CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPT OF MAN AND DIGNITY: A
PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE
Inquiry into the problem of man has been of perennial philosophical interest. Philosophers in the East as well as in the West have focused their attention on man, his nature and values. Man, his culture and civilization have been the subject matter of all philosophies. Man cannot be ignored by any philosophy whatsoever. Human being has to be retained at the centre of all philosophical inquiries. Human person has been regarded as the most valuable subject of all disciplines. The subject of human being is superior even to the discoveries of science. Even the world religions have given primacy to man and his values. As Radhakrishnan puts it, "The common wealth of humanity has no written constitution; it is based on community of ideals, freedom
and dignity of the individual, rule of law, economic opportunity for all citizens and love of peace."\textsuperscript{1}

Man is the point of reference for all disciplines. It is impossible to transcend the human reference point. The great minds of all ages have felt the need of reconstructing the human being. More than the reconstruction of the world, human beings have to reconstruct themselves. People have to find a way of life which can safeguard the freedom and dignity of all. Human beings have to understand themselves. We have to discover \textit{the man} who is behind all the activities. We have to find out the exact man who is at the source of spiritual, ethical and scientific activities. Socrates said that the study of man is the noblest of all studies. He also said that proper study of man is indispensable for the understanding of anything. So it is necessary to understand the subject of man as portrayed by different philosophical traditions. "Man himself, therefore, becomes the centre of our interest. He is the subject of our study and the test and value of that study as well. Philosophy now becomes the reflection of man about himself – a reflection which employs logical principles and avoids illogicalities."\textsuperscript{2}

Man is essentially the same everywhere. Human nature hardly differs from person to person. There is a general differentiation between the man in the East and the man in the West. Eastern man is said to be intuitive, mystic, introvert and
spiritual. The Western man is characterized as being intellectual, ethical, extrovert and materialistic. But the differentiation cannot be taken to be absolute. Man is essentially the same, despite the accidental differences. Man’s basic instincts, aspirations and ideals are the same. The fundamental nature of man remains to be the same everywhere. The habits, customs, civilizations and achievements constitute the second nature of man only. Philosophers as well as psychologists assume that man’s nature is the same. Their inquiries into the nature of man are founded on the principle of the uniformity of nature. It is because of the faith in the common nature of man that humanity is proceedings towards an ideal world. The religions and governments have been trying to formulate the values common to all. It is on the basis of the sameness of man that the UNO is making available the values of all cultures to each and every other culture. Humanity is trying to assimilate and utilize the values of different cultures. Even the rights have been considered to be the same to every person since the fundamental nature of man is accepted to be same. Every person longs for freedom and dignity. Nobody can grow and flower without freedom and dignity in their proper sense. “One who wishes to show that man is the same in the East and the West can collect at least as much evidence as the one who wishes to show that he is not the same. No one can be blind to the differences; and yet no one should miss the similarities. But similarities are
more important than differences, because they touch the essence of man and offer hope for future."³

**The Upanishadic Conception**

Human reality is encompassing many levels of being from matter to God. Man is both a temporal and transcendental being. Man is a biological, psychological and sociological being. The individual is also a religious, moral and metaphysical being, besides being a being of intelligence. Intelligence unifies the biological, social and psychological dimensions of the individual. Intelligence gives man the ego-consciousness and provides for the recording of the memory. The memory acts as the principle of self-identity of the person. It provides for the substratum of the ego. This ego may be called as the 'self' which is an organized whole. This self is empirical in character. It is a construct of thoughts, feelings and desires. It is also the seat of man's mechanical and instinctual acts. It is the source of all activities. Man is distinct from the animal in the sense that he possesses self awareness. Besides being aware of the external world, man is aware of himself also. "Unlike the animal he is aware of himself, reflexively conscious of himself."⁴

Man is more than the material body of instincts and impulses. The person is more than matter. He is life, mind and intelligence. Above all, the individual is spirit. In man, matter and spirit are not opposed to each other. The spirit is at work
transferring the matter towards the higher forms of being. Man, like all other species, has been evolving. But evolution in man is said to be proceeding towards the state of superman. In man, the human element is evolving towards the divine. The divine is the essential nature of man. The divinity has to manifest in man to its fullest extent. Man is the epitome of the spontaneity and creativity of the spirit. Man is unique also because he can look back to the past of his evolution. He can see through his life, mind and the spirit. He can also look forward to the future when the divine is fully manifest. "Spanning several levels of being, as he does, man holds a central place in the evolution of the Cosmos. The spirit is at work in man trying to bring him to completion and through him tries to transform the rest of the Cosmos. Man then becomes the instrument of transformation of the whole Cosmos."6

According to the Indian tradition, man is of the nature of the Spirit (Atman). The Vedas and Upanishads proclaim that man is the spirit only. The spirit is beyond all descriptions and explanations. Yet it can be articulated in many ways. The wise men have tried to express it in several ways. The self as the spirit is present everywhere and in all beings. It is because of its presence, that the beings possess the sense of identity in the midst of change. The self is permanent amidst the passing. It is order amidst chaos. It is the noumena behind all phenomena and the subject of the objective world. The self is the primal reality which
is more authentic than the anything. The Upanishads calls the Self *Brahman*. The *Brahman* is neither the sun nor the moon but the light that never gets extinguished. It is the light which is not illuminated by anything else. It illumines everything else. It is also the light by which man and every other being exists. Man's salvation consists in identifying himself with the *Brahman*. It is considered to be the *summun bonum* of human existence. "Because man is so rooted in the foundational self he is said to be created in the image and likeness of God. Hence man should be defined not as a rational animal, merely, but as a spiritual, rational animal, corresponding to the three dimensions in man: the spirit, the intellect and the body."

Human being is the crown of the universe. He is the ideal goal of the evolution since the Godhead is immanent in him. Man's destiny is to manifest the Godhead. He has to achieve the state of unity despite his multiplicity of functions. The perfect man is one who has united himself with the spirit in him. The whole man is the divine man. The ideal man is the man of truth and goodness. He is the man of freedom and dignity in their real sense. Everyone has to strive to become an ideal person by his or her own effort. Even the societies have to strive to bring about the ideal man. One has to help the other to become the perfect man. Nobody should suppress the perfect man in oneself or in the other. Everyone should contribute to the accomplishment of the spirit in oneself
and the other. Each one has to strive to realize the divine freedom and dignity inherent in oneself, despite the barriers of the varying circumstances of life. The outward factors cannot fully determine the spirit of man. The spirit is more powerful than the physical, social and psychological factors. One can overcome these fetters and attain the freedom and dignity in the divine sense through self-knowledge, good conduct and sincere effort. One has to help others in their endeavour to realize their true nature which is of the nature of spiritual freedom and dignity. "Since man's equality is based on the ultimate reality, he is asked not merely to show friendliness and compassion, but to actively work for his fellowmen. Even those who realize their oneness with the Universal Self, so long as they wear a body, work for the welfare of the world."7

In Indian philosophy, the Upanishadic conception of man is regarded as the prototype of the conception of other orthodox Indian philosophies. According to the Upanishads, man is essentially spiritual in character. Spirit (Atman) is the innermost essence of man's personality. Atman is the nāma of the individual. Nāma means the name which refers to the spirit of man. It may also be equated with "character" or "personality" transcending the body. Man consists of the universal elements which constitute the body (rūpa). The elements are adjuncts only. They leave the soul on the death and return to their cosmic counterparts. It is the
spiritual element that survives the 'death' of the body. The self casts off the body at death and takes another form. "Atman is thus proclaimed to be the inherent essence, the real self of man."8

The self of n.an is one and the same as the Brahman. So man has the capacity to identify himself with the Brahman, the transcendental cosmic source of the universe. Atman is the inner essence of everything including man. It is the inner intelligence of all beings. It is the inner controller of all things. It is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer and an unthought thinker. The self is the support of all and dwells in man's heart. This can be directly experienced as the Brahman. Reaching Brahman means attainment of immortality. The state of immortality is the state of truth, consciousness and bliss. The realization of the knowledge of Brahman is called the ultimate liberation. It is freedom from the cycle of repeated births. It is called the state of turiya which is otherwise called moksha.9

