INTRODUCTION

A CRITICAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SOME SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONCEPTS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND MAHATMA GANDHI

The primary purpose of the study as the title shows, is to make a critical and comparative study of some of social and political concepts of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. The relevance of this type of study is highlighted by the fact that in spite of the magical and amazing advancement in the field of science and technology, man has failed to achieve the same kind of progress in the realm of his mind or "spirit". The growing tension, the feeling of insecurity, jealousy and hatred that divide man and man, nation and nation of today are enough proof to support this view. As the gap of growth between the mind and matter is widening day by day, the teachings of Tagore and Gandhi are assuming more and more crucial and compelling validity for the problems of today.

In this context, it may be pointed out that neither Rabindranath nor Gandhi be regarded as a social or political theoretician or scientist in the modern sense of the term, as they did not develop any particular thesis nor propagated any new social and political theory as did the
Western thinkers like Bentham, Mill, Spencer, Marx, Engels and others.

Both Rabindranath and Gandhi accepted man in terms of the 'spirit' only and insisted that he and his problems on this earth could not be divided into separate watertight compartments i.e. social, political, economic, etc. They held that a comprehension of man's total view of life is essential in finding out the solution to his problems on this earth. Man's problems and their remedies do not lie in any of this or that aspect of his life but in its ensemble, in the totality of the effect and impression that is produced by the essential and integral relatedness of its various parts and aspects with the whole.

An understanding of this total view of life is thus necessary for an understanding of the thinkers' evolving minds and personalities also. It is for this reason, in the title of the thesis, the term "concepts" has been carefully chosen for the word "thoughts". The former covers broader areas than the latter, related to the issues of reflections or the inner preoccupation of mind of man. Rabindranath's and Gandhi's social and political concepts are distinctly marked by keen observation, new spiritual insight, deep metaphysical content and also by a volume and majesty of inspiration, that was the prevalent spirit of the time.
To know and understand Rabindranath and Gandhi, is to know their age also. What the scholar tries to express in the opening chapter of the thesis is not to recite the various facts with scholarly exactness, but to feel, understand and appreciate the very emotional undertones that characterized India's Nineteenth Century Renaissance. To give the feelings of the spirit of the age is to do more than expound its concepts and describe its history. One must catch its sentimental or emotional aspect, enter sympathetically into its hopes and aspirations, feel one's way into ideas and ideals as they were expressed in the teachings, writings and thoughts of the eminent figures of the age. Rabindranath and Gandhi, in this sense, were the only two ideal representatives of their age, whose influences have left far reaching impact on the mind of every Indian for all time to come.

Rabindranath and Gandhi were not only great friends but adored and loved each other like 'lovers' as their friends described them. There is an inner logic in the lives of great men and in their friendship we find reflected the significance and inner meaning of their lives. The meeting of great minds always takes place on a different level from which one notices in the case of common people of average sensibility. The minds of Rabindranath and Gandhi met on such a higher plane, which is often
overlooked by the common people. To trace the evolution of such a friendship is to go back to the very origin of their spiritual urge - i.e. realization of the 'self' or the 'ultimate truth' or the 'divine' in man. The thinkers regarded that ideal to be the final goal of man's individual, social, economic and political life. Like most of the renaissance thinkers of India, these thinkers believed that since man was essentially a spiritual being his life and his problems could be best interpreted in terms of the spirit only. Thus the thinkers had no faith in any politics which take no account of the 'soul'. In its wider application it goes against the Marxian formula of "materialistic interpretation of human history" and the Machiavellian principle of 'politics of expediency'.

Thus mere relationship and knowledge of the critical categories are not sufficient to understand the two great minds as Rabindranath and Gandhi were. One has to understand them with a matured mind or wisdom which is singularly free from prejudice and which has the capacity to see beneath appearances and differences. For the convenience of the study, the subject has been divided into ten broad chapters.

Chapter one deals with the cultural and family background of the thinkers i.e. the Spiritual Renaissance period starting from Ram Mohon Roy. The social and
intellectual ferment of this period expressed itself in the founding of new associations and societies whose main emphasis was the regeneration of India through various reformist activities in place of quiet contemplation and faith. Again, it should be noted, that the eminent thinkers and leaders of the time believed and also emphasized the fact that reform activities should be moulded and fashioned not after the models and techniques of the West but after India's own traditional fashion i.e. according to her spiritual and religious ideals, social patterns, customs and beliefs. Or, in other words, the Renaissance thinkers never emphasized the need of disassociating themselves and the so-called reform movements from the main social body of Hinduism, rather they encouraged reforms in and within the traditional Hindu Order. Swami Vivekananda who was also a contemporary of Tagore and Gandhi was the great champion of this cause. Rabindranath and Gandhi being the true representatives of the Spiritual Renaissance period thought and believed in an identical way.

