CHAPTER - V

CONTEMPORARY INDIAN THINKERS ON
VALUES AND ETHICS

The values and ethical trend in contemporary Indian philosophy may be seen in philosophy of M.K. Gandhi, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Ravindranath Tagore and Radhakrishnan. M.K. Gandhi and Radhakrishnan follow the Indian brand of humanistic values and ethics coming from the ancient Vedas, the Upaniṣads, and the Bhagavad Gītā. This will be further clear by the analysis of the Neo-Vedanta trend in contemporary Indian philosophy. While fundamentally, there is no essential difference between the Western and Indian values, the later is represented by the traditionalist group of Indian philosophers. Therefore, it is their values which form the essential element of Indian philosophy.206

The Bhakti Movement:

The existence of relationship between God and devotee is not of now it is there since the Vedic times i.e. about 5000 years ago. This relationship is considered to be devotional. Bhakti has proved attractive over a period of two thousand years as the devotional path brought together feelings and forms easily recognizable, generally acceptable and nearly pleasurable. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says that the Bhakti is the means to attain salvation.

206 Battacharya., The Humanist Trend in Contemporary India, p. 27.
“We have had in our country from the time of the *Rig-Veda* down to our own days a long line of torch bearers who stress the primacy of spiritual values, who point out that even as the human being is above the animal, the spiritual man is above the human. The exponents of pure abstract speculation find their way into the minds of men through song and poetry. The attainment of life in God is achieved more easily by *Bhakti* than by other means. The poets, singers and saints with their passionate devotion to the ideals of beauty, harmony, freedom, and aspiration have had the strongest impact on society.”

The *Bhakti* Movement is remarkable of its kind for the religious unity and for the emancipation of poverty. They have advocated equality between men and women. They have condemned idol worship. They condemned the social evils like casteism and *Sati*. They have preached the oneness of God.

The doctrine that all men both high and low are equal before God has become the central idea that has rallied large sections of the masses to fight against the priesthood and caste tyranny. This great movement of the middle Ages has not only helped the development of a composite Indian culture embracing different linguistic and religious communities but also paved the way for united struggle against feudal oppression.

The *Bhakti* movement has attained varying degrees of intensity sweeping in different parts of the country. It appeared in a variety of

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207 Radhakrishnan, S., Foreword, *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja*, p. iii.
forms also. Yet, some basic principles underlie the movement as a whole.

Ramananda (1400-1470 AD)

The movement which Ramanuja started in South India was spread to the other parts of Northern India by his great disciple Ramananda. His concept of God is that he is a person who cares for all men and rewards their devotion. Ramananda brought a radical reform. He made no distinction between Brahmanas and members of the degraded castes. He wanted to promote the ideal of inter-dining. Another reform of Ramananda was the use of the vernaculars for the propagation of the new creed. He was the founder of a new school of thought. He took people as disciples from all the castes including the degraded castes.  

The mystics are considered to be saints who believe that God can be realized in a process of self-culture. God is conceived as a being with many human attributes. The relation of man with God is similar to that of a master to his servant or a lover to the beloved. The prominent feature of these mystic saints was stated to be the spirit of religious tolerance. Religion is a question of individual approach to God without the necessity of any outside interference. Both the Muslims and Hindus are equal and they are the children of the only true God. Nevertheless the mystics were fearless in pointing out the defects in the belief of both

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210 George Kotheran., Ahimsa: Gautama to Gandhi, p. 118.
Hindus and Muslims. They fought against casteism and idolatry of the Hindus. George Kotturan writes:

“There had been a process of acculturation of Hindu and Muslim in India since a long time. Islamic contact with India made people closer to the outside India which gave rise to new social and religious thinking and opened a new vista of knowledge. Indian people were ready to welcome new ideas and assimilate new ways. The Hindu society woke up to reform itself.”

The ideal of Islamic brotherhood exerted profound influence on Hindu social thinking. Islam treats all men equal which was in disregard to caste in the new development of Bhakti philosophy. The mystics held that in the sight of God there was no difference between a high caste Brahmin and an outcaste. The love of God is universal. The whole universe is tied up in brotherhood. This practical ideology owes its existence due to the synthesis of Hindu and Islamic teachings. Ramananda started a religious renaissance: “He ably guided the spiritual life of the Indian people and introduced social and religious reforms. He recognized no difference of caste and creed. According to him all men and women are equal.”

He insisted upon correct moral conduct and a life dedicated to virtue and charity. He had Muslims and Hindus as his followers. In the matter of caste he was indifferent. He had Sudras - the outcaste or untouchables as his disciples. The magnetic personality of Ramananda attracted thousands of people as selfless disciples. He said that God is

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211 Ibid, p. 119.
212 George Kotheran, Ahimsa: Gautama to Gandhi, p. 121.
omnipresent. The divine energy envelops the whole universe. God revealed to him that he is in his heart. God filled the entire universe with his presence.