Upanishads regard human life as the most important and sacred. Because unlike the other beings, human beings can attain what is known as the ultimate liberation. It is human being who has the destiny that is very distinct. Subhuman forms of life cannot aspire for the spiritual destiny. And man is distinct also because he is the maker of his destiny. He can shape his character for the attainment of full liberation. He can arrive at final freedom through his good deeds and also through the pure knowledge of
the Self. Good deeds work only as the facilitators. Ultimately only knowledge liberates the individual self. "It is knowledge alone as a personal, individual achievement which, paradoxically, breaks the shell of individuality and enables the knower to arrive at the realization of the underlying universal oneness."\textsuperscript{10}

According to the Upanishads, man's dignity lies in his spiritual freedom of knowing the Brahman. Knowing here does not mean the conceptual knowledge. Knowing Brahman in the real sense means actually becoming Brahman himself. So freedom means attaining the status of Brahman itself. Dignity consists in becoming or being Brahman itself. It means man is the being of absolute and unconditioned freedom which is the Spirit itself. Knowledge of the spirit is not a mediated one. It is not like the knowledge of objects gained through perception and conceptualization. It is knowledge of one's true self through awakening. It is the individual's unification with the absolute. "This deep and penetrating knowledge reveals the essential oneness of all that exists, and of transcendence, without abolishing the surface diversity which, however, no longer obstructs the deep inner vision and resulting freedom."\textsuperscript{11}

The nature of human dignity based on the Upanishadic conception of man becomes clearer when we consider it in the light of what Vivekananda has said about it. Vivekananda says that man's freedom and dignity consists in his power to transcend
nature. The spiritual nature of man is not bound by the laws of nature. In this, Vivekananda criticizes the Western concept of the freedom of the will. Spiritual freedom of man is far superior to the freedom of the will. Freedom of the will is still within the laws of nature. Vedanta considers freedom within the law of cause and effect is no freedom at all. Body-mind complex is governed by the laws of nature. But we the human beings are aware that we are not only body-mind complex. We have a feeling that we are free. "Life would have no meaning, it would not be worth living, if we were not free."12

Following the Upanishads, Vivekananda says that man is not limited to mind and body. Man is the soul which is ever free, eternal and boundless. Man's freedom lies in the soul and not in the mind or the body. The mind of man has to identify itself with the soul and not with the body. Man lost his freedom and dignity since he lost sight of the soul. The soul lost itself in the maze of time, space and causation. It identifies itself with the phenomenal world. But man has awareness that his soul is free despite its bondage to the world. "Man's free agency is established in the soul, and the soul, realizing itself to be free, is always asserting the fact in spite of the mind's bondage: I am free! I am what I am! I am what I am! This is our freedom. The soul—ever free, boundless, eternal—through aeons and aeons is manifesting itself more and more through its instrument, the mind."13
Vivekananda says that human dignity lies in the fact that "the spirit of man is an emanation of the Eternal Being and had no more a beginning than God Himself." Man's freedom is inerably connected with immortality. Man's freedom transcends the laws of nature. It is only the ignorant person who is confined to the laws of nature. Knowledge of the laws liberates man from nature. Man is the master of the social circumstances also. The fact that there have been great men in history is the proof that man can overcome any constraint, for man is essentially the spirit that cannot be bound by anything. Man can kill the brutal nature in himself and can become noble. Man can conquer even the so-called fate. It is only the weak who believe in fate. The strong man says that I am the maker of my fate. It is degrading oneself to give in to fate. Only the weak people resort to the talk of fate and they believe in astrology. It may be true that we are under the influence of the planets and stars. But it cannot be the cause of concern because we are free to transform our lives, specially, economically, morally and spiritually. If a star disturbs my life, it would not be worth a cent. You will find that astrology and all these mystical things are generally signs of a weak mind; therefore, as soon as they are becoming prominent in our minds, we should see a physician, take food and rest." says Vivekananda.

Freedom and autonomy of man lies in the fact that he is the sole maker of his life. The causes of all his thoughts and action are
there in one's own life. There is no need to search for causes outside the life of man. The life-world of man explains everything of man. There is no phenomenon in the life of a man which cannot be explained by the power of man himself. One's own action (Karma) is a sufficient explanation of his or her present condition. Vivekananda says that 'anything that stands in the way of one's freedom and dignity should be put aside. One should put oneself above all superstition and illusion. Anything that brings weakness and indignity to man should not be entertained. There is the natural strength in every man. He says, "A spring of infinite power is coiled up and is inside this little body, and that spring is spreading itself. And as it goes of spreading, body after body is found insufficient; it throws them off and takes higher bodies. This is the history of man, of religion, civilization, or progress. That giant Prometheaus, who is bound, is getting himself unbound. It is always a manifestation of strength, and all these ideas such as astrology, although there may be a grain of truth in them, should be avoided."'

Vivekananda reiterates that only those ideas that contribute to our strength and dignity have to be entertained. Everything that is good is life and everything that is bad is death. Life consists in freedom and dignity. Death is the absence of freedom and dignity. Divinity is the ultimate freedom and dignity. Only thing is that we do not know the truth that we are divine. The truth that we are
divine makes us strong. Man is the infinite soul which cannot be
tricked by the twinkling of stars and superstition. The stars owe
their existence to the man who is the offspring of immortality.
Vivekananda says that the philosophers have the duty of liberating
man from everything that degrades his or her humanity and
divinity. As the manifestation of the spirit, human being is superior
to everything in the world. Human beings need not bow down his
head to anything, for we are the children of divinity and dignity.
“The highest things are under your feet, because you are Divine;
Stars, all these things are under your feet. You can swallow the
stars by the handful if you want; such is your real nature. Be
strong, get beyond all superstitions, and be free," asserts Swami.

The Buddhist Conception

According to the early Buddhism of Hinayana, man is
composed of five groups (khandhas) of constituents. Group one is
corporeality (rupa khandha). It is composed of the four elements of
nature, namely, earth, water, fire and air. In this part, man
experiences of himself as bodily awareness. Group two is feelings
(Vedana khandha). Feelings are experiences of pleasure, pain or
indifference which constantly accompany the person’s conscious
life. The feelings are either mild or strong. Sometimes they may be
overwhelming. They may fill the entire experience for a brief
moment. They are constantly changing since they are reactions to
perceptions. Group three is perceptions (sanna khanda). They are
of six kinds, namely, perceptions of forms, perceptions of sounds, perceptions of colours, perceptions of tastes, perceptions of touch, and perceptions of mental objects such as thoughts, memories and images.\textsuperscript{18}

Group four is called mental formations (sankhara khand\textit{a}) which represent mental processes of volitional character. It comprises the conscious and unconscious mental factors like instincts, urges, inclinations, desires, and so on. They include the factors of mental attentiveness as well as of sluggishness. It is the totality of mental qualities of the person's character including the conscious capacity of decision-making. The mental processes are subject to constant change. At the same time this group may consist of person's deep-rooted habits, instincts or talents persisting for many lives. "The whole structure is therefore constantly undergoing some change, while continuity is preserved not only during one's life but throughout the entire sequence of lives of one individual."\textsuperscript{19}

And, the group five is called consciousness (vinnana khand\textit{a}). This is the most important group of the human personality. Consciousness penetrates all the acts of awareness. Consciousness is not a substantial entity. It is not an independent or a pure process. It is only a continuous process of the awareness of forms, sounds, odours, tastes, impressions of touch and several mental objects. It is always associated with one or more elements
of the other groups of human personality. This group includes the conscious and the unconscious mental objects which exist as parts of human experience. Consciousness survives physical death as it carries with it the whole mental framework of the personality which includes the other three groups of the mental realm (nāma). The consciousness that survives death acquires a new body or form again. The nature of the body it acquires depends upon the Karmic dispositions and the circumstances in which the person appears to be. Thus the structure of human personality continues birth after birth.20

