of non-fulfilment are not favourable to the strong formulation of a new birth in the national life. All that is as yet clear is that the first period of a superficial assimilation and aping of European political ideas and methods is over. Another political spirit has awakened in the people under the shock of the movement of the last decade which, vehemently national in its motive, proclaimed a religion of Indian patriotism, applied the notions of the ancient religion and philosophy to politics, expressed the cult of the country as mother and Shakti and attempted to base the idea of democracy firmly on the spiritual thought and impulses native to the Indian mind. Crude often and uncertain in its self-expression, organising its effort for revolt against past and present conditions but not immediately successful in carrying forward its methods of constructive development, it still effectively aroused the people and gave a definite turn to its political thought and life, the outcome of which can only appear when the nation has found completely the will and gained sufficiently the power to determine its own evolution.

Indian society is in a still more chaotic stage; for the old forms are crumbling away under the pressure of the environment, their spirit and reality are more and more passing out of them, but the facade persists by the force of inertia of thought and will and the remaining attachment of a long association, while the new is still powerless to be born. There is much of slow and often hardly perceptible destruction, a dull preservation effective only by immobility, no possibility yet of sound reconstruction. We have had a loud proclaiming, -- only where supported by religion, as in the reforming Samajes, any strong effectuation, -- of a movement of social change, appealing sometimes crudely to Western exemplars and ideals, sometimes to the genius or the pattern of ancient times; but it has quite failed to carry the people, because it could not get at their spirit and itself lacked, with the exceptions noted, in robust sincerity. We have had too a revival of orthodox conservatism, more academic and sentimental than profound in its impulse or in touch with the great facts and forces of life. We have now in emergence an increasing sense of the necessity of a renovation of social ideas and expressive forms by the spirit of the nation awaking to the deeper yet unexpressed implications of its own culture, but as yet no sufficient will or means of execution. It is probable that only with the beginning of a freer national life will the powers of the renaissance take effective hold of the social mind and action of the awakened people.

## The Renaissance in India - 4

The renaissance thus determining itself, but not yet finally determined, if it is to be what the name implies, a rebirth of the soul of India into a new body of energy, a new form of its innate and ancient spirit, prajñâ purânî, must insist much more finally and integrally than it has as yet done on its spiritual turn, on the greater and greater action of the spiritual motive in every sphere of our living. But here we are still liable to be met by the remnants of a misunderstanding or a refusal to understand, -- it is something of both, -- which was perhaps to a little extent justified by certain ascetic or religionist exaggerations, a distrust which is accentuated by a recoil from the excessive other-worldliness that has marked certain developments of the Indian mind and life, but yet is not justified, because it misses the true point at issue. Thus we are sometimes asked what on earth we mean by spirituality in art and poetry or in political and social life, -- a confession of ignorance strange enough in any Indian mouth at this stage of our national history, -- or how art and poetry will be any the better when they have got into them what I have recently seen described as the "twang of spirituality'', and how the practical problems either of society or of politics are going at all to profit by this element. We have here really an echo of the European idea, now of sufficiently long standing, that religion and spirituality on the one side and intellectual activity and practical life on the other are two entirely different things and have each to be pursued on its own entirely separate lines and in obedience to its own entirely separate principles. Again we may be met also by the suspicion that in holding up this ideal rule before India we are pointing her to the metaphysical and away from the dynamic and pragmatic or inculcating some obscurantist reactionary principle of mystical or irrational religiosity and diverting her from the paths of reason and modernity which she must follow if she is to be an efficient and a well-organised nation able to survive in the shocks of the modern world. We must therefore try to make clear what it is we mean by a renaissance governed by the principle of spirituality.