**Kabir (1440-1518 AD)**

Kabir is a constructive reformer. He has founded a Panth or a sect. The followers of Kabir sect are to be found principally among lower castes. Freedom from egotism and self-seeking is of fundamental importance. If there is a little in the way of social philosophy, there would be a repudiation of the arbitrary distinctions that India has kept man from man. Kabir has refused to acknowledge any caste distinctions. He claimed social equality for the low caste Śūdrās with the other castes. In the Indian literature the unreality of these caste distinctions has not clearly been mentioned. In the writings of Kabir, he says:

“It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint may be. The barber has sought God, the washer-woman and the carpenter. Even Ravidas was a seeker after God. The Ṛṣi Swapacha was a tanner by caste. Hindus and Muslims alike have achieved that End, where remains no mark of distinction.”

Kabir denounces what is irrational and inhuman in the division of society into castes. He says:

“If you reflect on the origin of castes they came into being from one and the same . . . . . How is it that one is born. Sudra, and remains Sudra till his death . . . . one makes a Brahma is thread

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215 Tagore, Ravindranath., *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, p. II.
oneself and then puts it on. The world is thus in confusion. If thou art a Brahmin, born of a Brahmin, why art thou not born in a different fashion . . . . If you milk a black cow and white cow and then mix their milk, will you be able to distinguish the milk of one from the other.”

In another context we find Kabir watching the wife of a gardener, who gathered flowers to offer them to an idol. He said to her:

“In the petals of the flower, dwells the soul of vegetation, and the idols to which you are going to make your offering is lifeless. The vegetal condition is better than the mineral conditions. The idol to which you are going to offer flowers has neither feeling nor life.”

The chief aim of the teaching of Kabir was to find an acceptable means to reconcile the differences between diverse castes and religious communities. His cherished wish was to abolish the caste system and the antagonism of religion based on blind superstition or on the selfish interest of a minor group of people exploiting the ignorance of others. His desire was to establish peace in social and religious spheres among the people and unite them for they were separated one from the other on the grounds of religion.

The Bhakti movement has preached human equality and openly condemned rituals and caste prejudices. It is radically new and basically different from the old established traditions and ideas of religious authority. It seeks to refashion the collective life on the new lines upholding the values of justice and equality for all people in the society.

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217 Yusuf Hussain., *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, p. 16.
Kabir holds very strongly the doctrine of *ahimsā* (non-violence) and treats it as sinful if life in any form is injured or taken away.\textsuperscript{218}

Kabir preaches for the harmony, love, understanding of Hindus and Muslims. He declares the equality of all men recognizing no banners of caste or creed and peaceful co-existence. His concept of non-violent (ahimsa) society is indicative of a peaceful community living in virtue and goodness. He has set before the world an idea of love and universal brotherhood. As the love of God prevails in the world, the love of one’s neighbor should prevail amongst men. An often quoted saying of Kabir is:

“That body in which love does not dwell is a crematorium; the heart which is without love is like a blacksmith’s bellows, breathing but lifeless.”\textsuperscript{219}

Kabir demands the moral purity and does not restrict it to one particular kind of life. Obedience to the master to his commands must not be blind. The believer has to rely on his reason and follow according to the details of his conscience.\textsuperscript{220}

**Ravidasa (1450-1540 AD)**

Ravidasa was a great Hindu saint and Philosopher during the medieval times. Although he hailed from a low community, he did not suffer from inferiority complex. He did not cherish ill-will or malice against any people. He returned good to the evil. Society recognized his greatness. The poems of Ravidasa reflect his view on religion. He

\textsuperscript{218} Keavy, I. B. (Rev.), *The Religious Life of India*, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{219} George Kotheran., *Ahimsa: Gautama to Gandhi*, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{220} Barth, A., *The Religions of India*, p. 239.
considers religion as the basic need of man. Man has religious instinct distinct from hunger and thirst. He says that if self-realization is the dawn of the soul, self-negation is the dark night of the soul. He can guide those grouping in darkness to their destiny.

Ravidasa criticizes these teachings of religion which did not appeal to the human reason. He stands against the fallacy of the vain religious action. Those religious actions that are contrary to human nature are mistakes. Continence, yogic control, and fasting are contrary to the human tendencies. He opposed them and termed them as unhumanistic tendencies. Some religious books prescribe some extreme paths of God realization but these paths are not accessible to everybody. As God is in all, the path way to him should also be accessible to all. If the path way is simple, everyone would be able to follow it. Devotionalism leads to such democratic path. The Vedas teach the observance of indifferences to the world or control over the sense organs. Both of these are very difficult to everyone to follow. Ravidasa condemns the superstitious practices associated with devotion. For his devotion was chiefly in the form of service. According to him:

“Service with in the sphere of devotion means service to God and his creatures by service to mankind is service to God. His hospitality and service to the poor and needy is worthy to be noted. Lord resides in everybody’s hearts is not knowable through rites or performances. Highest expression of religion in life is the service of man.”