The above description of the human personality shows, according to Pali Buddhism, that the person is subject to constant change. The personality is a purely phenomenal structural process. It does not possess any substance. There is no kernel such as the self or soul (atman) as advocated by the Vedanta. There is also no strict identity between successively reborn personalities. The reborn person is not the same as the previous one. At the same time, he is not entirely different from the person in the past, although there is a direct continuity between the two. The continuity and the differences in the personality can be noticed within one single life. A person can change beyond recognition both physically and mentally while preserving the sense of continuity at the same time.
But it cannot be said that Buddhism limits the human being to the structure of the five groups. Buddhism admits of what is known as liberation from sorrow (nirvāṇa). Liberation is a state which transcends the empirical personality of the five groups. It is a state which is "deep and unfathomable to be understood only by the wise, meaning, by a liberated alone."\(^{21}\) It means that the person exists not only at the phenomenal sense but also in the transphenomenal sense. As a liberated one, the person exists in the ultimate sense also. The person is not totally identical with the experiencing self. Nor is the person identical with the ultimate Self. The person is neither the individual Self (Jivatman) nor the absolute Self (paramatman) of the Upanishadic philosophy. The full reality of the person is neither in the five groups nor outside them. It is not even identical with them. The person is "undefinable and is fully known only by the Buddhas."\(^{22}\)

The Buddhist analysis of the human personality as explained above shows that every human being is nothing but the five bundles of forms, feelings, perceptions, mental processes and consciousness. There is nothing that is unique about anybody. All are a material process without anything special. The phenomenal reality of the person is composed of these five elements only. And anybody can 'transcend' the phenomenal being and attain liberation from sorrow by following the eightfold path. Liberation from sorrow is not meant for only a privileged few. All are eligible
for nirvāna. One can achieve it by one's own character, concentration and knowledge. Thus the Buddha has established equality among all people. It is this equality that is the background for the dignity of the human being. Everyone has to treat the other with equal dignity. Everyone is worthy of liberation. So there is no scope for gradations among human beings. Even women are of the same nature as men. They are also entitled for liberation. They are as worthy as men. They deserve a dignified treatment as men.\textsuperscript{23}

Socially and economically also human beings are of equal status. All are entitled for a happy and peaceful life. Happiness and peace are possible only when one leads a moral and spiritual life. One can lead a moral and spiritual life only when the circumstances are conducive for it. Material and social conditions have to be favourable for leading a moral and spiritual life. An individual should be provided with opportunities to lead a decent life and not to be put to indignities. A life of degradation and condemnation makes man resort to immoral ways of living. One can do meritorious deeds only when one is situated in an environment of equality, liberty and fraternity. A life of oppression and suppression is a barrier to the material and spiritual growth of the human being. "In the days of the Buddha, as today, there were rulers who governed their countries unjustly. People were oppressed and exploited, tortured and persecuted, excessive taxes
were imposed and cruel punishments were inflicted. The Buddha was deeply moved by these inhumanities.\textsuperscript{24}

It is important to note that the Buddha held that good governments are necessary for the protection of the freedom and dignity of the person. A just government is required for a just society, and a just government is possible only when the rulers are just. That is why the Buddha has prescribed certain principles for the rulers to follow. The ruler has to be liberal, generous and charitable. The ruler should be of high moral character. He should be able to sacrifice everything for the good of the people. He must be prepared to give up personal comfort, name and fame. He should be a person of honesty and integrity. He should be free from fear and favour in discharging his duties. He must be sincere in his intentions. The ruler should not be intemperate but be kind and gentle. Austerity in his habits is another important characteristic that a ruler should possess. He should have self-control and lead a simple life. He should be free from hatred and enmity. The important duty of the ruler is that he should be non-violent to people. It is only when the ruler follows these principles that he can assure people of the life of freedom and dignity. The ruler “should not oppose the will of the people, should not obstruct any measures that are conducive to the welfare of the people. In other words he should rule in harmony with his people.”\textsuperscript{26}
The world today is not conducive for the freedom and dignity of the people. There is fear, tension and discrimination among people. There is destruction and misery in the world. Each is degrading the other. There is the atmosphere of "mutual annihilation along with the total destruction of humanity." The solution for this crisis lies in the Buddha's teaching of non-violence and peace. There should be compassion, tolerance and understanding among people in human relations. Regard and respect for the life and dignity of the other is essential. There can be no peace as long as one desires to subjugate the other. One has to conquer the desire to hate the other. The hatred cannot be conquered by hatred. Mutual hatred leads to total destruction. So the Buddha said that one has to conquer hatred with non-violence. Love and compassion alone can appease hatred for the other. Hatred has to be won with kindness. Ill-will and hostility can never bring about a peaceful society. Genuine peace is possible only when the dignity and freedom of the people are protected. Happiness of the human beings is possible only when the poor and the weak are not persecuted. *Buddhism aims at creating a society where the ruinous struggle for power is renounced; where calm and peace prevail away from conquest and defeat; where the persecution of the innocent is vehemently denounced; where one who conquers oneself is more respected than those who conquer millions by military and economic warfare; where hatred is
conquered by kindness and evil by goodness; where enmity, jealousy, ill-will and greed do not infect men's minds; where compassion is the driving force of action; where all including the least of living things are treated with fairness, consideration and love; where life is in peace and harmony, in a world of material contentment, is directed towards the highest and noblest aim, the realization of the Ultimate Truth, Nirvana.  

Thus the person, according to the Buddha, is composed of name and form devoid of any substantial or distinct self. Everyone is endowed with freedom and dignity. Human being is more valuable than the so called God. Treating the other as one treats oneself is superior to worshipping God. One has to be good to others without a belief in God. It is not for the sake of God that one has to be good to his fellowmen. One has to be good to others because one is of the same nature as that of oneself. One has to treat the other with dignity by relating oneself with friendliness, compassion and joy. Equality, liberty and fraternity are also the sources of treating the other with dignity. The Buddha recognized the dignity of the person in declaring that the individual is the architect of his destiny. Each one can attain salvation by knowledge, conduct and effort. There is no need for anybody to be subservient to anything or anybody. One can attain social and spiritual salvation all by himself or herself. Treading the eightfold path diligently leads to nirvana, the supreme enlightenment. One
can cross the river of sorrow by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

The Marxist Conception

Man, according to Marxism, is the product of nature. Man is the highest manifestation of nature. Man is the best of all the living organisms on the earth. Man appeared on the earth because of the self-development of nature. Man is the product of the workings of the evolutionary laws of nature. Man is the medium through whom nature seems to have arrived at its own self-knowledge. But the power and potentiality of man is such that he adapts to nature for his ends. He subordinates it by his conscious activity and knowledge of the laws of nature's development. At the same time, man remains to be a part of nature itself. But in the course of the development of society, man gradually alienates himself from nature. He becomes more and more independent of natural conditions. Nevertheless, man improves the living conditions of his life by being in harmony with nature. "Man lives in a definite natural environment, and uses the products of nature in his life. He actively influences it, changes and transforms it. Man derives the means of his existence from nature and only from it. Therein lies the most profound meaning of the mutual relations of man and nature."28

The relation between man and nature may be likened to the process of metabolism. Man's labour is the process of metabolism
between nature and man. It is a process of change through which man appropriates to himself the matter of nature. He uses the matter for his own aims and interests. He utilizes it to support and reproduce his life and its conditions. In Marxism, production of goods through labour acts as the connecting link between man and nature. Production is the basic motive of human progress. Marxism regards labour as the real essence of man. Man's being lies in his productive tie with nature and in social labour and social relations. Work is the differentiating factor of man from animals. Work elevates man above the world of animals. Man is superior to animals since he is a being who works. Man uses the substances of nature. But unlike animals, he remakes the natural substances and adopts them for his needs. Work creates man as the civilized person. Labour developed man's body, enriched his mind and perfected his intellect. It transformed man as a being of science, art and philosophy. Work or labour which produces the goods of the hand and mind transformed man into a being of freedom and dignity. "Man distinguished himself from the world of animals and became a human being only through work. In this sense we can say that work created man himself. It is only thanks to his labour, thanks to the working processes that man gradually became transformed into a human being in the real sense of the word."29