But first let us say what we do not mean by this ideal. Clearly it does not signify that we shall regard earthly life as a temporal vanity, try to become all of us as soon as possible monastic ascetics, frame our social life into a preparation for the monastery or cavern or mountain-top or make of it a static life without any great progressive ideals but only some aim which has nothing to do with earth or the collective advance of the human race. That may have been for some time a tendency of the Indian mind, but it was never the whole tendency. Nor does spirituality mean the moulding of the whole type of the national being to suit the limited dogmas, forms, tenets of a particular religion, as was often enough attempted by the old societies, an idea which still persists in many minds by the power of old mental habit and association; clearly such an attempt would be impossible, even if it were desirable, in a country full of the most diverse religious opinions and harbouring too three such distinct general forms as Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, to say nothing of the numerous special forms to which each of these has given birth. Spirituality is much wider than any particular religion, and in the larger ideas of it that are now coming on us even the greatest religion becomes no more than a broad sect or branch of the one universal religion, by which we shall understand in the future man's seeking for the eternal, the divine, the greater self, the source of unity and his attempt to arrive at some equation, some increasing approximation of the values of human life with the eternal and the divine values.

Nor do we mean the exclusion of anything whatsoever from our scope, of any of the great aims of human life, any of the great problems of our modern world, any form of human activity, any general or inherent impulse or characteristic means of the desire of the soul of man for development, expansion, increasing vigour and joy, light, power, perfection. Spirit without mind, spirit without body is not the type of man, therefore a human spirituality must not belittle the mind, life or body or hold them of small account: it will rather hold them of high account, of immense importance, precisely because they are the conditions and instruments of the life of the spirit in man. The ancient Indian culture attached quite as much value to the soundness, growth and strength of the mind, life and body as the old Hellenic or the modern scientific thought, although for a different end and a greater motive. Therefore to everything that serves and belongs to the healthy fullness of these things, it gave free play, to the activity of the reason, to science and philosophy, to the satisfaction of the aesthetic being and to all the many arts great or small, to the health and strength of the body, to the physical and economical well-being, ease, opulence of the race, -- there was never a national ideal of poverty in India as some would have us believe, nor was bareness or squalor the essential setting of her spirituality, -- and to its general military, political and social strength and efficiency. Their aim was high, but firm and wide too was the base they sought to establish and great the care bestowed on these first instruments. Necessarily the new India will seek the same end in new ways under the vivid impulse of fresh and large ideas and by an instrumentality suited to more complex conditions; but the scope of her effort and action and the suppleness and variety of her mind will not be less, but greater than of old. Spirituality is not necessarily exclusive; it can be and in its fullness must be all-inclusive.

But still there is a great difference between the spiritual and the purely material and mental view of existence. The spiritual view holds that the mind, life, body are man's means and not his aims and even that they are not his last and highest means; it sees them as his outer instrumental self and not his whole being. It sees the infinite behind all things finite and it adjudges the value of the finite by higher infinite values of which they are the imperfect translation and towards which, to a truer expression of them, they are always trying to arrive. It sees a greater reality than the apparent not only behind man and the world, but within man and the world, and this soul, self, divine thing in man it holds to be that in him which is of the highest importance, that which everything else in him must try in whatever way to bring out and express, and this soul, self, divine presence in the world it holds to be that which man has ever to try to see and recognise through all appearances, to unite his thought and life with it and in it to find his unity with his fellows. This alters necessarily our whole normal view of things; even in preserving all the aims of human life, it will give them a different sense and direction.

We aim at the health and vigour of the body; but with what object? For its own sake, will be the ordinary reply, because it is worth having; or else that we may have long life and a sound basis for our intellectual, vital, emotional satisfactions. Yes, for its own sake, in a way, but in this sense that the physical too is an expression of the spirit and its perfection is worth having, is part of the dharma of the complete human living; but still more as a basis for all that higher activity which ends in the discovery and expression of the divine self in man. Sarîram khalu dharma-sâdhanam, runs the old Sanskrit saying, the body too is our means for fulfilling the dharma, the Godward law of our being. The mental, the emotional, the aesthetic parts of us have to be developed, is the ordinary view, so that they may have a greater satisfaction, or because that is man's finer nature, because so he feels himself more alive and fulfilled. This, but not this only; rather because these things too are the expressions of the spirit, things which are seeking in him for their divine values and by their growth, subtlety, flexibility, power, intensity he is able to come nearer to the divine Reality in the world, to lay hold on it variously, to tune eventually his whole life into unity and conformity with it. Morality is in the ordinary view a well-regulated individual and social conduct which keeps society going and leads towards a better, a more rational, temperate, sympathetic, self-restrained dealing with our fellows. But ethics in the spiritual point of view is much more, it is a means of developing in our action and still more essentially in the character of our being the diviner self in us, a step of our growing into the nature of the Godhead.