Ravidasa considers the human existence as rare, and obtained due to the result of meritorious deeds. So man should not waste his life in ignorance. He should utilize his life in achieving the highest human aspiration which becomes possible only by following a moral code of discipline. Man according to Ravidasa is of double nature. His nature is attached at first to this world. He is unbound to any form of existence in the physical world. Ravidasa compares goodness with knowledge. With the acquisition of knowledge, senses are not killed but live their prosperous life with the difference. Man’s essence lies in his self determination in the realization of his freedom: “Man is found to be in bondage due to his sheer ignorance. Total removal of it involves a virtuous life. Wisdom is the greatest value and the true perspective of things. Selfless service has been given an utmost importance both before and after the realization of God.”

Ravidasa exhorts the people to raise above evils of pride, anger, greed, attachment, jealousy and lust. True freedom can be realized only in the absence of determinism. Reason, faith, contemplation have been attached much importance. Reason is dependable and indispensable. The philosophy of Ravidasa is marked by the values of self transcending existence of absolute freedom.

**Tulasidas (1532-1623 AD)**

Tulasidas was composed the great work *Rāmacarita mānasā* usually known as *Rāmāyaṇa*. According to him, the supreme fruit of

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devotion is deliverance from sin and purification of heart.\textsuperscript{223} Knowledge and devotion are the two paths for attaining God. Those who follow these methods wield power in this world. In the whole creation, there is nothing in comparison to such abiding value as saintliness of character. A saint has the characteristics of deep wisdom and boundless love. A wise man sees unity in diversity and identifies himself with the whole of creation. The devotee radiates peace which is active and exalted which silently and gently communicates itself to others. It transforms many lives and lightens the hearts that are heavy laden with sorrows and gives them rest.

Tulasidas writing, \textit{Ramacarita mānasā} relating to the life story of Rama stood as a great force in preventing disintegration of the Sanatana Dharma. His writing helped the people in reposing faith in themselves and in their own culture which had been shaken by the Muslim rule. This work is proved to be immediate success and has been enshrined in the heart of the common man. As Haridas Bhattacharya observes:

“Tulasidas captured the imagination of the people further by making that God-head live and move on earth. In giving from the formless, he brought within the orbit of conceptual that \textit{Brahman} which the Vedas describe as not (not this) . . . . the very idea that God lived till one of us and shared our joys and sorrows: brings peace and solace to the human heart.”\textsuperscript{224}

\textsuperscript{223} Bhandarkar, R.P., \textit{Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor religious systems}, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{224} Bhattacharya, Haridas., \textit{The Cultural Heritage of India}, p. 398.
Tulasidas says that man is responsible for his sorrows and joys in life. He attaches great importance to the man associating with the good and holy. This is said to be a recognized way prescribed for the ordinary mortals to help themselves to progress on Godward path.

**Tukaram (1598-1649 AD)**

Tukaram stood against casteism. He asserts that a Brahmin who does not care for the name of God is no Brahmin. An outcaste who loves the name of God is indeed a Brahmin. He attaches utmost importance to character and values. Tukaram says that different castes have sprung from the same being and says that those alone are pure who love God with lasting love and faith. Those people are prosperous whose love transcends the greed for money. If we serve the people our service reaches God. Truthful word uttered is the best service one can offer to others. In Tukaram’s teachings we find emphasis on the point of no compromise for those who successively wish to follow the path of truth. He says:

“Those who want to fulfill the worldly and the spiritual life together shall accomplish neither one needs to surrender himself to God.”

He says that he who is truthful in speech throughout this worldly course is like lotus to which water does drench. The supreme spirit dwells in those who serve and snow compassion on other creatures.

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Ones merit lies in serving others and sin is injury done to them. Truth is the only true religion while observances are false. Tukaram says:

“Blessed in the world are the compassionate. Their true home is Vaikuntha, but they have come here to serve mankind. They speak no false word: speak says, sweet is the speech on their lips, there is room within their hearts.”

Tukaram holds that men ought to be helped in their good deeds, but not to deter them. Their merit lies in that, he calls the benefactor as one who has finished his benefactions. He says that he knows not the difference between himself and others:

“Take up the task you have found, to benefit yourself; do not count your own toil. Look on the souls of other men as you look on your own, be heap of pure qualities.”

A man has to treat others as himself without any degree of difference between himself and others. He has to treat others as ends in themselves but never as means to his own ends. To treat others as his means is to reduce the source of human value and dignity. In the earliest of human attitude towards this world he says:

“When you enter the world, do this one thing- Walk gradually in the path of liberation.”