Chapter Two deals with the thinkers' basic concepts of God, truth and religions especially Hindu religion as they interpreted it from humanistic point of view. According to Hindu religious ideal, 'self-realization' is regarded as the supreme goal of man's life on earth. According to Rabindranath and Gandhi, this ideal confirms
the existing world or 'finite' as well as the 'infinite' or 'God'. The thinkers did not believe in the existence of any 'God' or 'Truth' apart from the realities of life. At the same time they emphasized that the realization of the "supreme truth" or 'divine' in man should be regarded as the final goal of man's life and his individual, social, political and economic activities should be oriented to that supreme ideal only. They claimed that Hindu religion represents this great 'truth', being the synthesis of various and different cultures, traditions, customs and beliefs that come under its fold during the different stages of history. Thus the thinkers identified every Indian as a 'Hindu'. Both Rabindranath and Gandhi upheld the inner ideal of "Varnashram" doctrine based on the spirit of co-operation, love and moral obligation and duties to others. The thinkers held that the present 'caste system' was a deviation from the old ideal, an unwanted growth of later days which needed to be totally abandoned or rejected.

Chapter three deals with their spiritual approach to politics. The thinkers held that man is basically a 'spiritual being' and he and his problems should be regarded as an integrated spiritual whole, as one acts and reacts upon another. Politics devoid of 'morality' or 'spiritual' support had no value for them. Gandhi emphasized that he
wanted to introduce 'religion' into politics. Rabindranath, like Gandhi, insisted that politics should always be interpreted in the perspective of 'spiritual' or 'moral' gains only. Rabindranath's famous lectures on "Nationalism" represent this spirit. Thus both the thinkers made no clear cut distinction between the spiritual freedom and political freedom, the individual rights and his moral obligation and duties to others, between the true spirit of nationalism and the ideal of internationalism and universal brotherhood in general.

Chapter four deals with the changing attitude of the thinkers towards British administration after the commencement of Zalianwala Bag episode. So long, the thinkers maintained more or less a conformistic attitude towards the British administrators as they believed that the British rule, to a certain extent, was beneficial to India's overall progress and advancement. Gandhi himself acknowledged it in his Autobiography (p.161) and Andrews in his study on Gandhi, emphasized this fact. The atrocities and cruelties committed on the unarmed innocent civilians of Punjab by the British military regime, made the two thinkers (along with many other Indians of the time) revolutionary and non-cooperative to British administration. Rabindranath renounced his 'Knighthood' and his famous letter of protest addressed to the then Viceroy is a striking example of it. Andrews described this gesture of the poet as "his first
act of non-cooperation" against the British government of the time. Similarly, Gandhi returned the "Kaiser-I-Hind" Gold Medal and the Boer War Medal which were granted to him by the British Government of the time in recognition of his services as officer in charge of the Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps in 1906 and for his humanitarian services as assistant superintendent of the Volunteer Stretcher bearers corps during the Boer War of 1899-90. Gandhi's famous letter of protest to the then Viceroy could only be compared with that of Tagore.

Chapter five deals with their economic thought. The thinkers did not believe or accept Marxian interpretation of human history from "materialistic" point of view. To Rabindranath and Gandhi, it was not the "matter" but "mind" that determines the history of mankind. Accordingly, the thinkers made a clear cut distinction between the "economic progress" and "real progress". They were against the theory of "class-war" and total economic equality or class-less society of the communists. Instead, they enunciated the principle of "Trusteeship" based on India's age old "samaj ideal" of co-operation, disinterested service to others, love and trust among the different classes of people.

Chapter six discusses their views on 'Hindu-Muslim Problem'. They regarded the problem as an 'end in itself'
not as a "marriage of convenience" made on the Congress platform to be used against the British administrators. They were against the "two-nation theory" and regarded Hindus and Muslims as blood-brothers having common culture, interest, ideals and common allegiance to one motherland, namely, India.