So with all our aims and activities; spirituality takes them all and gives them a greater, diviner, more intimate sense. Philosophy is in the Western way of dealing with it a dispassionate enquiry by the light of the reason into the first truths of existence, which we shall get at either by observing the facts science places at our disposal or by a careful dialectical scrutiny of the concepts of the reason or a mixture of the two methods. But from the spiritual view-point truth of existence is to be found by intuition and inner experience and not only by the reason and by scientific observation; the work of philosophy is to arrange the data given by the various means of knowledge, excluding none, and put them into their synthetic relation to the one Truth, the one supreme and universal reality. Eventually, its real value is to prepare a basis for spiritual realisation and the growing of the human being into his divine self and divine nature. Science itself becomes only a knowledge of the world which throws an added light on the spirit of the universe and his way in things. Nor will it confine itself to a physical knowledge and its practical fruits or to the knowledge of life and man and mind based upon the idea of matter or material energy as our starting-point; a spiritualised culture will make room for new fields of research, for new and old psychical sciences and results which start from spirit as the first truth and from the power of mind and of what is greater than mind to act upon life and matter. The primitive aim of art and poetry is to create images of man and Nature which shall satisfy the sense of beauty and embody artistically the ideas of the intelligence about life and the responses of the imagination to it; but in a spiritual culture they become too in their aim a revelation of greater things concealed in man and Nature and of the deepest spiritual and universal beauty. Politics, society, economy are in the first form of human life simply an arrangement by which men collectively can live, produce, satisfy their desires, enjoy, progress in bodily, vital and mental efficiency; but the spiritual aim makes them much more than this, first, a framework of life within which man can seek for and grow into his real self and divinity, secondly, an increasing embodiment of the divine law of being in life, thirdly, a collective advance towards the light, power, peace, unity, harmony of the diviner nature of humanity which the race is trying to evolve. This and nothing more but nothing less, this in all its potentialities, is what we mean by a spiritual culture and the application of spirituality to life.

Those who distrust this ideal or who cannot understand it, are still under the sway of the European conception of life which for a time threatened to swamp entirely the Indian spirit. But let us remember that Europe itself is labouring to outgrow the limitations of its own conceptions and precisely by a rapid infusion of the ideas of the East, -- naturally, essential ideas and not the mere forms, -- which have been first infiltrating and are now more freely streaming into Western thought, poetry, art, ideas of life, not to overturn its culture, but to transform, enlighten and aggrandise its best values and to add new elements which have too long been ignored or forgotten. It will be singular if while Europe is thus intelligently enlarging herself in the new light she has been able to seize and admitting the truths of the spirit and the aim at a divine change in man and his life, we in India are to take up the cast-off clothes of European thought and life and to straggle along in the old rut of her wheels, always taking up today what she had cast off yesterday. We should not allow our cultural independence to be paralysed by the accident that at the moment Europe came in upon us, we were in a state of ebb and weakness, such as comes some day upon all civilisations. That no more proves that our spirituality, our culture, our leading ideas were entirely mistaken and the best we can do is vigorously to Europeanise, rationalise, materialise ourselves in the practical parts of life, -- keeping perhaps some spirituality, religion, Indianism as a graceful decoration in the background, -- than the great catastrophe of the war proves that Europe's science, her democracy, her progress were all wrong and she should return to the Middle Ages or imitate the culture of China or Turkey or Tibet. Such generalisations are the facile falsehoods of a hasty and unreflecting ignorance.