He is oppressed to casteism. He states that the source of virtue is in the inner parts; caste and family cannot ensure it. Standard of goodness is measured in terms of merits and demerits but not the basis

228 Nelson Fraser, J. & K.B. Maratha, The Poems of Tukaram, p. 274.
of caste. Tukaram dissuades men from giving up the world or retiring from the world and become recluses instead he advices them to render the service to God.\textsuperscript{229}

**Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833 AD)**

The Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century lays more stress essentially at revival of the Indian spirit, with the grandeur of antiquity and purity profoundly affecting religion, society and culture. National awakening has expressed itself as a reflection of religious awakening. In the initial stages, religious consciousness is found to be a reflection of political consciousness. Social and political notions, democratic and patriotic aspirations hope for a better life have been expressed in the form of religion. The Indian Renaissance initiated in the nineteenth century by the social reformers does not aim at a complete break with religion. It is opposed to the out moded religious customs and practices on the one hand and reinterpretation and revitalization of religion to suit the new conditions on the other. Macicol says:

\begin{quote}
“Raja Ram Mohan Roy is the spiritual father of this Renaissance who appears to be ‘the herald of a new age.’”\textsuperscript{230}
\end{quote}

He is opposed to many customs and beliefs of the decadent social system. He has totally rejected the dogmas prevalent in Hindu society in regard to their numerous Gods, rituals, the doctrine of rebirth; avatars, their practice of idol worship, animal sacrifices and above all the evil practice of sati prevalent in those days which inhumanly forces

\textsuperscript{229} Bhandarkar, R.P., *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious systems*, p. 95.

\textsuperscript{230} Macicol, *The Making of Modern India*, p. 172.
widows to commit suicide by plunging into funeral pyres of their husbands. He is the foremost opponent of these barbarous practices. He continues to fight against this evil practice and could be successful in arousing the public opinion through the wide spread campaign, it is declared illegal in the regime of Lord William Bentinck. These inhumanities have deeply inflicted the heart of Ram Mohan Roy and longed to deliver the country as an ardent lover from her degradations to set her feet on safe paths for which he has devoted his whole energies without sparing any pains.

In order to promote the human equality, the removal of the disabilities of women in social life is another important issue. He stands for the granting of equal property rights to men and women. He campaigns in support of widow remarriage and against child marriages. He advocates the women education. He seeks to assimilate the new values created by Western science to blend them with the traditional values of India in order to meet the challenge of the new age. He holds that no nation could prosper if it just imitates other nations but what is needed is a global perspective. This would help in arousing a new spirit of enquiry and progress.

Hinduism as he understands is rooted in a broad humanistic outlook. Therefore he has set himself the task of purifying Hinduism and sweeping the cobwebs of superstitions which have accumulated through

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232 The Life and Letters of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, p. 78.
the ages. He is of the opinion that the regeneration of Hinduism as a truly national religion would suit to the new conditions of social life. His humanism can be termed as universal humanism for his emphasis on world fellowship with a liberal spirit, and for his laying stress on cordial relationship among the various nations of the world.

He is the founder of Brahma Samaj. It opposes the social discrimination which stands against the human equality and dignity. It is a creative endeavour to free the social conscience from the stifling grip of conservative thinking and to make the people respond to the call of the time. The two complementary concepts of the philosophy of Brahma Samaj are faith in a single Godhead and the brotherhood of man. The concept of brotherhood helps in the removal of social evils and sectarian distinctions imposed by the Hindu orthodoxy. The concept of monotheism reflects the urge for a synthesis of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Thus the Brahma Samaj is not purely a religious reform movement. Social and political progress is linked with religious reform. In the popularization of the ideals of individual freedom, national unity and liberation of social institutions and social relations, the Brahma Samaj movement has undoubtedly played a great role in quickening the forces of national regeneration. Playing a glowing tribute to Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekananda says:

“Raja Ram Mohan Roy had put India on the march towards progress and freedom.”

Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883 AD)

Dayananda Saraswati was one of the leaders of the Indian renaissance who has perhaps widely travelled and well-informed man as far as the Indian scene is concerned. He is an ardent reformer. He has fearlessly denounced the evils of post-vedic Hinduism and revolted against idol worship. He holds that idol worship is not sanctioned by the Vedas. Neither untouchability, nor child marriage, nor the subjection of women to unequal status with men is sanctioned. The study of Vedas should be determined in accordance with his merits.²³⁵

His attack on casteism is most noteworthy. The mere accident of birth cannot determine the social position of a man but should be rather determined in accordance with his qualification, accomplishments and character. Even a cobbler’s son is competent to steady Vedas and similarly a man born in a Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya family should be treated as a Shudra if his actions resemble Śūdra, the low caste. His appeal to stick to the Varṇavyavastha (division of castes in accordance with social status and progressions) has had little practical response. It has relaxed the rigidity of caste system, breaking the creed of untouchability into pieces in several quarters at several places.²³⁶

The suffering women folk whose social position is similar to the untouchables, whose lives are reduced to the sub-human level, also

²³⁵ Theodre de Bary, U.M., Sources of Indian Tradition, p. 628.
have drawn the attention of Dayananda. They are deprived of education. The *Paradah* system, child marriage, polygamy, the evil practice of *sati*, forced widowhood and several other bad practices are believed to be in vogue on the sanction of the Śāstrās. He has opposed all these evils with force at his command and pleaded for their doing away at any cost. He stands for the equal and just treatment of women in the hands of men. He holds that imparting of good education helps in attending to the household affairs, and home keeping which can never be satisfactorily conducted by the uneducated women. The uneducated cannot take part in the day to day affairs of the government in the administration. His scheme envisages a free and compulsory education for all. Reacting reasonably to the problem of curriculum, he says that it should be spread; representing all branches of knowledge with equal emphasis on languages, arts, science and technology and in the school through lessons relating to social equality should be taught.