Marxism says that the character and degree of man's work on nature is different in different periods of history. People of
different periods organized themselves differently against nature. The socio-economic conditions of people varied from one epoch to another. These conditions are determined by the objective conditions and circumstances of people’s lives. They are conditioned by the level of development of the productive forces in the given epoch. They are also controlled by the dominating method of production in the particular epoch. That is, the varied socio-economic conditions that prevailed in the history are characterized by the manner in which the means of production, namely, the implements of labour were used. We can learn this fact from the technological revolutions that have taken place in the human history. These revolutions are the significant turning points of man’s affirmation of his dominance over nature. For instance, man’s transformation from stone age to metal age was a technical revolution. Man changed the implements of labour from stone axe to that of bronze. It gave man new opportunities of progress in terms of both culture and civilization. "The transition to agriculture, the invention of the steam engine, the discovery of electricity and the possibilities of its industrial use must also be regarded as great technical revolutions." 20

These revolutions are the products of man's constant interaction and struggle against nature. It is this struggle resulting in revolutions that has gradually enhanced the status of man. These revolutions are the landmarks that have brought about
tremendous changes in the status of man. And this process of technological advancement through the revolutionary discoveries has been going on. Presently, there have been several technological revolutions both in physics and biology. These discoveries are a testimony to the enormous potentiality of the human intellect. They also mark man's growing power over nature. This process of subjugating the forces of nature has been continuous. But on the social level, man has not been able to overcome the attitude of exploiting man. Man has not yet passed through the societies in which the relations have been one of master and slave. He is still experiencing the system of the exploiter and the exploited.

The workers have not been able to enjoy the fruits of their labour. They have been alienated from the objects of their work. The capitalist has been the exploiter of the worker. The owner of the means of production has been appropriating the surplus of the labour power. On the social front a majority of people have not been able to lead a life of the real human being. They have not been living a life of freedom, equality and dignity. The process of subordinating nature to man has been going on for many centuries. On the other hand, in virtue of the historically established social relations of people in exploiting societies (the slave-holding system, feudalism, capitalism) man became dependent on the elemental forces of social development. Man, who became an ever stronger and all-powerful ruler of nature, as a
result of the social conditions of his existence, proved to be the slave of blind necessity, the elements dominating society. Those, who by their labour, created all material values did not enjoy equal rights and were subjected to exploitation. This fact reflects the tragedy of men of labour, the greatest of all known in the history of mankind."31

The Marxian philosophy of historical materialism conceives man as the whole man. It aims at the creation of the total man. Marx says that fragmentation of man took place through the division of labour. Mechanization led to the alienation of man from himself, from his fellowmen and with nature. Alienation became the common lot of humanity as a whole. As everything was turned into a commodity, man was degraded to the status of an object and became a fragment of his own self. People were overpowered by their own works. They fell away from themselves. Marx says that man's alienation manifested in many ways. Enjoyment was divorced from labour. The means was divorced from the end. The effort was divorced from the reward. Man became chained to a little fragment of the whole man. Alienation increased the misery of the worker. The product of the worker's labour confronted him as an alien commodity. Labour produces marvels for the rich. It produces palaces, beauty and intelligence. But it also produces privation, deformity and hovels for the worker. It turns the workers into machines and stupidity. In his work, the proletarian does not
fulfil himself but denies himself. He has a feeling of misery rather than well-being. He does not develop freely his mental and physical energies. "The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless." 32

The workers' misery increases regardless of how much he produces. In fact, the more he produces the more miserable he becomes. His misery increases in proportion to the volume and importance of his labour. The more the wealth he produces the poorer he becomes. His plight increases regardless of whether his wages rise or fall. "Higher wages do not confer human dignity upon the worker". 33 The production of surplus value is the chief object of capitalist production. Capital always extracts more from the worker by lengthening of the working day. It may do so through intensification of work. The worker's miserable condition is due to the fact that he produces capital for the benefit of the capitalist. Capital accumulation is reckless with the welfare of the working people. It is oblivious of the health of the labourer. It causes the physical and mental degradation of the worker. It also leads to the premature death due to the torture of overwork. Having become a slave to free competition of production, the capitalist forces the worker to work intensely and for long hours. As a slave to the inherent laws of capitalist production, he is constrained to engage the labourer overtime and with lower wages. "This ruthless chase after profit, the motive force of capitalist production, creates a
continuous tendency towards the increasing misery of the worker, hence the general tendency of capitalist production is not to raise, but to sink the average standard of wages."\textsuperscript{34}

Marx is of the view that the elevation of the proletariat to the position of ruling class alone can bring them dignity. Establishment of a state under the leadership of the working class gives them the freedom from alienation. Dictatorship of the proletariat is inevitable for the elimination of worker's indignity and misery. Dictatorship of the workers means the achievement of democracy. It means the transfer of the means of production from the capitalist to the public ownership. Marx says "A violent struggle is required for the establishment of the dictatorship of the workers. As a majority, the workers become victorious over the exploiting class. Then only there will be a free development of each as the condition for the development of all."\textsuperscript{35}

The Existentialist Conception

Existentialism is one of the contemporary Western trends that has given prominence to the freedom and the dignity of the human person. Existentialism is of the thesis that individual freedom is the most valuable of all values. Human existence is the centre of the world. That is, it is through human being that the world as we know comes into being. Human being is the creator of the world of civilization and values and also the source of all the problems that are there in the world. Human reality is the
foundation on which the life-world is built. As the champion of the individual freedom and responsibility, existentialism bestows on man the highest dignity. The dignity of the human being lies in his or her being the sole architect of his or her life.

Existentialism arose as a protest against the idealism of Hegel. Hegel’s objective idealism is the movement of reason from the state of abstract being to the state the concrete idea. It is the system of the dialectical march of reason from logic to spirit through nature. It is totally an objective system in the sense that reason is independent of human being. The subjective element of the human being does not have a place in it. The individual has no place in it. Reason which is objective and abstract submerges the individual. Human existence becomes a prey to reason. Reason is the only reality which subsumes all other factors. Thus, Hegel’s philosophy of reason suppresses the individual. The individual does not have any freedom and dignity, for the individual is like a cog in the machine of reason. Hegel’s system is like a big mansion in which there is no person. It is empty of human beings, since it is reason which is all pervading. There is no place for the individual freedom since it is reason which determines itself and everything else. So there is no role of the human decision in determining his own life. Thus the human person has lost dignity in the objective idealism of Hegel. The subjectivity of the individual is sacrificed at the altar of the objectivity.
According to existentialism the existence of the individual is the highest truth. Existence is more valuable than essence. Existence means the freedom of the individual. Essence means what is given to the individual. It also means what is acquired by the individual. Human existence is independent of what is given and acquired. It is the individual who determines the given and the acquired and not vice versa. Existence of the individual is unique in the sense that it determines itself. Existence surpasses reason. It cannot be explained completely by reason. Reason rejects the uniqueness of the individual. So existentialism is opposed to understanding of human existence in terms of rational concepts. Reason cannot account for the totality of human existence. It cannot take into account the role of passions in life. There is 'mystery' to human existence which reason cannot unravel. "The concern for the individual human life is the foundation of the philosophy of Existentialism. This has found expression in the revolt against the rationalist concept of system as well as against the mechanistic idea of modern life." 36

Existentialism is of two kinds— theistic and atheistic. Kierkegaard is the chief representative of the theistic existentialism. Jean Paul Sartre is the main exponent of the atheistic existentialism. Kierkegaard is also regarded as the father of existentialism. He expounded his brand of existentialism mainly as a protest against Hegel's philosophy. He says that
systematization of human existence degrades the individual. The system cannot understand the existence of human being. The system is dead whereas the individual is alive. A systematic thinker like Hegel cannot understand himself. It is only the one who is oblivious of his own existence can think of systematization. System and human existence cannot go together. Objectivity and subjectivity cannot go together. The former is mechanical while the latter is existential. The dignity of the individual lies in being unique. Each individual is unique in the sense that he or she is not one among the common people. The common man is a faceless one, whereas the individual is a specific person who exists with freedom and dignity. To be an existing human being, according to Kierkegaard, "does not mean to be a human being in general, for such a being can be agreed to by the speculative philosopher, rather it means that you and I and he are human beings each one for himself."