Chapter seven deals with their educational ideals. They were the great exponents of introducing the ideal of "learning by doing" and "craft" oriented education. They were in favour of using mother-tongue as the medium of learning and expression. They emphasized the need of reviving India's old "ashram ideal" based on close teacher-student relationship.

Chapter eight deals with their views on "Women". They regarded "woman" only as complementary, and not "competitor" of her male partner. The thinkers appealed to Indian women to live according to the best teachings of their predecessors i.e. love and self-sacrifice for the common good of society. The thinkers advised the modern women of India not to imitate their counterparts in Western countries in dress and in their way of living.

Chapter nine discusses the background and the origin of the famous public controversy that accidentally developed between Rabindranath and Gandhi during the famous non-cooperation movement in 1921-25. Rabindranath was not in favour of Gandhi's technique of applying non-violence
on a mass scale. In his famous article contributed to the Modern Review (1921) under the title, "The Call of Truth" Rabindranath warned Gandhi of the far reaching consequences of this so-called experiment of mass movement. He pointed out that the involvement of public in the non-cooperation movement would carry the risk of mob violence and indiscipline. Gandhi replied to Rabindranath's criticisms in his famous article contributed to the Young India under the title 'The Great Sentinel'. In fact, the mob-violence and riots in 'Chauri Chaura' and in 'Bombay' ultimately led Gandhi to the total suspension of the Satyagraha movement in 1922. Gandhi was tried and sentenced to a six-year term of imprisonment. The co-workers and friends of the thinkers, like Andrews and others, described this incident only as a "temporary misunderstanding" or 'difference of emphasis' between the two. Gandhi himself concluded that he found no real difference between him and the Poet. Gandhi who always counted on Rabindranath's valued opinions and criticisms asked for the same, prior to his undertaking the famous historic fast in 1932 against the verdict of communal award. Gandhi personally wrote a letter to Rabindranath asking for his views and also his blessings for the cause. Tagore not only sent his heartfelt support to Gandhi but in his 'eighties' undertook three days strenuous train journey from Calcutta to Poona, only to be personally present near the bedside of the fasting Gandhi in the Yarvada Jail at Poona. Similarly, Gandhi often
extended his active help in finance and in other matters to Rabindranath, when the latter was in difficult position to deal with the problems of his favourite Shantiniketan. Gandhi acknowledged that he always regarded 'Shantiniketan' as his 'second home'.

Chapter ten contains the summary of the whole thesis and ends with an evaluation of the two thinkers.

The thesis includes nine appendices and two separate bibliographies on Rabindranath and Gandhi.
CHAPTER - I
CHAPTER I (A)

IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1(A)1 The age, the spiritual renewal

Rabindranath was born on 7th May, 1861 and Gandhi's birth took place on the 2nd of October, 1869 - an age when India was in a state of ferment, after the Great Revolt of 1857.

The scene was quite different when the British first entered the Indian political scene in the second half of the eighteenth century. This period is often described by the historians as a period of great political turmoil and administrative chaos. The Grand Mughul Empire was on the verge of complete disintegration, a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty was prevailing in the country. In Bengal and Bihar the Mughal Governors set themselves up as virtually independent and autocratic rulers, in Central India the Marathas became very powerful, and in the Deccan the rulers of various states were fighting among themselves.

Culturally, as very effectively pointed out by J. P. Suda in his Indian National Movement, the conditions were even worse. The vitality and creativeness of the Indian spirit had touched a very low ebb due to the decay
of knowledge and learning and social degeneration with the growth of useless observances of dogmas and empty rituals. Evil practices like Sati, polygamy, enforced widowhood, girl infanticide, untouchability and rigid caste system were gradually undermining the sublime truths of the Upanishads and the Vedanta. The people's spiritual yearnings were being swiftly diverted by useless observances and rituals. Or in other words, "The vision of Indians had become narrow and clouded and they had lost the power to think creatively" says J. P. Suda in his study of this period.

By the early part of nineteenth century, the British managed to establish its unquestionable authority over a large part of India under the East India Company. Two-fifths of the country was under the native rulers, who by and large, accepted the paramountcy of the British. The British impact upon India was deep, many-sided and varied. It was also different and something peculiar from what India had witnessed and experienced during her long history of foreign invasions and incursions. As pointed out by Rabindranath in his study of Indian history, the Mughals and other foreign rulers in the preceding eras had been thoroughly Indianized under the impact of India's rich cultural heritage. The case was totally different with the British. It was partly because of the fact that
the seat of power was located many thousands of miles away from India and partly due to the conscious effort on the part of British rulers to keep themselves segregated from the native culture. The British showed no inclination to mix with the Indian people or to be assimilated into the mainstream of Indian culture. On the other hand, they wanted to win Indian people culturally by the introduction of English education. All these had certain peculiar effects upon the life and thought of India.