We have both made mistakes, faltered in the true application of our ideals, been misled into unhealthy exaggerations. Europe has understood the lesson, she is striving to correct herself; but she does not for this reason forswear science, democracy, progress, but purposes to complete and perfect them, to use them better, to give them a sounder direction. She is admitting the light of the East, but on the basis of her own way of thinking and living, opening herself to truth of the spirit, but not abandoning her own truth of life and science and social ideals. We should be as faithful, as free in our dealings with the Indian spirit and modern influences; correct what went wrong with us; apply our spirituality on broader and freer lines, be if possible not less but more spiritual than were our forefathers; admit Western science, reason, progressiveness, the essential modern ideas, but on the basis of our own way of life and assimilated to our spiritual aim and ideal; open ourselves to the throb of life, the pragmatic activity, the great modern endeavour, but not therefore abandon our fundamental view of God and man and Nature. There is no real quarrel between them; for rather these two things need each other to fill themselves in, to discover all their own implications, to awaken to their own richest and completest significances.

India can best develop herself and serve humanity by being herself and following the law of her own nature. This does not mean, as some narrowly and blindly suppose, the rejection of everything new that comes to us in the stream of Time or happens to have been first developed or powerfully expressed by the West. Such an attitude would be intellectually absurd, physically impossible, and above all unspiritual; true spirituality rejects no new light, no added means or materials of our human self-development. It means simply to keep our centre, our essential way of being, our inborn nature and assimilate to it all we receive, and evolve out of it all we do and create. Religion has been a central preoccupation of the Indian mind; some have told us that too much religion ruined India, precisely because we made the whole of life religion or religion the whole of life, we have failed in life and gone under. I will not answer, adopting the language used by the poet in a slightly different connection, that our fall does not matter and that the dust in which India lies is sacred. The fall, the failure does matter, and to lie in the dust is no sound position for man or nation. But the reason assigned is not the true one. If the majority of Indians had indeed made the whole of their lives religion in the true sense of the word, we should not be where we are now; it was because their public life became most irreligious, egoistic, self-seeking, materialistic that they fell. It is possible, that on one side we deviated too much into an excessive religiosity, that is to say, an excessive externalism of ceremony, rule, routine, mechanical worship, on the other into a too world-shunning asceticism which drew away the best minds who were thus lost to society instead of standing like the ancient Rishis as its spiritual support and its illuminating life-givers. But the root of the matter was the dwindling of the spiritual impulse in its generality and broadness, the decline of intellectual activity and freedom, the waning of great ideals, the loss of the gust of life.

Perhaps there was too much of religion in one sense; the word is English, smacks too much of things external such as creeds, rites, an external piety; there is no one Indian equivalent. But if we give rather to religion the sense of the following of the spiritual impulse in its fullness and define spirituality as the attempt to know and live in the highest self, the divine, the all-embracing unity and to raise life in all its parts to the divinest possible values, then it is evident that there was not too much of religion, but rather too little of it -- and in what there was, a too one-sided and therefore an insufficiently ample tendency. The right remedy is, not to belittle still farther the agelong ideal of India, but to return to its old amplitude and give it a still wider scope, to make in very truth all the life of the nation a religion in this high spiritual sense. This is the direction in which the philosophy, poetry, art of the West is, still more or less obscurely, but with an increasing light, beginning to turn, and even some faint glints of the truth are beginning now to fall across political and sociological ideals. India has the key to the knowledge and conscious application of the ideal; what was dark to her before in its application, she can now, with a new light, illumine; what was wrong and wry in her old methods she can now rectify; the fences which she created to protect the outer growth of the spiritual ideal and which afterwards became barriers to its expansion and farther application, she can now break down and give her spirit a freer field and an ampler flight: she can, if she will, give a new and decisive turn to the problems over which all mankind is labouring and stumbling, for the clue to their solutions is there in her ancient knowledge. Whether she will rise or not to the height of her opportunity in the renaissance which is coming upon her, is the question of her destiny.