We find Dayananda giving utmost importance to man. He strives hard for the happiness of man. He explores possible human ways for the radical removal of the human suffering. He wants people to live in harmony and co-exist peacefully. He upholds human values and emphasises the need for the regeneration of man and restoration of the cultural values. His desire is to reform and redeem the individual and society and create awareness among the people in the socio-political context. He examines the elements that have contributed to the degradation of the individual and works out progressively to dominate
them. Mahatma Gandhi makes a substantial estimate of his character. He says:

“Among the many rich legacies, that Swami Dayananda has left us his unequivocal pronouncement against untouchability is undoubtedly one.”

Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902 AD)

Swami Vivekananda is one of the greatest thinkers of Indian Renaissance. Vivekananda was moved with pity on seeing the impoverished state of the masses. He says:

“Material civilization, may even luxuries necessary to create work for the poor. Bread, I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven. Pooh! India is to be raised the poor are to be fed, education is to spread, and the evil of priest craft removed. No Priest craft, no social tyranny: More bread, more opportunity for everybody.”

According to Swami Vivekananda, social, economic and political reconstruction of the country is a pre-requisite for the spiritual uplift of the masses. When the people ask for food, to offer religion to a starving people is to insult them. To teach religious principles to a starving man is an affront to his self-respect. He criticizes strongly the failings and weaknesses of the people, the evil practice of untouchability, the feeling of caste superiority, priest craft and religious tyranny. He prefers to see the people as confirmed atheists rather than as superstitious fools, for

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237 Harabilas Sarada., Dayananda Commemoration Volume, 1933.
238 Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p. 862.
the atheists may be of some use. But with regard to superstitions it holds away, the brain is bread, the mind is frozen and decadence engulfs life. So it holds good if the mankind become atheist by relying on reason rather than blindly believing in two hundred millions of Gods on the authority of anybody.239

According to him freedom is the precondition for the human growth but freedom does not mean absence of obstacles in the way of social aggrendisement or economic exploitation. Commenting on the meaning of freedom he says:

“Our natural right to be allowed to use your own body, intelligence and wealth according to our will, without doing any harm to others, and all the members of a society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education or knowledge.”240

He has expounded progressive ideas and vehemently opposed escapist doctrines like mysticism. He maintains that occultism and mysticism have destroyed the people. The need of the present is man making religion. Any-thing that weakens has to be rejected as poison. He stands for reason. He says that no genuine inspiration ever contradicts reason when such contradiction is found, it is to inspiration. Vivekananda’s outlook is essentially idealistic although it contains elements of materialism. Man’s objective is to identify with Brahman through self-purification and service of the people. Man is the centre of

240 *Selections from Swami Vivekananda*, p. 561.
religion conceived by him. He, who has set out in search of God, ultimately recognizes man as the centre of this world. He calls upon the people to find God in man.\textsuperscript{241}

The only hope for India he lays in the common people, for the upper classes were exhausted physically and morally. He urges a radical transformation of the social order because all the members of a society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education or knowledge and declares that these rules governing the society which stand the way of the unfolding of the freedom are injurious and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily. To uplift the masses spiritual and secular education is necessary. He says:

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"We have to give them secular education. We have to follow the plan laid down by our ancestors that is to bring all the ideals slowly down among the masses. Raise them slowly up. Raise them to equality. Impart . . . . Secular knowledge through religion."\textsuperscript{242}
\end{quote}

In the whole idea of education, we find Swami Vivekananda summing up as the manifestation of divinity in man. He realizes the caste consciousness as a barrier to India’s progress. Casteism narrows restricts and separates the noble bond of humanity. For him the true measure of man is worth but not birth. The ultimate end of Swami Vivekananda is the good of all. He advocates the idea that man must strive for this end even to the point of sacrificing himself. The means to

\textsuperscript{241} Damodaran, K., \textit{Indian Thought – A Critical Survey}, p. 359.
\textsuperscript{242} Vivekananda Swami., \textit{On India and Her Problems}, p. 71.
be adopted for realization of this ultimate end must also be worthy of that end.\textsuperscript{243}

Emancipation of women and uplift of the masses are the two important items in Swami Vivekananda’s programme of social regeneration of India. He could notice the downfall of Indian Society because of the continued neglect of women and masses. In India there are two great evils: he writes:

“Uplift of the women, the awakening of the masses must come first and then only can any real good come about for the country.”\textsuperscript{244}

That country and that nation, he says, which do not respect the women has never become great, nor will ever be in future.