Although the inner spirit of India's traditional spiritual life and thought was fast losing its vitality then, it was not totally dead. It was only in a state of torpor and stagnation. It needed some shock to awaken and act. The contact with the west and the impact of English education proved to be the shock which indirectly roused the slumbering spirit of India and channelised it into a spurt of dynamic activity that led to the birth of Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century.

Although, it is the currently accepted view that the Renaissance in India was the result of the impact of the west, it must also be pointed out that, in real fact, the western impact was only the occasion for the national awakening, but not its cause. As pointed out by J. P. Suda and the view is shared by many eminent thinkers like...
Gandhi, Rabindranath and Aurobindo that the primary force which contributed to the continuity and longevity of Indian civilization and culture throughout the centuries, is the inherent power of the 'spirit' of India to change, grow and assimilate according to the need of the time and people. This does not mean that the scholar ignores or minimizes the vital role played by the impact of the west in general and by western education in particular. But this is to re-emphasize the truth upheld by Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath and Gandhi that the spiritual character of Indian civilization could neither be ignored nor could be distinctively separated or analysed. Or, in other words, to the Indians, life and religion is the same and identical and even as pointed out by J. P. Suda: "Nationalism in India did not remain a mere political cry, it became something like religion". The most notable feature of Indian nationalism was its spirituality. It was the awakening of the spirit of India, of her creative life force. As pointed out by Suda, Indian Nationalism has remained non-aggressive and non-militant and prevented the country from pursuing an imperialist policy (like Japan) in relation to other countries. In persons like Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath, Aurobindo, Gandhi it was closely associated with a universalistic or cosmopolitan outlook aiming at the spiritual salvation of the whole of mankind
in general. To them, India wanted to rise and free not only for her own sake, but for the sake of the world. As Sri Aurobindo pointed out: "It is to give this religion (Sanatana Dharma) that India is rising. She does not rise as other countries do, for self or when she is strong to trample on the weak. She is rising to shed eternal light entrusted to her over the world". Like Aurobindo, Gandhi and Rabindranath believed and pointed out in many of their speeches, writings and essays that India had been divinely entrusted with a special responsibility to carry out her spiritual mission to the world as a whole and to lead mankind to a peaceful and progressive way of life.

1(A)2 Meaning of spirituality

The best account of the meaning and nature of spirituality, as pointed out by J. P. Suda, has been given by Sri Aurobindo as "the sense of the infinite". Gandhi and Tagore had an identical opinion. They also defined it was the spirit of 'religion'. It means that life cannot be understood and lived perfectly in the light of its externalities only. To quote Aurobindo, India, "saw that the complexities of the universe could not be explained in the present terms of man or seen by his superficial sight, that there were other powers behind, other powers within man himself of which he is normally unaware". She also saw that man has "the power of exceeding himself, of
becoming himself more entirely and profoundly than he is". In short, as very convincingly analysed by J. P. Suda, spirituality signifies nothing more recondite than the insight that man cannot be properly understood unless we relate him to the Infinite which wraps him. His nature is not exhausted by the contents of his superficial consciousness, to know his nature one has to go deeper where lies his unlimited power of exceeding himself. It was the constant endeavour of the Indian mind in the past to realise this Supreme Spirit or 'God' and oneness of the human spirit with it. The yearnings to realise the ' Infinite' and possess it, as Aurobindo, Gandhi and Rabindranath very clearly pointed out, did not work in a void or vacuum, it was intimately connected with life on earth, and produced a sense of 'spirituality' or 'religiousness' in the mind of India which in turn influenced her idealism, art, philosophy and religion throughout the centuries. It is a highly creative faculty which gives India a stupendous vitality to survive as the most ancient civilization of the world and to enjoy the essence and joy of life. Thus in India 'spirituality' in no way means an indifference to the mundane affairs and concentration on those of the life after death, as the western critics often misread it. Ancient Indians were quite alive to the importance and greatness of the existing world and had a keen sense of joy of life. They however realised, as in the present
times the modern people have failed to realise that to make the best of the life on the planet it was necessary to go beyond the superficialities and to touch the deeper truth of life and mind which is identified with 'God' or 'Infinite'. The Indians in their art, philosophy and religion and literature throughout the centuries tried to understand, express and enjoy the 'finite' in the light of the 'infinite' as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo\textsuperscript{13} and Rabindranath\textsuperscript{14} in their many writings and essays. This is what Aurobindo described as 'spirituality' or the 'sense of infinite'. It is a philosophy not only of 'being' but of 'becoming' as upheld by Rabindranath in his famous essays entitled 'The Religion of Man', 'Creative Unity' and 'Personality'. According to Aurobindo it constitutes 'the master-key of Indian mind'. On page 21 of his Renaissance in India he writes thus: "The note of spirituality is dominant, initial, always recurrent; it is the support of all the rest". It is the hidden source of the tremendous creativity of the Indian people of all the ages, it supplies the unending energy of Indian culture to survive through centuries despite the political conquest of the country by foreigners in different stages of history.