Indian Renaissance - National Awakening

S. S. PUJARI and S. S. NARAYANA

Lexicons call Renaissance “new birth.” The European Renaissance which started in Italy in the 16th century signified the birth of Modern Europe. Similarly, the Indian Renaissance which began in the early phase of the 19th century resulted in the birth of modern India. The question, however, arises: What exactly do we mean by the birth of Modern India?

The land, rivers, mountains, seas, etc., of the country remain what they have always been: they neither die nor are they born anew. The national habits, folkways, culture, religion, etc., of the people also continue to be almost alike; so also the general composition of the Indian people. Or we can say, amidst certain invariable changes there is a deep underlying continuity.

What, then, is it which can be said to have been newly-born with the advent of the so-called renaissance?

What is called renaissance or new birth in India is nothing other than the awakening of the mind, soul or psyche of the nation after a long or short span of sleep; it is the galvanising into creative activity of the dormant life-force of the national spirit. It may be described as a renewal of the national springs of life when they seemed all but choked and about to dry up. It is the emergence and unhampered functioning of the free and creative spirit of the country. To realise the significance of this statement we must bear in mind that every nation, like each individual, has in it a creative principle which is always seeking to convert its potentialities into actualities. India, too, possesses a creative force. We may call it “spirituality.”

**How Renaissance began in India**

 The Indian Renaissance begins with the Modern Period. And the Modern Period starts with the British domination in India. The British rule brought political unity to India which she was lacking for centuries. It also brought with it a new and expanding religion, a different culture and civilisation which has had enormous impact on the life and mind of the people of India.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy, generally acclaimed as the prophet of the Indian renaissance or Indian awakening or Indian national­ism, took up the task of the study of English language and literature immediately after starting his crusade against idolatry, politheism and Sati. In other words, his movement for the reform of Hinduism and his call to his countrymen to go back to the teachings of the Upanishads antidate his familiarity with English literature and Western ideas.

This important fact leads us to assert that the impact of the West could at best be the occasion for the birth of the national awakening, but definitely not a veracause. On the contrary, the spirit of India was awakening the minds of a number of eminent persons to raise India from its deep slumber and recovering its spiritual heritage, although in some form or other the impact of the West cannot be ignored to this effect.

**The British Impact (negative aspect)**

The important fact to be noted is that with its roots in a materialistic view of the universe and self-untreadness as well, the Western civilization was incapable of reviving the spiritual culture of ancient India directly unto the floor. It will be too much to hold that a civilization (i.e. West) which exaggerates bodily and mental life could directly lead to the discovery of the inner spirit of man and its immense possibilities. At best, it could give rise to conditions under which the dormant creative faculty of the Indian spirit could be revived.

Another important feature to be born in mind is that the first and immediate effect of the introduction of Western pattern of education in our country by a joint effort of some of the leading citizens of Calcutta and the Christian missionaries – in general­–has more a negative effect in this regard. No doubt it became a centre of intellectual revolution, a nursery for the origin and dissemination of new ideas of change in education, culture, society and politics. But unfortunately its alumini denationalised Indian spirit instead of being any help to recover the spiritual heritage of the past. They began to take pride in denouncing everything Indian. To them the ancient heritage of India was anathema. They denounced it outright as vile and corrupt and unworthy of the regard of rational beings.

This is how they became great admirers of everything Western and opened the doors for India to develop an attitude of contempt and inferiority complex towards their great religions and cultural traditions. Referring to this state of affairs, Prof. D. S. Sarma rightly observes:

“This was the first time perhaps that the Indian mind was thrown off its balance. Even the devastating Muslim invasions and conquests had not produced a result of this kind.” (Sarma, D. S. *Hinduism through the ages.* Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. P. 58.)