Kierkegaard argues that man is not a concept which isolates individual human existence. Treating human being through a philosophical conception stifles human freedom and takes away the dignity of the individual who is the source of his or her own existence. It is wrong to reduce human person to the level of a concept. Concept is merely a possibility whereas existence is an instantiation of that possibility. The concept of the individual is not the actual individual who is subjectivity. Subjectivity is the truth
of the individual. It is the basis of the individual freedom and dignity. It is only when the individual realizes the truth of his or her subjectivity that he or she attains freedom and dignity. And it is only when one sees the truth of the subjectivity in others that one can treat them with dignity. Subjectivity means the absence of objectivity. The truth of the human person is devoid of the objectivity in the sense that he or she cannot be reduced to the status of an object. Kierkegaard speaks of the individual existence in a very special sense. To him the individual is not a biological, psychological or social unit. On the contrary, human being is an existence who lives as an individual with thoughts, feelings and values. Human being is one who is committed, feels his freedom and dignity, and recognizes his responsibility for his actions. "The meaning of existence, according to Kierkegaard, is the significance which one provides for one's own life, through realization of one's personal freedom, and autonomy, through passionate commitment, through responsibility and the feelings accompanying freedom and responsibility." 38

Martin Buber is another theological existentialist who has given tremendous importance to treating the other with dignity. To him relationality is the mirror in which we can examine whether we are treating the other as a being of intrinsic value. Life consists in meeting the other. All real living is encountering the other in freedom and dignity. We have to encounter the other not as an
object but as the person and by "discovery of the thou" of the other. Buber says that human dignity lies in treating the other not as 'it' but as Thou. It amounts to the discovery of the divine dignity inherent in him or her. Relating oneself with others in the mode of the thou means knowing them with intimacy. It is meeting them in the subjective mode of they living in us and we in them. Whereas relating oneself with others in the mode of the "it" means degrading them to the level of objects. It means knowing them impersonally as objects which exist beyond us and impenetrable by us. But the attitude of Thou towards others means being in dialogue and communication with them. It also means creating the other on a par with oneself, with inalienable dignity and honour of the person. The true meaning of the being of the person lies in the peculiar mutuality of the I-Thou relationship.

Jean Paul Sartre, an atheistic existentialist, is the champion of human freedom and dignity. He says that man is essentially a being of freedom. Man is endowed with a consciousness which is free. Nothing can determine human consciousness. Neither nature nor society can condition consciousness. Not even body can determine consciousness. There are no laws which can control consciousness. Human being is absolutely free. Man is free in taking decision and choice. In man, existence proceeds essence, says Sartre. It means that human existence is pure consciousness. Man is a being of consciousness without any given essence. It is
later on that consciousness acquires its essence. Man chooses his essence by his free acts. Man is thus a being of both freedom and responsibility. Man is a being of self-determinism. Human being is at liberty, and from the moment he is thrown into the world he is responsible for everything he does. So man is the architect of his life. Man has to take the responsibility for his life-world. Thus, Sartre conceives of the human person as a being of dignity. Man's dignity lies in the freedom of making his own destiny. Man is the author of his life. "Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being-free." 41

Sartre gives man dignity in making man the creator of values. Values are not given or pre-ordained. Values have no existence prior to man. There is no world of values apart from the human world. It is man who is the creator of values. Man is free to create values he wants. But the freedom of man is such that it cannot create bad values. The responsibility of man is such that he cannot but create better values. The dignity of man lies in creating values that are conducive to harmonious living. It is human being who introduces values into the world. Man is the being through whom values arrives into the world. Values manifest through the freedom of man. Good or evil depends on the choice of man. But freedom is the highest of all values. One has to choose only on the background of freedom. One has to choose in the name of freedom.
One should not degrade one's freedom in choosing anything. Man's dignity lies in choosing out of absolute freedom. Morality is choosing values with absolute freedom and total responsibility. In Sartre's opinion "action chosen in the intensity of the experience of freedom is moral and the action which is not so chosen is not moral."\(^{42}\)

**Rabindranath Tagore**

Let us now consider some of the modern Indian thinkers who have given importance to human dignity and freedom. The thinkers we are going to discuss here are Tagore, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Krishnamurti, besides Vivekananda. According to Tagore, man is essentially a being of freedom and dignity. Man is the crown of the evolution of the spirit. Human being is the product of evolution, the creative principle of unity, the divine mystery of existence, which baffles all analysis. The march of evolution with its ever unfolding potentialities of life took a different turn with the appearance of man. It turned its course from an indefinite march of physical aggrandizement to a freedom of perfection. It made possible man's progress to become unlimited and realize the boundless power hidden in him. The process of evolution assumes a new value and meaning with the advent of man. The divine principle of evolution turned from the outer to the inner, from the physical to the spiritual. But the evolution from the physical to the spiritual is
united and continuous, because man's inward expression of perfection takes place in his own body.

Man has realized perfection in a more subtle body outside his physical system. That is, man finds his own truer self in his relationship with people and nature. It is in immortal multi-personal humanity that man attains his perfection. It is in the ideal of unity that man realizes the eternal and boundless love. The unity with multi-personal humanity is not a mere subjective idea but an energizing truth. The awareness of the truth of this unity is spiritual. The spiritual truth is revealed in the life of man in a more and more spectacular way. And man's effort to be true to the spiritual truth and unity of humanity is his religion. "Whatever name may be given to it, and whatever form it symbolizes, the consciousness of this unity is spiritual, and our effort to be it is our religion. It ever waits to be revealed in our history in a more and more perfect illumination."43

Tagore says that man has eyes with which he relates himself with the physical universe. Man has the vision of the universe through his eyes. Besides the physical vision of the eyes, man is endowed with an inner faculty, namely, the freedom of imagination. Tagore is of the view that it is through this faculty that man finds his relationship with the supreme self. The supreme self is the same as the universe of inner being. It is otherwise known as the individual personality which is special to the human beings. The
luminous faculty of imagination offers man the vision of wholeness. The freedom of imagination and vision of spiritual universe transcend the physical realm. They are superfluous to the biological necessity of physical survival. The freedom of imagination arouses in man rays of perfection which is immortality in its true sense. Man is endowed with inner perfection which is the Eternal. And the faculty of imagination inspires man to realize it more and more. It creates in man the pure love for the realization of the ideal of perfection dwelling in him. The purpose of life consists in developing one's consciousness of the inner perfection. It consists in gradually deepening and widening the realization of our immortal being. Man has to dedicate his life to reveal the divinity in him through the creations of art also. Man has to unravel the inner humanity in various ways of truth, goodness and beauty. Tagore says, "The individual man must exist for Man the great, and must express him in disinterested works, in science and philosophy, in literature and arts, in service and worship. This is his religion, which is working in the heart of all his religions in various names and forms. He knows and uses this world where it is endless and then attains greatness, but he realizes his own truth where it is perfect and thus finds his fulfillment."44

To Tagore the idea of perfect humanity in Man is the same as God. God is not different from the divinity of Man, the Eternal. Tagore says that the idea of God as the divinity in man is not a
conclusion of his philosophical reasoning. On the contrary, it is the result of his direct vision. It is the consequence of the sudden flash into his consciousness. This idea of inner divinity of humanity had been there in Tagore since his childhood. It had been part of his temperament from his early days. He experienced it suddenly in clear and lucid vision in his adulthood. The eternal spirit of human unity dwelling in man is beyond our knowledge of it. It is beyond the finite and ever-changing self of the mundane life. It also contradicts the travails and trivialities of our daily life. It also upsets the order and arrangements of the exclusive personal life. It breaks down the superficial customs, conventions and habits. But it inspires in us the power to create the works that are the expressions of the Universal Spirit. It invokes in us the spirit of supreme sacrifice in the midst of a self-centred life. It enables us to dedicate our lives to the cause of truth, beauty and service of others. It generates in us the intense feeling of love which gives us a clue to the deeper meaning of all religions. It suggests that the existing religions are "never about a God of cosmic force, but rather about God of human personality."