Gandhi in the introduction\textsuperscript{15} of his autobiography clearly wrote, "I should certainly like to narrate my
experiments in the spiritual field which are known to myself and from which I have derived such power as I possess for working in the political field". He added that he wanted to see or realise 'God' and emphasized, "I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing and my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end". He explained that to him truth was the sovereign principle. "This truth is not truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God". Gandhi wrote.

In fact, this note of 'spirituality' is distinctively noticeable in the Indian Renaissance which started with Rammohan Roy, who, being one of the earliest intellectuals, gave a great stimulus to the revival of Upanishad's teaching and to bring to light the grandeur of India's ancient civilization. Before going to study the different forces (including a British impact) that contributed to the fostering and promoting a kind of 'self-introspective' thought, represented by Indian Renaissance, it is necessary to point out that, it never meant a mere revival of the

*The underlines have been given to emphasise the words.
past. It was to awaken the people of India to the real sense and value of the ancient culture which they had nearly forgotten. It also meant as pointed out by J. P. Suda that the "problems of new India are to be solved in the light of Indian Spirituality". J. P. Suda in his study of this period has very clearly pointed out that from Rammohan to Mahatma Gandhi we noticed the trend, while the period under Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership was quite different. According to J. P. Suda, Nehru "tried to lead India along the path trodden by the West, popularised democratic socialism as against Sarvodaya socialism, and propagated the ideal of secular society as distinguished from secular state, he affected a departure from the Gandhian ideal". This view of Suda, although it seems to be too bold and sharp and subject to several criticisms, it must be admitted that the very emphasis on 'spiritualism' or viewing man and his problems in terms of 'Infinite' or 'God' (a distinct characteristic of Aurobindo's, Rabindranath's and Gandhi's thoughts) is totally absent in Nehru's thinking. This difference between Gandhi and Nehru has been brought into light by many thinkers and writers of the modern age. Jawaharlal Nehru in his famous work, The Discovery of India, clearly indicated that he had no faith in 'God'. He wrote, "Often, as I look at this world, I have a sense of mysteries of unknown depths. What
the mysterious is I do not know. I do not call it God
because God has come to mean much I do not believe in. I
find myself incapable of thinking of a deity or of any
unknown supreme power in anthropomorphic terms. Unlike
Rabindranath and Gandhi, Nehru was much inspired and
impressed by the so-called scientific approach of interpret­
ing human history from Marxian point of view. As pointed
out by V. P. Varma, Nehru in his Autobiography (pp 362-64)
confessed that the communist philosophy of life gave him
comfort and hope. It attempted to explain the past and
offered hope for the future.

In short, Nehru differed from Gandhi and Rabindranath
in accepting 'God' or 'the Infinite' to be the sole criteria
in defining man and his nature and in prescribing his
future course of history. In the words of V. P. Varma,
"It is true that Nehru was not a dogmatic or militant
atheist or materialist, but he was not a spiritualist
either." 'Nehru age' may be described as the opening
chapter of a new type of secular and scientific thinking
of India of very recent time. This age with its emphasis
of modernization and urbanization of India aided by
scientific and technological knowledge and thinking after
western model is totally different from the age to which
Rabindranath and Gandhi truly belonged and represented it
in their thoughts, ideals and minds. In order to understand
Rabindranath and Gandhi one has to go back to the period of the late nineteenth century when the spiritual Renaissance was still under a process of growth after the great revolt of 1857.