**British Impact (Positive side)**

Every “no-moon” has its positive side to show at some or other time. And the impact of Western thought is no exception. It gave momentum to the renaissance movement in India. English education enabled Indian mind for the first time to have a closer view of Western culture. As a result of which the mental outlook of the educated Indian mind was broadened. Indian people now could understand and appreciate the ideological forces that were the living force for the West. They also felt the direct impact of a great industrial, scientific and technical civilization which was in a process; to change the shape of the world, it also engendered in them a new critical and reflective attitude and they became more conscious of the shortcomings of their own society. Moreover, they could be conscious of evils that had entered Indian society through the ages and had almost depri­ved it of its dynamism and creative vigour.

The Indian thinkers were now determined to reform society and purge it of all its evils. Infanticide, child marriage, Sati, enforced widowhood, purdah, Devadasi, untouchability, caste system and prohibition of foreign travel appeared to them as the plagues of Hindu society which were to be rooted out altogether. Above all, the Indian thinkers and reformers of this period condemned and discouraged the tendency of some English edu­cated people to entertain blind and uncritical admiration for everything Western and cherish hostility towards their own cul­ture and civilization.

Some reformers and leaders of this century aroused in people a sense of patriotism and greater admiration and respect for its rich cultural tradition. To this effect they also got considerable support from a section of Western indologists, orientalists and some other Western friends and well wishers of India.

Translations of Sanskrit texts into English created sensation in the Indian mind and made English-educated people to realize the greatness and depth of Indian culture and civilization. The names of some of the great Western indologists and orientalists to be particularly mentioned here are Sir William Jones, Sir Charles Wilkins, Colebrooke, Wilson, Muir, Monier Williams, Max Mueller, James Fergusson, Dr. Buffler, Dr. Fleet and Havel.

That is how the many-faceted contribution of Britishraj is recognised for the birth of Indian Renaissance Movement. But some scholars like Sri Aurobindo would not like to recognise the British impact, rather would bestow the credit on Indian spirituality or the inherent Sakti. At best British impact might have had indirect effect in a secondary level. So in what follows, we shall discuss how the Indian spirit is responsible for Indian renaissance.

**Indian Spirituality and Indian Renaissance**

It is quite evident that the spread of Western education could not by itself have fostered and promoted the renaissance unless there had not been a genuine urge from within, a spirit of renais­sance aiming at the revival of what was noble and elevating in India’s past. That is how we are led to assess that though the West has had its influence on Indian minds for a national resur­gence, the main factor responsible for this is the Sakti of India which has thrown up a large number of high-souled Indians who incarnated in themselves the new spirit of awakening. How the sprout of Renaissance came out to stand as a gigantic banyan tree is the stimulation of the West to revive the dormant intellectual and critical impulse of the people, to force them to turn to their past and recover the spiritual heritage, and put the revived spirit face to face with novel conditions and ideas and the urgent necessity of understanding and conquering them.

The so-called Renaissance Movement is not confined to religion only. It is so comprehensive that it reflects almost all departments of national life; a many-sided movement concerned with rejuvenating all aspects of Indian life and thought, educa­tion, humanities, the social sciences, the physical sciences, the economic, political and social life of the country, literature and the other fine arts: Philosophy and Religion.

It is thus naturally difficult to count all the departments of activity which were shaped by the Renaissance Movement. Raja Ram Mohun Roy was concerned in a way with education and social life and its reformation and some aspects of the Hindu religion. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda liberalised and modernised Hinduism and took it back to its universal roots and form. They were concerned with the very soul of the Indian Renaissance.

Having thus analysed some factors which contributed to the Indian Renaissance, we may now set forth its various phases.

**The Different Phases of the Indian Renaissance Movement**

As is said earlier, the impact of the West on India was to some extent destructive. Hinduism, as it was understood and practised in those days, was unable to withstand the terrific forces of the Western onslaught. Many of its ideas, institutions and practices were unable to stand those examinations and scrutiny and were therefore summarily rejected by the young men of Bengal who had received Western education. They became English in taste, opinions, words and intellect and the dream of Macaulay was being realized to some extent.