The state with the assistance of society can foster and promote the common interests of people, which can bring justice, honesty, peace etc. The state cannot have interests than the interests of the individual who form the society. The state is composed of individuals. Without virtuous individuals it is futile to expect the state becoming prosperous. He states:

“The basis of all systems social or political rests upon the goodness of man. No nation is great or good because parliament enacts this or that, but because its men are great and good.”\textsuperscript{245}

\textsuperscript{243} Arora, V.K., \textit{The Social and Political Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{244} Majumdar, R.C., \textit{Swami Vivekananda}, p. 400.
\textsuperscript{245} \textit{The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda}, Vol. V. p. 192.
The concept of nationalism vis-à-vis internationalism visualized by him is dynamic and encourages people to be mingled with the life of other individuals and nations which holds good of them, their own well-being, progress and prosperity. His love for mankind transcends the geographical limitations. His interests are not confined to India alone but are extended to international level. He pleads for the harmony and good relationship with the multinationals.

Thus in Indian tradition from *Vedas* up to the present century certain values were cherished and propagated which are humanistic in content and spirit. Of course Indian humanism has not developed as a systematic philosophy with a sound metaphysics and epistemology as in the case of western tradition.

**Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948):**

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was one of the very few people who impressed an idea upon a historical epoch. That idea was non-violence. Gandhi’s creed of non-violence insisted that people struggle for their rights should never violate their basic obligation to respect life.246

“Elements of Gandhi’s philosophy were rooted in the Indian religions of *Jainism* and *Buddhism*. Both of these advocate *Ahimsā* (non-violence), which is absence of the desire to kill or harm.”247

In the words of J. H. Holmes:

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“Gandhi is the greatest Indian since Gautama Buddha and the greatest man since Jesus Christ.” 248

Gandhi was both religious and open-minded, and saw all religions as paths to reach the same goal. He was inspired by the teachings of Jesus, in particular the emphasis on love for everyone, even one’s enemies, and the need to strive for justice. He also took from Hinduism the importance of action in one’s life, without concern for success. The Hindu text

*Bhagavad-Gītā* says:

> “On action alone be thy interest, / Never on its fruits / Abiding in discipline perform actions, / Abandoning attachment / Being indifferent to success or failure” 249

Gandhi’s God was an immanent and his general philosophy of Hinduism becomes an ethic of political action. Gandhi’s approach to reality is religious rather than philosophical. He approached reality through non-violence. 250 Non-violence is an integral part of every religion. He says that: “Non-violence is in Hinduism, it is in Christianity as well as in Islam. 251 If non-violence disappears, Hindu Dharma disappears. Islam does not forbid its followers from following non-violence as a policy. 252

After having studied the *Bhagavad-Gītā* against the background of Indian culture and tradition, he has come to the conclusion that the

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249 Wolpert, Stanley., *India*, p.71.
central teaching of the *Gītā* is to follow truth and non-violence. When there is no desire for truth, there is no temptation for untruth of violence but it maybe freely admitted that the *Gītā* was not written to establish non-violence. The central teaching of the *Gītā* is not violence but non-violence. Violence is impossible without anger, without attachment, without hatred, and the *Gītā* strives to carry us to the state beyond *sattva, rajās* and *tamas*, a state that excludes anger, hatred, etc., to one who reads the spirit of *Gītā*, it teaches the secret of non-violence, the secret of realizing the self through the physical body.

The *Ṛṣis* discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness and taught the weary world that its salvation laid not through violence but through non-violence. In this way, the superiority of the law of non-violence is established over the law of violence. Violence is declared as useless and non-violence is the way of salvation. Gandhi says:

"The sage who realized Truth found non-violence out of violence raging all about him and violence is unreal; non-violence is real."

According to him non-violence is the Kingdom of Heaven. It promises peace and bliss, harmony and concord, sympathy and co-

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operation, in human affairs. these are its fruits. As the aspirant seeks the kingdom of heaven as the highest goal, so non-violence is the Heaven, it is a perfect state. Our scriptures tell us that non-violence is all conquering.\textsuperscript{257} It is also the supreme law. In his philosophic strain, Gandhi says that at the centre of non-violence is a force which is self acting. The beauty of non-violence there is that it caries within its own security.\textsuperscript{258}

\textbf{Gandhi as a Practical Idealist:}

Gandhi was not a visionary but he claimed to be a practical idealist. He was a man of action. It was the idealist that made him function as a practical man. He was also an irrepressible optimist.\textsuperscript{259} His optimism was based on the belief that man is endowed with infinite possibilities of development. His belief in the law as the ideal is unquestionable. It matters whether individuals fall short of the ideal. Though he was aware of the reality, his striving was always to reach the idea. He elucidates the point thus:

``Euclid’s straight line exists only in our conception but we have to postulate it. We have always to strive to draw a true line corresponding to Euclid's imaginary line. Ideals can never be completely embodied in practice. And yet it is never to be forgotten that ideals do exist; that if they be not approximated at to all, the whole matter goes to wreck."\textsuperscript{260}''}

\textsuperscript{257} Gandhi, M.K., \textit{Hindu Dharma}, p.231.