Even before the revolt of 1857, the British Indian Association had been founded in 1851, by a group of intellectuals and politically advanced people who had become aware of and had started thinking, although very vaguely, of the humiliating positions of the Indians under a foreign power. The immediate cause of the establishment of the British Indian Association was the famous Black Acts controversy. The Association may be regarded as the father of the Indian Congress which was established in 1885.

After the revolt of 1857, the British made a deliberate effort to consolidate its power and authority on a permanent basis on Indian soil and by the famous Queen's proclamation of 1858, the responsibility of governing the country was shifted from the East India Company to the Crown.

By and large, the administrative, political, economic

*In Indian history, it is customary to refer to the period starting from Rammohan Roy 1815, as the period of Renaissance.
and educational policies followed by British rulers (during and after the Company's rule) contributed indirectly, if not directly, to the awakening of Indian mind in her own peculiar way. J. P. Suda has rightly pointed out that if India had not something original to be called her own, the British influence might have been disastrous, Indians might have been swept off their feet, and their civilization might have been extinguished.

1(A)3.2 The British impact (Administrative factor)

The unification of the whole country from Kashmere in the north to Kanya Kumari in the south and from Assam in the east to Sind in the west under a strong and highly centralized government and development of communication and speedy travel arrangements provided a sense of solidarity and unity among Indians. They began to think of India as a whole or in other words, the highly centralized administrative system under the British rule facilitated the forging of a large number of social and economic links between different parts of the country. Increasing social contacts between the peoples of different provinces, by and large, gave a real meaning to the words 'India' and 'Indian'.

The establishment of the all India services as well as Indian army (recruited from various parts of the
country) provided a sense of homogeneity and integrity among the Indians in a manner never known before. Similarly, the British legal system and its insistence on the principle of equality of all before law contributed also to the growth of a sense of unity among Indians.

1(A)3.2 The economic factor

The economic impact of British rule, on the other hand, was not so much impressive and beneficial. To some extent, it contributed to the growth of an anti-British feeling among the common people and peasantry who constituted the majority of Indian population.

Under the British rule, the traditional pattern of Indian economy based on the ideal of self-sufficiency of the villages was thoroughly disturbed and disintegrated. The Britishers were interested more in their trade and commerce than in the well-being of Indian masses. Their intention was to develop and utilize the Indian agriculture as well as the market for the interest of trade and commerce of their own motherland i.e. of England.

Under the Mughal Empire, India enjoyed a flourishing export trade of her highly skilled handi-crafts and products of silks, cotton, spices and others, and they had a steady demand in the market of the world.
With the advent of British rule the economy of India had been steadily impoverished. The British made a deliberate attempt to destroy the indigenous industry, and as a result, the village artisanship began to dwindle down and gradually vanished. Agriculture began to be commercialized with the purpose of exploiting raw materials for the industrial interest of Great Britain. The British also introduced a change in the land tenure system. Previously, the village community had a traditional right to the village land. The celebrated permanent settlement of Cornwallis in 1793, gave rise to a new class of aristocratic landlord or Zamindars, as the spokesmen of British interests. The state courts began to supplement the village panchayat. A money economy gradually replaced the old barter system. In short, the economic exploitation under the British rule altered the old rural scene altogether.

In pre-British era, each village was a complete self-contained unit. Socially and politically, the village with its traditional joint family system and "Four divisions" system managed to maintain a kind of harmony, peace and balance and provided an almost an impregnable bulwark against any change and upheaval. Under the British rule, with the growth of several industrial towns and cities the village ceased to be the autonomous economic unit, and became dependent economically upon the city or
the external world. The millions of ruined artisans, craftsmen, weavers, spinners, potters, found no option but to crowd in the cities for employment or to crowd into agriculture. The pressure on land thus increased greatly and the masses sank into extreme poverty. This in turn, produced a deep feeling of discontent and frustration among the vast multitude of Indian villages and a feeling of distrust and enmity against the British rulers.

The European indigo and tea planters of Bengal, Bihar and Assam provided grist to this feeling in a more direct manner, by following a system of inhuman oppression and tyranny towards the peasants and workers engaged in the business. Dinabandhu Mitra's famous play, Nila Darpan, was written on this theme. By 1860, there was a serious Indigo agitation in Bengal. The tyranny of the planters which became very severe in the fifties of the last century led to several peasant's upsurges on a large scale in the provinces. The cause of the peasantry was espoused by several national minded men and the Press of the time, particularly the Journal, the Hindu Patriot, which wrote powerfully in defence of the peasantry week after week.