Tagore says that there is in man what is known as the surplus. The surplus is that which gets revealed through the works of art which are truly spiritual. Man has to consciously coordinate these works of him in one great religion of Man. He should find happiness in the creative imagination of expressing the surplus in
him. As mentioned above, the surplus is the transcendental humanity dwelling in our inner being. All the civilizations and cultures in the human history, whether Greek, Roman or Asian, are the manifestations of the surplus through imagination. The art, philosophy and science are also the products of the surplus. It is through the expression of the surplus that man becomes truly man. Man becoming truly man means man becoming divine. Divinity is the true nature of man. It is in becoming divine that man attains perfection and wholeness. It is in this sublimity that he can find true happiness. True happiness and peace lies in the disinterested pursuit of divinity within us. Tagore says that true happiness arising out of the realization of perfection is the same as greatness. "Greatness is happiness itself."46 Greatness which is devoid of goodness and happiness is not holistic. Happiness which is greatness lies "in cultivating the vision of Being who excels him in truth and with whom also he has kinship."47

Tagore's Gitanjali is an ardent articulation of his vision of ideal Man. One hundred and three poems of Gitanjali are a supplication of Tagore to the Almighty to transform the mundane man into the spiritual Man. They are a prayer to the infinite God entreating Him to liberate man from bonds of the conditioned mind. They are a long pleading of Tagore to take man away from the confines of the institutionalized religion to the religion of humanity, namely the religion of Man. True religion consists in
realizing the inner truth, beauty and goodness. True man is one who strives to realize the inner perfection and freedom from fear, ignorance and falsehood. He is the one who does not divide the world with his narrow ideas and whose reason is not controlled by the dead habit. The true man always strives towards perfection and moves ahead with ever widening thought and action. The ideal man is never poor in heart and he takes both joy and sorrow alike. He is the one who never disowns the poor but is always at their service with love and compassion. He is not perturbed by the trifles of daily life but surrenders all his powers to the will and love of the God. He does not submit himself to the mighty and the insolvent. The truly religious person is one who has attained the freedom and the unity of the spirit. He sees all beings as himself and realizes the truth that all beings are of equal freedom and dignity. Having realized the sacred humanity in himself and in all other beings, he restores the bonds of friendship and love in the world. Thirty fifth and thirty sixth poems of Gitanjali are a vindication of Tagore’s longing for the ideal man and the nation, particularly India. They beautifully reflect his vision of the heaven of freedom and dignity into which a person or a nation has to awaken.

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; Where knowledge is free Where the world has not been broken up Into fragments by narrow domestic walls; Where words come out from the depths of truth;*
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action;
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake;
This is my prayer to thee, my Lord, strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.
Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.
Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.
Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might
Give the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.
And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will and love."

Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi says that the dignity of man lies in his obedience to the strength of the Spirit which is of truth and non-violence. Non-violence, according to Gandhi, is law of the species of human beings. Violence is the law of the species of brutes. Law of non-violence is higher than the law of violence. The dignity of human being consists in his or her being non-violent in thought, word and deed. It consists in our being non-violent towards others. Non-violence or love is the means for the realization of the supreme truth or God. One can come face to face with God by treating others with equal dignity. It is by recognizing the worth of others that one can realize one's own worth. Gandhi holds that all are the children of God. Everyone is endowed with the same kind of spirit. The spirit is of the nature of truth and non-violence. So everyone
is entitled for the same kind of treatment with dignity, freedom and equality.

Gandhiji represented the masses of India and awakened the people to the evils of social injustice. He took upon himself the task of awakening of the conscience of the human race for the eradication of the degradation of man by man. He was a saint who revolted against the suppression of the downtrodden. He was a practical idealist who sought to change the world through non-violence and truth. He fought against the system of indentured labour in South Africa. He also fought valiantly against the horrors of untouchability. He sought to put an end to all kinds of social evils which are a blot on humanity itself. He declared untouchability as the national shame of India. He wanted to regard a Brahmin and a Harijan as of equal dignity and freedom. He lived by defending the weak and meek. He was the advocate of those who suffered silently. Gandhiji said, "I will speak for dumbs. I will speak of the small to the great and of the feeble to the strong. I will speak for all the despairing and silent ones. I will interpret the grumblings, murmurs, the tumults of crowds, the complaints ill pronounced and all those cries of beasts that through ignorance and through sufferings, man is forced to utter. I will be the word of people. I will say everything." 

Gandhiji's commitment to the removable of untouchability in India was so strong that he set it as a condition precedent to
Swaraj. He argued for the special representation of the untouchables in case the superior classes continued to suppress them. The untouchables should be allowed legally to protect themselves against the tyranny of the upper caste Hindus. Although he opposed the separate electorate for the suppressed classes of India he allowed all other constitutional safeguards to them. He also established the Harijan Sevak Sangh for the service of the masses of India. The society is of those who are engaged in the service of the untouchables. Gandhiji called the untouchables "Harijans" which means the children of God. He said that every member of the Harijan Sevak Sangh must strive for the purification of Hinduism. They must have passion to eradicate untouchability. They should lay down their lives for upliftment of the downtrodden. They must be ready to sacrifice their everything to wipe out the blot on Hinduism. The worker of the Sangh would rather starve than allow the Harijans to be starved. He or she would hesitate to use amenities which are denied to the Harijans. He would totally identify himself with them, "All this work should be done without regard to political results and only in order to keep Hinduism pure and alive."81

Gandhiji was deeply concerned with transformation of the condition of the untouchables. He laid down the following principles to be followed by the Harijan Sevak Samaj. The Sangh should promote cleanliness and hygiene among the Harijans.
Improved methods of carrying out the unclean occupations like scavenging and tanning should be introduced. The Harijans should be made to give up beef eating and taking of liquor. They should be persuaded to send their children to schools. The Harijan parents should be encouraged to go to night schools. And the members of the Sangh should ask the Harijans to abolish untouchability among them. They must provide the Harijans with good living conditions, with proper drainage and roads. They should work for keeping clean the environment of the Harijan colonies. They must construct good houses and wells for the Harijans. And the members of the Sangh should be prepared to live with the them. They should teach the children of the Harijans good manners, speech and conduct. Gandhi said, "The Sangh should establish good preparatory schools for Harijan children, where teachers would not make a fetish of the three rupees, but try to teach their pupils to keep their persons and clothes clean, so as to enable them to take their place in line with Savarna children of the same age. In hostels the boys should be taught some industry not through text books but in actual practice."82

Gandhiji laid down several other measures for the enhancement of the freedom and dignity of the untouchables. He said that common schools should be opened for all. All other necessary services should be available to the untouchables on a par with the upper caste Hindus. Gandhiji's anti-untouchability
movement aimed at the social, economic and political advancement of the Untouchables. Gandhiji aimed at changing the condition of the Untouchables through service. His mission was to touch the heart of the Savarna Hindu and change it. He believed that untouchability would disappear only when the stony heart of the caste Hindu melts. Then only all the public places like schools, temples, wells would be open to Harijans. All other public institutions should be opened to them on the same terms as the caste Hindus. Gandhiji said, “I think the first thing the Sangh should undertake is a campaign all over India to secure to the depressed classes the enjoyment of their civic rights such as taking water from the village wells, entry in village schools, admission to village chawdi, use of public conveyance, etc.”