\textsuperscript{258} Gandhi., M.K, \textit{Communal Unity}, p.166.

\textsuperscript{259} Gandhi, M.K., \textit{For Pacifists}, p.60.

It is a means of focusing his attention to the ultimate goal. He has to tread the right path without digression. This is the yardstick by which man’s progress is measured. Gandhi’s philosophy was the direct result of human relations and it was in the sphere of human interaction that his plan of action took concrete shape. His approach was liberal and human. The world is there for all practical purposes. It is the field of greatest activity. No turning ones back to, or running away from, the world is Gandhi’s attitude. According to him:

“The world offers problems of man and he is made to solve them. This is what Gandhi thinks about man and the world. Thus, the world is an arena where man has to fight his battle for the conquest of life. The world is an active field. Man cannot remain inactive or static in it. His activity can be progressive as he is a progressive being pushed up by Nature which is never at a stand-still.”

Gandhi has faith in the fallible man who can improve his condition by cultivating a perfectly innocent heart incapable of evil. Thus, the fallible man, being a hindrance to his own self-development, can be corrected to follow the path of progress in the right spirit. It can only happen through life-education. Gandhi observes that: “It is not literacy or learning which makes a man but education for real life.”

The teaching of Gandhi is more explicit and implied in the sense that man is expected to use his discretion in the choice of conflicting duties. In this way, man is trained in the exercise of ‘ranking’ the order of

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262 Ibid., p. 209.
his duties, without neglecting or ignoring any one single duty. It is the conscious effort on the part of man to ‘finalize’ his preference in the scale of duties. This duty-conscious man is the creation of Gandhi.

“It was only an extension of my social activity. I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole mankind, and that I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man’s activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a mass of sound and fury signifying nothing.”

This crux of Gandhi’s philosophy, which is nothing more and nothing less than action, philosophized. The range of his activity is as wide as man’s activity in respect of his interests. There can be no question of evading it as human progress is evident in the direction of equating life with the principle of morality. The present age of man is becoming more and more human-conscious.

Gandhi never practiced violence and above all never permitted violence. The only thing lawful in his estimation is non-violence. Violence can never be lawful, i.e., not according to man-made law but according to the law made by Nature for man. Though violence is not lawful, when it is offered in self-defence or for the defence of the defenceless, it is an act of bravery far better than cowardly submission.

There is an element of bravery in violent action, but the soul of Gandhi revolts against the adoption of violence as means of defence. Under violence there are many stages and varieties of bravery; every man must judge it for himself; no other person can or has the right. Gandhi’s choice between violence and non-violence was clear, but he had no hesitation in saying that it is better to be violent, if there is violence in the heart than to put on the cloak of non-violence to cover the impotence. That violence is any day preferable to impotence, was his firm conviction. Therefore, non-violence is no covetable weapon for the impotent or the coward.\textsuperscript{264}

The idea of sacrifice, in the philosophy of Gandhi is to die for a noble cause, but to die in the act of killing is in essence to die defeated.\textsuperscript{265} Thus, man dies in vain and his purpose is defeated. It is a sacrifice offered for no justifiable cause. Killing is an ignoble act for which no sacrifice is needed. Peace is a cementing force in the sense that it promotes and encourages factors of human progress. Gandhi, therefore, says that way of peace insures internal growth and stability.\textsuperscript{266} Gandhi’s contribution to the human civilization lies in his presenting truth and non-violence in every walk of life for individuals or nations.\textsuperscript{267} His treatment of non-violence is described as follows:

\begin{quote}
“I have been practicing with scientific precision no-violence and its possibilities for an unbroken period of over fifty years. I have
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\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{265} Gandhi, M.K., \textit{For Pacifists}, 1949. p. 75.
\bibitem{266} Ibid., p. 47.
\bibitem{267} Gandhi, M.K., \textit{Women and Social Justice}, p.27.
\end{thebibliography}
applied it in every walk of life, domestic, institutional, economic and political. I know of no single case in which it has failed. Where it has seemed sometimes to have failed, I have ascribed it to my imperfections. I claim no perfection for myself. 