1(A)3.3 The role of English education

Western or English education produced several effects in India, some highly beneficial and others of an
opposite character. By 1871, there were 47 Arts Colleges in India out of which 17 were in Bengal. The study of western literature and history and political thought, specially the works of great European thinkers like of Mill, Burke, Herbert Spencer, Rousseau, Voltaire, Thomas Painé, Mazzini, Carlyle, Ruskin and others indirectly led the Indians to a kind of self-introspective thought and helped them to shed their inferiority complex from which they were suffering greatly in those days. It also contributed to the rousing of the Hindus to a sense of the greatness and richness of their religion and culture. The Indians gradually learned to have faith in their country's great past and entertained a vision of her glorious future and with a renewed enthusiasm the minds of Indians started to work for it. Politically, it led to the growth of political consciousness and the demand for the introduction of representative institutions. Regarding the evils of English education system it must be pointed out that it also led to the end of India's traditional educational pattern based on the ideal of 'plain living and high thinking' i.e. the old ashram ideal based on close teacher-students relationship and a strict religious discipline and morality commonly known as the principle of Brahmacharya. The use of English as the medium of educational instruction also produced a small elite class which tried to imitate blindly
everything that was typically western, in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To create such an elite class as the spokesman of English interest was the ulterior aim of Lord Macaulay who put his whole weight on the side of western as against oriental education when the educational policy of the government was being determined.

1(A)4.1 A new pattern of thinking

It is, no doubt, true that this desire of Macaulay was not realised to any great extent, due mainly to the rise of Hindu Renaissance under the inspiring lead of Rammohan Roy, Debendranath Tagore, Swami Dayananda and continued by Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Bose, Gandhi and Rabindranath in later days.

Summing up, the English education brought a great revolution in the ideas and outlook of the educated elite. It provoked in them a spirit of enquiry and self-criticism and showed in their minds an indivisible faith in their own religion and cultural tradition. In short, the administrative, economic and educational impact of the British rule (by the ironic fate of history) only led to the growth of a sense of homogeneity, integrity and unity among Indians and subsequently gave birth to a truly national consciousness or awakening of Indian minds which lay dormant and morbid during the advent of European powers
on the Indian soil. This awakening of the Indian 'Spirit' and mind known as 'Indian Renaissance' led to various social and religious reform movements in succession during this era.

It is undoubtedly a difficult task even to outline a few broad features of these movements that sprang up in close succession by this time. The following pages are confined only to sketching some general outline to indicate the nature of the Indian revival which led to the development of a new pattern of thinking, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when Tagore and Gandhi were born.

1(A)4.2 Raja Rammohon Roy

It began with the coming up of a great philosopher-theologian and social worker, Raja Rammohon Roy (1774-1833) whom Tagore regarded as a great Hindu and his spiritual Guru. Rammohon upheld India's ancient Upanishadic principle of unity underlying everything and every being. He founded the Brahmo Samaj 'the first Hindu Unitarian Church' in 1818. As pointed out by Rabindranath himself, it was not a new religion but was an attempt to revitalize the old Hindu thought based on the new spirit of reform and progress and was in true conformity with the real Hindu tradition.

Rammohon received his early education in a Muslim maklab and acquired proficiency in Arabic and Persian. This
enabled him to read Koran and the famous works of the great Sufi poets like Saddi and Hafiz. At the age of fourteen he came under the influence of the great Sanskrit scholar, Nanda Kumar Vidyalankar, from whom he took his first lesson in Sanskrit and got acquainted with the spiritual knowledge of the Upanishads.