Gandhiji's anti-untouchability movement is more a spiritual than a political movement. It aimed at the inward transformation of people for treating the untouchables with dignity and equality. First, the workers of the Sangh should not practice untouchability. They should make their families to stop the practice of untouchability. They should regard untouchability as sin and be prepared to suffer boycott by others. They should regard the negation of untouchability in heart and soul as an act of purification and penance. One should serve the cause of eradication of untouchability in the name of and for the sake of God. One should show courage of conviction, faith in them and in
a living God. The movement against the evil is not meant for faint-hearted. The workers should be of irreproachable character and strong heart. They should be able to influence the villagers with their own strong conviction. They should persuade others to do the right thing even in the face of persecution and hardships. He said, "The reformers need not expect thorough success, unless they are themselves willing to suffer boycott, complete ostracism, and may be even loss of their social position and their belongings. Easy chair and substantial religious reform go ill together."54

Gandhiji held that the struggle against untouchability means the ending of the idea of pollution by the touch. No body should be treated as social lepers. The Harijan Sevak Sangh sought to raise the status of the Harijans by giving them higher education by instituting scholarships. It also maintained hostels for the untouchable students attending high schools and colleges. It provided medical facilities to them. It also opened industrial institutes and trained artisans for independent living. It also opened and organized cooperative societies for the untouchables. Gandhi regarded the service that the caste Hindu does to the untouchables through the Sangha is a panacea for the sin of untouchability. The Sangh aimed at the abolition of untouchability by reason of birth. It sought to acquire equal rights to the untouchables by gaining access to public institutions. It sought to bring about radical change in the sentiments and opinions of caste
Hindus. It aimed at changing the caste Hindus to willingly allow the Harijans to enjoy all civil rights as they themselves do. Gandhiji devoted much of his time and energy for the eradication of untouchability. He took a nationwide tour to promote the Harijan cause. He wanted to gift the Sabarmati Ashram to the Harijan Sevak Sangh. While on tour, he called on upper caste Hindus to purge themselves of prejudice against the Harijans and asked the Harijans to shake off the vices to get absorbed into the Hindu fold. "He repudiated and ridiculed the idea of the people being high or low, clean or unclean by birth."

Gandhiji's efforts to raise the untouchables to the status of human dignity and freedom hurt the feelings of the orthodox Hindus. They accused him of heresy and provoked workers against him. In Poona a bomb was thrown at him. He organized temple entry movements for the untouchables which infuriated the caste Hindus. But Gandhi regarded temple entry of the untouchables as a spiritual act that would constitute the message of dignity to the untouchables. It is a way of assuring them that they are not outcastes. He said that it is the bounden duty of every caste Hindu to keep open the doors of the temples to the untouchables. Temples are an integral part of Hinduism and they must be open for all Hindus for their spiritual benefit. The Savarna Hindus have to purify themselves by allowing the Harijans into the temples. Harijans are as good as the rest of Hindus and deserve all the
freedom and dignity which the other Hindus deserve. They have as much right to enter the temples as the others. The right to enter the temples should be given to the untouchables irrespective of whether they want it or not. "The point is whoever cares to go to a temple, provided he observes the rules observed by all other Hindus, ought to have the right to do so. He may be a sinner, but it is precisely because we are all sinners that we would like to go to temples to wash out our sins there. A saint need not go there. The sanatanists may expect him to observe all the rules of outward cleanliness that they themselves observe, but nothing more."56

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is one of the prominent contemporary Indian thinkers who has fought for the dignity and freedom of the Indian subaltern. As the one who suffered the indignities of being a Dalit, Ambedkar wanted to liberate the people of his community from the suppression by the upper caste Hindus. He strived for the upliftment of the depressed people of India and establish a society of equal respect and dignity to all. His contention was that Hinduism is caste-ridden and a source of the division of people by birth. Ambedkar viewed that an equalitarian society is possible only when the system of caste is totally abolished. Caste gives dignity to people just by birth. Even an unworthy person acquires respect and dignity if he is born in a higher caste. But the worth of the person should be determined by what he does. So the
discrimination and degradation of people continue as long as there is the system of caste. He opined that the condition of the Dalits will change only when the caste system is abolished. Hinduism is a system of castes which classify people in a vertical order. It treats the Dalits as belonging to the lowest class. "This system of rank and gradation is simply another way of enunciating the principle of inequality so that it may be truly said that Hinduism does not recognize equality," says Ambedkar.

He contends that in Hinduism the human being cannot enjoy freedom and dignity, since it is devoid of the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. In Hinduism these principles are conspicuous by their absence. There is no place for liberty in Hinduism, since Hinduism denies social equality to the *shudras*. It gives privileges to the higher caste people. Hinduism deprives the *shudras* all the conditions required for liberty. It denies economic security, knowledge and education to the *shudras*. It also denies them the freedom of vocation. It says that the *shudras* are born to serve the higher caste people only. They have to seek their livelihood only by serving to the higher castes. Hinduism does not give the shudras economic freedom also. It says that the *shudras* cannot become wealthy. "No collection of wealth must be made by a *shudra* even though he may be able to do it; for, a *shudra* who acquired wealth gives pain to Brahmins."
Ambedkar holds that Hinduism is against the fraternity of the people. There is no place for fellow feeling in Hinduism. So individuals act in a self-centred way. Each individual seeks his or her own interest. An individual acts as though he is an end in himself. The person acts in such a way that he does not respect the other. He treats the other not only as an alien but also as an enemy. But fraternity fosters real brotherhood among people. Each one identifies with the other and works for other's good. Nobody treats the other as a rival. There is no sense of degrading the other. Fraternity is a feeling in which "the good of others becomes to him a thing naturally and necessarily to be attended to like any of the physical conditions of our existence."59

Ambedkar holds that many of the Hindu scriptures like Manusmrti contain inhuman injunctions against the shudras. They say that everyone should do the duty prescribed by the Varna only. The shudra will not get salvation if he transgresses his duty of serving the classes above him. The hierarchical system of caste has nurtured "the social psychology of mutual hatred and contempt."60 It is detrimental to the spirit of sharing and community living. It stands in the way of sharing the joys and sorrows among people. Ambedkar deplores that the system of caste is a source of division and degradation of people. It promotes separation and hatred among people. There is no scope for dignity of the human person in Hinduism, since it preaches exclusiveness
of eliminating the downtrodden from the mainstream of society. Even the acts of charity and philanthropy are caste based in Hinduism. There is no place for public charity which is open to all. This shows that the spirit of fraternity, equality and liberty is foreign to Hindu way of life. The separate and exclusive character of the caste system is the cause of the denial of human dignity and freedom.61

Having maintained that Hinduism is detrimental to human dignity and freedom, Ambedkar says that it is only in Buddhism that the individual can enjoy dignity and freedom. There is no place for caste system in Buddhism. It does not divide people in any way. Basically it is a religion of friendship and compassion. It gives importance to character and conduct of the person. The worth of the person is determined by his or her behaviour. Each one has to treat the other with dignity. It is not because of the fear of God that one has to be good to the other. We have to be good to others, since it is our duty to be so. Morality does not require the sanction of God. "It is not to please God that man has to be moral. It is for his own good that man has to love man."62

In Buddhism, morality is given a higher place than God. Morality is meant to protect the freedom and dignity of the person, especially of the weak and meek. Moral principles like friendship, love, and joy are there to impose restraints on the strong and powerful who seek to suppress the weak and powerless. The latter
have to be protected against the former. They should be given the opportunity of coming up in their lives and assert their dignity. The principle of the survival of the fittest is wrong in social reality. It may be correct in the natural world. But in society, the weak has to be protected against the strong. Buddhist morality opposes the principle of the survival of the fittest as being anti social. There should be no supremacy of one group over the other. Morality should be sacred and universal. It should promote the welfare of all and safeguard the dignity and interests of all in society. Buddhism preaches morality common to all and pregnant with the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. It does not give supremacy to any one group. Nor does it suppress any other group. There is no scope for discrimination and injustice in Buddhism. There is no stratification of one group being superior to other groups. There is no place for master and slave relationship in Buddhism since it stands for the fraternity of the human beings who live with equal freedom and dignity. Universalization of fraternity alone can eradicate the evils of inequality and discrimination. Universal brotherhood alone can bring about human dignity and freedom. Buddhism stands for unity of mankind without any kind of exclusiveness. It advocates the morality of strict righteousness which is good conduct in human relations.63
Ambedkar holds that it is not birth but worth which is the measure of man. The principle of determining the worth of the person just by birth was repulsive to the Buddha. The Buddha held that a *shudra* was one who is vicious, detractive and deceitful. The man of immorality is the man of indignity. "No one is an outcaste by birth and no one is a Brahman by birth." All are equal by birth and the natural equality has to be protected by one's actions. Everybody can command dignity through his or her morality. Morality should be the measure of man's status in society. So it is necessary to abolish the heredity status and occupations. One should be given freedom to choose one's own occupation and develop one's own personality. One should also give opportunity to others to assert their freedom and dignity.