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975):

In contemporary Indian philosophers, Radhakrishnan was a great thinker who was a professor in Eastern and Western universities and also as a Vice-Chancellor. As the head of the University Education Commission he had an occasion to probe deep into the problems of higher education in India. Along with his wide experience of the field of education, Radhakrishnan had wide learning and deep insight into Indian and Western, ancient and contemporary philosophy. He was undoubtedly one of the most qualified persons to speak about Indian philosophy of education with authority. His views are found scattered in his various books such as An Idealist view of Life, The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, The Brahma sутra, The Bhagavad-Gita, The Hindu View of Life, Eastern Religion and Western Thought.

Human nature an analysis - Radhakrishnan’s view:

Radhakrishnan was an advocate of ancient Indian Vedanta philosophy. He was an idealist philosopher. He defined philosophy as a combination of reflection and intuition. Radhakrishnan’s aim of philosophy is to search that synthesis which may include all the aspects of creation. Philosophy, according to him:

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Radhakrishnan admitted the value of reason and faith, logic and experience and the value of perceptual, conceptual and intuitive knowledge in education. According to him intuitive knowledge is the highest knowledge it is an integral experiences. He explained mystic experience as a part of intuitive experience. Total experience is gained by total self and it is much higher than any other experience gained by total self and it is much higher than any other experience and creative insight has an important place in total knowledge. His philosophy has been rightly interpreted as integral experience, and this experience finds place for every other type of experience in it.

According to Radhakrishnan, human personality is not determined by economic or physical environment. So far as physical changes are concerned they may be generally determined by the environment by the human will which is free to decide to win or loose. The real human freedom is the freedom of will. In the tradition of ancient Indian thinkers Radhakrishnan had admitted the principle of Karma. According to this principle our present is determined by our past and future depends upon the present. In the words of Radhakrishnan: “Karma or relationships with the past does not mean that man cannot do

269 Radhakrishnan, S., The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, p. 101
anything freely but free action is involved in it.”270 The law of *Karma* is not fatalism. According to it:

“An individual will gain according to the use of his energy. The world will respond to the individual *Jīvātma*’s demand. The nature will reply the insistent call of the man.”271

Like Karl Marx, Radhakrishnan believed that man can change the world. On the basis of his will he can make his future. The principles of Nature are the principles of justice. In nature and in human world, everywhere, one universal divine law functions. Therefore, the law of *Karma* is not an external but an internal determinant of human life. In the line of evaluation, man is distinguished by self-consciousness which is not found either in plants or in animals. The mental processes cannot be interpreted in terms of physical changes. The physical movements do not explain total behavior.

Modern psychology takes a one-sided view of man while presenting behaviouristic interpretation. Behaviorisms have only historical value. Man’s behavior cannot be explained by stimulus-response formula. An organism is not merely a sum total of parts and its parts are internally related. Consciousness does not come out of matter, it is a new creation. Self-consciousness is not a biological product. Therefore, psychological phenomena should not be explained

271 Ibid.,
in physiological or biological terms. With the evolution of self-consciousness, Nature evolves to a new level of existence. The self-conscious man is rational, self-realization is the aim of life and self is the spirit. In the words of Radhakrishnan:

“Spirit is life, not thing, power not status, real in itself and through itself and cannot be compared to any substance subjective or objective.”

Human nature is essentially spiritual, spiritual also means natural because nature is as much an expression of spirit as the self. Human life is not only natural but also divine since its essential nature is spirit. The world is a gradual evolution towards spirit. The metaphysical hypothesis is very important in the philosophy of education. The child will develop only that which is potential in it. What is not implicit cannot be explicit, however, every level of evolution expresses new elements. The characteristics of spirit are seen in creativity, change, system and progress.

Radhakrishnan philosophy is mysticism so far as the concept of spirit is concerned. In his book ‘An Idealist View of Life’, Radhakrishnan has called spirit total Brahman, brahman precedes cretion. Identifying God and creator Radhakrishnan said: “They are the different forms of seeing the same ultimate reality.” Thus, like Sri Aurobindo,

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272 Murihead and Radhakrishnan (Ed.), Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 2nd Ed., p. 492.
273 Radhakrishnan, S., Recovery of Faith, pp. 89-99
Radhakrishnan believes the world to be the expression of God, the metaphysical proposition lays down the spiritual goal of education and certifies its possibility. Radhakrishnan has synthesized idealism, realism, mysticism and pragmatism in his philosophy of education. He welcomes all sorts of experiences of arrive at some general principles. As he said:

“We should weave different parts of experience in a total pattern. We should keep our general ideas connected so that different experiences may be explained.”

As David Hume has rightly pointed out, the principle of causation in the field of science is a mere probability. So far as physical incidents are concerned, they are determined by natural laws but man has been provided freedom of choice in life. He is not free to choose his cards but he is free to play, win or loose as he likes. This freedom of winning or loosing is given to man. This victory or defeat is not a physical happening but of the mind. The real freedom is the freedom of the will. In spite of being a votary of science Radhakrishnan is not a determinist or environmentalist. This fact is of capital importance in his explanation of human nature and in his philosophy of education. Science proves that every effect has a cause but is does not definitely prove the cause of every effect.