The educated youth became denationalised and began to ape European manners and to look with irreverence, if not with contempt, upon the past civilization of the Hindus. As Lord Ronald says that westernisation became the fashion of the day and westernism demanded its votaries that they should cry down the civilisation of their own country. The more ardent their admiration for everything European, the more vehement became their denunciation of everything Eastern.

But fortunately, this spirit did not spread widely. It failed to filter down to the masses nor could it affect all the educated youngmen. The factor which India could receive from complete westernisation was that she lives centrally in the spirit, with less buoyancy and vivacity and therefore with a less ready adaptiveness of creation, but a greater, intenser, more brooding depth. In this respect India differs greatly from Japan who lives centrally in her temperament and in her aesthetic sense and has therefore been more rapidly assimilative of Western culture.

When men like Raja Ram Mohun Roy in Bengal and Mahadev Govind Ranade in Maharashtra who had some knowledge of the past to react differently to the West, by way of looking upon the past culture from a new angle and tried to understand and reshape it in the light of new ideas and knowledge to suit the modern society, there arose Indian renaissance. They became the pioneers of social reforms and initiated the liberal tradition in Indian thought. Though Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Justice Ranade are famous as great social reformers, they were no less interested in political and educational matters where they showed remarkable towers of their minds. Of course, for several reasons they could not exercise their powers in these fields at large.

We have to look to men like Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Gopala Krishna Gokhale and Surendranath Banerjee who with many others, introduced, formulated and strengthened the Western pattern of the so-called liberal tradition in the political thinking of modern India. This, without any hesitation, may be regarded as the first phase of the Indian renaissance which was the outcome of Western impact on Indian spirituality.

The contrast feature, as it could be said the next phase of the renaissance, is said to have been carried on by Swami Dayauanda Saraswati who did not know English at all. Thus this patriot re­mained uneffected from the influence of English civilisation and asked his countrymen to go back to the purity of the Vedic civili­zation. The Arya Samaj founded by him was mainly responsible for the awakening among the people of Northern India as well as for social and religious reform.

During the third phase, there arose a great figure in the personality of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa who laid emphasis on the recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendour, depth and fullness as the first and the most essential work of the religious and the social reform. His great disciple, Swami Vivekananda, carried out the flag flying adding a new dimension by interpreting Vedanta scientifically and up­lifting the masses by channelising their thought in political and philosophical realm.

In the pronouncements of Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo we see the fourth stage of Indian renaissance. Their contribution through literature helped Indian renaissance to be­come fuller and more self-conscious, and nationalism purer and nobler. The tradition both in Indian renaissance and political thinking of Modern India finds its high water-mark in Tilak, Lajapat Rai and Bepin Chandra Pal.

The most significant phase starts with Mahatma Gandhi. He contributed immensely towards giving a new direction and form to the Renaissance Movement and brought forth into active life some of the old and characteristic features of ancient Indian culture. He was mainly responsible for turning the national struggle for independence into new channels and thereby made a rich addition to social, religious and political ideas.

**Assessment of Indian Renaissance Movement**

Thus the overall description suggests that the social, politi­cal and philosophical thinking of modern India has been shaped under the stress of different forces and contains several currents of thoughts. They cannot be assessed as a consistent or system­atic whole. The reason for this non-integration may be found in the mutual incompatibility of the Western influence and the Indian culture. India would have been completely westernized like Japan if she had accepted Western culture without a second thought. But fortunately she has tried to Indianise what she got from the West. This has been the chief aim and purpose of the Indian Renaissance Movement which is yet to see its end-point.

Till this day Western impact has not been uprooted from India, though Britishers have left the nation since more than three decades. Nor Indian renaissance has come to its saturation. In its process, even now, the renaissance is effected by Western thought, but certainly not uncritically. The process of “Manana” and “Nidhidhyasana” has saved Indian culture to get its position in the peak. The task of reconstructing a new India, which ought to retain what is of value in the ancient culture and absorb what the new scientific and technical knowledge has to give is still going on. No better job can be discharged to put the characteristics of the Indian renaissance in a nutshell than to quote Sri Aurobindo – its greatest exponent and interpreter. He writes:

“It is rather a process of a new creation in which the spiritual power of the Indian mind remains supreme, recovers its truths, accepts whatever it finds sound or true, useful or inevitable of the modern idea or form but so transmutes and Indianises it, so absorbs and transforms it that its foreign character disappears and it becomes another harmo­nious element in the characteristic working of the ancient goddess, the Sakti of India, mastering and taking possession of the modern influence no longer possessed or overcome by it. (Sri Aurobindo, *The Renaissance in India.* Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. pp. 21-22.)