**Jiddu Krishnamurti**

According to Jiddu Krishnamurti human being is essentially a being of dignity and freedom. Man has the capacity to realize the absolutely and unconditionally free mind. Dignity of the human person consists in attaining freedom from the known. The known is the past accumulated in the brain. It is put together by thought through time. It is also called knowledge or experience which conditions the brain. The brain which is conditioned by the past is called the conditioned mind. The man who is existing on the background of the conditioned mind is a conditioned man. Such a person is without freedom and dignity. He or she is a slave to his
conditioning, namely, the conditioning of the mind by itself. The mind conditions itself with the past. The past is the content which contains division, complicit, fear, desire, anger, sorrow and so on. This content constitutes the "self" of the person. The self is full of unholy characteristics like desire, fear, anger, division, conflict, violence and unhappiness.

Thus the conditioned mind is the cause of the bondage of man. It is the barrier to man's living in dignity arising out of inward freedom. The conditioned mind dehumanizes the human being. It inflicts pain on himself and on others, since there is conflict and violence in it. The conditioned person is not only a threat to himself or herself but also to the entire humanity. Such a person is a threat to the other species and to the entire planet. He does not allow anything or anybody to live in dignity and freedom. So Krishnamurti says that a dignified man with freedom is one who has realized the eternal Truth hidden in himself or herself. Krishnamurti says, "I maintain that Truth, life eternal lies hidden in every human being but it is covered over with self consciousness."

To Krishnamurti human dignity consists in attaining freedom by and for oneself. Each individual has the capacity to transform oneself. One need not depend on anybody for one's inner change. Bondage and sorrow are entirely of one's own making. Human mind has been conditioned not by anything but
itself. So it can liberate itself without any aid either internal or external. Man is the maker of himself. He is the architect of his life and destiny. Dignity lies in being psychologically independent of other. Physically we depend on other. Our existence consists in mutual dependence and interaction. But one depends on the other psychologically and becomes a slave to the other. One gets exploited and suppressed and oppressed by the other. One gets treated as an object by the other. So psychological dependence is the source of indignity and servitude. Dignity is possible only when one is free from psychological dependence on the other. A man of inner freedom has an inner order which is different from the order put together by thought. The man of inner order has dignity, majesty and beauty.

It is only when one is completely free from the fear of authority that one attains dignity. Authority of all kinds either political or spiritual breeds subordination. It makes the individual a mere follower. A follower is a mediocre person who cannot understand his true being of freedom and dignity. Krishnamurti says even the guru is detrimental to one's freedom and dignity. Guru stands between the seeker and the truth. Understanding of truth does not require any mediators. It is only direct approach and understanding of truth that leads us to freedom. "The setting up of authority and following of it is the denial of understanding. When there is understanding there is freedom, which cannot be
bought or given by another. What is bought can be lost, and what is given can be taken away; and so authority and its fear are bred.\textsuperscript{67}

Krishnamurti says that identification of the individual with a group, an idea or a sect destroys freedom and dignity of the individual. It puts an end to understanding of oneself as one actually is. Understanding of oneself gives freedom from one's own conditioning by belief, ideology or symbol. The belief, ideology or symbol becomes more important than the individual. They dehumanize the individual and take away the dignity of the person. Dignity lies in being free from all conditioning. The one who seeks fulfillment through identification with something loses his dignity. Conformity to any pattern or formula and finding security even in the so-called Masters is a barrier to one's freedom, for one forgets oneself and submits oneself to the Master. One chooses to be a mere blind follower without trying to discover the truth of oneself.

Discovering the truth of oneself gives man the dignity of being autonomous and independent. Dependence on anything or anybody destroys the dignity of the person. Freedom from dependence and domination brings dignity to the person. Repression by self or by the other is a barrier to understanding of oneself. We allow ourselves to be degraded and we choose to degrade other. We find the sensation of pleasure in subjecting one another to indignity and suppression. "The desire to be hurt, to be
rudely shaken, is part of the pleasure of hurting; and this mutual degradation of the leader and the follower is the outcome of the desire for sensation. It is because you want greater sensation that you follow and so create a leader, a guru; and for this new gratification you all sacrifice, put up with discomfort, insults and discouragements. All this is part of mutual exploitation, it has nothing whatever to do with reality and will never lead to happiness.68

Thus, Krishnamurti says that the dignity of the human being consists in being absolutely and unconditionally free. Conforming to the past comprising belief, fear, anxiety, and sorrow is a barrier to the freedom and dignity of man. Thought which is a source of division, conflict and violence conditions the mind. Thought at the psychological level is the cause of the degradation of man by man. It is at the source of inhuman attitude towards one another. Realization of truth beyond thought liberates man from the narrow self. Truth is the nothingness which is beyond thought. Nothingness is the true nature of the human being. It is beyond all identifications and divisions. Nothingness is not a state of abstraction but an actuality of being absolutely and unconditionally free. It marks the attainment of dignity of oneself and of others. One who has realized the truth of nothingness never degrades himself or the other.
Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda is the champion of human dignity and freedom. He sought to recover the dignity of the person by asking people to realize the reality of the inner being. He held that every individual is potentially and essentially divine. So everyone is entitled for equality and dignity of all kinds. He strived for the dignity of man even through the service of humankind. He says that it is necessary for everyone to believe in oneself. Faith in oneself is the first step for the realization of dignity. To Vivekananda an atheist is one who does not believe in himself. The one who believes in himself alone is the theist in true sense. He says, "He is an atheist who does not believe in himself. The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself." 69

The history of the world is a testimony to the fact that all those who did great things were those who had faith in themselves. There is divinity within us. The realization of the divinity gives dignity to the person. The one who realizes the truth that he is the same as God can do anything. Such a person never feels inferior to others. Nor does he treat others as inferior to him or her. He or she does not think superior to others. He does not exploit others but serves them. To him service to others is the service to God, for there is divinity in others. There is absolutely no difference between people. So, Vivekananda inspires people to strive for the
manifestation of inner power. It is the inner power that gives life to
the person. The one who loses faith in the inner power is a dead
person. Faith in oneself and therefore faith in God are the secret of
one's greatness. This holds true even in the case of a nation. A
nation of people who have faith in themselves alone can progress.
But the nation without people who have faith in themselves can
never prosper. We may have faith in several Gods and Goddesses.
But without faith in ourselves, we can never grow in dignity. Faith
in oneself is the only solution for the indignity and servitude of
man. Swami says, "If you have faith in all the three hundred and
thirty millions of your mythological gods and in all the gods which
foreigners have now and again introduced into your midst, and still
have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you."70

Swami holds that there is nothing impossible for the soul of
man. It is sin to think that we are weak. Neither I am nor are
others weak. The soul is all powerful. It is made of adamantine
spiritual power. The one who realizes in oneself the all powerful
soul he will never think that he is weak or inferior. He does not
become a parasite and expect any help from others. It is vain to
hope of getting help from others. Self help is the greatest help.
True help comes from within and not from outside. Man is more
powerful than nature itself. Spirit is stronger than matter. It is the
former that controls the latter. That is why Swami says, "Never
say, 'No', never say, 'I cannot', for you are infinite. Even time and
space are as nothing compared with your nature. You can do
anything and everything, you are almighty."71
We shall deal in detail with Vivekananda’s conception of human dignity and freedom in the succeeding chapters. The metaphysical and social aspects of it will be studied in the fourth and fifth chapters respectively.

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