Since the renaissance has exerted a great deal of impact on the proceedings of Indian National Movement playing a nota­ble role in shaping its political, philosophical and social think­ing, it can very well be inferred that the later must have been greatly shaped and moulded by its central feature, namely spirituality. In its most representative and leading thinkers like Lokamanya Tilak, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi, social, philosophical and political thinking stands at the edge of religion.

If the distinctive feature of the ancient Greek political thought was its ethics and that of the Roman thought legal approach and if German political thought is immensely influenced by its metaphysical trend, in modern Indian thinkers philosophy, politics and religion have been closely knitted very successfully. Gandhiji dazzles as the best illustration in its favour. He made it as the mission of his life to interact religion and politics.

Age of the Indian Renaissance - Kevat Shah

"Renaissance" was a word used to describe the scientific, artistic and cultural revolution which changed Europe from 14th to 17th centuries. Similar changes have been seen in numerous civilizations before and after. The most striking of these other Renaissances were the Age of Renaissance in Athens during the time of Socrates and Plato, as well as the Age of the American Renaissance, which began in the 17th century and still seems to be continuing today.

During these Renaissances, many new ideologies were introduced. These ideologies changed the way people thought and acted. For example, after the death of Socrates, people of Athens became less afraid to think independently, as evident from the writings of Plato. Likewise, in 14th century Europe, thinkers like Leonardo Da Vinci and Michealangelo challenged the popular belief system through novel innovations and artistic ideas. This allowed men like Gallileo, Newton and Copernicus to believe in what they thought was true. The same can be said about the Founding Fathers of America, the men who lead the American Renaissance. Benjamin Franklin refused to believe the widely accepted "facts" about lightning, allowing him to understand electricity. Therefore, we can safely assume that "thinking outside the box" and believing in your own ideas are an integral part of being a "Renaissance Man".

Another interesting fact to note is that all the Ages of Renaissance were preceded by a long dark age. In ancient Athens, a long war with Sparta preceded the coming of Socrates. The European Renaissance was also preceded by the "Dark Ages" full of war, famine and the black plague (10th - 13th centuries). The American Renassiance was preceded by 200 years of colonization of a wild land, as well as wars with the England, Spain and France and Native Americans. While the years preceding the Renaissance seem to be full of misery and seem to lack of stability, the years at the beginning of each Renaissance seem to be peaceful when compared to the years preceding them. In Athens, war against Sparta had come to a standstill and a period of peace had begun. In 14th century Europe, nations had begun unifying themselves as feudalism came to an end, ushering in an era of relative peace. In 17th century America, Americans had finally organized themselves into a nation allowing them to fight all other forces against them, which again, led to an era of relative peace.

Therefore, it follows that there are 2 things neccesary for an Age of Renaissance to begin. First, there need to independent thinkers not afraid to speak their mind. Second, and Age of Renaissance is almost always an era of peace preceded by an age of darkness.

For the last 1000 years, India has been torn by war. Of these, the last 400 years under Mughal and British Empires have been the darkest days India has seen. However, since gaining independence, India has become a relatively safer and more peaceful place. There is a movement in India towards education. Having a good education is considered the most important thing needed for success. As more and more Indians become educated, there will be more Indians, such as myself, who are not afraid to think of novel ideas or to speak their mind.

An age of darkness followed by an age of enlightement, along with the presence of independent fearless thinkers is what defines a Renaissance. According to that definition, a new age is just beginning in the history of India: The Age of the Indian Renaissance.