The study of Hindu as well as Islamic scriptures made a deep impression on Rammohon's mind. He was attracted towards monotheism of Vedanta and gradually achieved his religious conviction that religion did not mean in the real sense, only mechanical performance of rituals and ceremonies, or blind faith in dogmas and superstition, but its essence lay in the contemplation of the Brahman or the 'Supreme God'. His attack on idolatory superstition and unnecessary dogmas and rituals and his appeal to return to the original purity of the sublime monotheism of the Vedanta is contained in his book A Gift to the Monotheists (1803). He appealed to his countrymen to rise above all man-made, unnecessary and obsolete practices and dedicate themselves to "the worship and adoration of the Eternal unsearchable and immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe", without distinction of caste and creed. With this ideal in mind he founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1818. In this case it must be said that when he wrote his book or when he began to criticize the evil practices of Sati as pointed out by
J. P. Suda, Rammohon had neither learnt English nor had come under the influence of Western Rationalism and Liberalism. In short, the sources of his religious or spiritual awakening had its root in his study of the Hindu and Muslim scriptures as until his twenty second year Rammohon did not pay his attention to the study of English. In his later days, he also learned Hebrew, Greek and Latin along with English. Besides the unity of God head, Rammohon also believed in the basic unity of mankind. He collected and published the text of the 'Upanishads' and 'Vedanta' in Sanskrit, Bengali and English simultaneously. He repeatedly declared that it was never his intention to break from the ancestral religion. All he wanted and strove for was its restoration to its original purity and sublimity. With this end in view, he founded the Vedanta College in 1826 'for the propagation and defence of Hindu Unitarianism'.

Rammohon won immortal renown by his crusade to free Indian womenhood from the heinous practice of Sati. In short, the work of discovering the spiritual basis of life and then building on it a higher life according to the true spirit of ancient Hindu culture was begun by Raja Ramohon, who is often described by historians as the father of Indian Renaissance.
Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905)

The work of awakening Indian mind and spirit started by Rammohon was continued by Debendranath Tagore after the death of the former. Like Rammohon, Debendranath proclaimed truths having universal significance and he founded the Truth Teaching Society (or the 'Tattwabodhini Sabha') in 1838, whose aim was to popularise the higher and purer Hinduism which to him, was nothing but the philosophy of 'Vedanta'. The Sabha or 'Society' lasted for twenty years and in 1859 it was united with the Brahmo Samaj. Like Rammohon, Debendranath welcomed western ideas so far as they were in conformity with Hindu ideals and encouraged the spirit of inquiry and true knowledge in the minds of Indians. As the leader of Brahmo Samaj, as well as being a man of highly religious discipline and of saintly poise, Debendranath won wide intellectual support and respect from his followers. He also took steps to refute the slanderous attack made on Hinduism by Alexander Duff, a Christian missionary who condemned Hinduism as the most stupendous 'of all the systems of false religion ever fabricated by the perverse ingenuity of fallen men'. In a series of articles under the title "Vedantic Doctrines Vindicated" Debendranath (published in his Tattwabodhini Patrika) gave an effective answer to this vile attack made by the Christian missionary.
Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884)

The founder of the 'Brahmo Samaj of India' (1866), in the beginning of his career was a great follower of Debendranath Tagore. In 1859 he joined Brahmo Samaj under the leadership of Debendranath. But unlike Rammohon and Debendranath, Keshab Chandra was very much impregnated with Christianity and wanted to lead Brahmoism away from Hinduism. Keshab was not willing to view Brahmoism as a branch of Hinduism, to him it was outside Hinduism. Thus, there developed a breach between Debendranath and Keshab which ultimately led to the establishment of the 'Brahmo Samaj of India' in 1866 under Keshab's leadership. However, Debendranath continued to be the head of the old body namely Adi-Brahmo-Samaj. As Keshab Chandra was deeply influenced by Christianity, the Samaj began to work more or less on Christian lines. He was a good orator. During his religious tour in England, Keshab Chandra impressed the British intelligentsia profoundly, by his effective oratory. His famous lectures in England on "Christ and Christianity" on 28th May of 1870 evoked warm appreciation in educated English society. Under the leadership of Keshab Chandra the messages and teachings of Brahmo Samaj became an all-India movement. In other words, he took its message outside Bengal. In 1887, the Prarthana Samaj was established in Bombay by Ranade and Bhandarkar who were great followers of Keshab
Chandra. After Keshab's death, his followers founded the 'Sadharan Brahmo Samaj' in 1876. The name 'Sadharan' (ordinary) symbolizes the transition from the theocratic pattern of the government of the Samaj to a more democratic equalitarian mould.

1(A)4.5 Legacy of the Brahmo Samaj

The Brahmo Samaj was neither a political nor an anti-Hindu movement. It was an attempt to revitalize the decaying Hindu thought in a rationalistic and enlightened way. Its universalism, humanism, its spirit of synthesis of different ideas of the East and the West, its emphasis on the spread of education had far-reaching effects throughout India especially in Bengal and in Maharashtra. It led to a great spiritual and intellectual awakening among the educated class of the two provinces which in turn, produced a host of foremost scholars, patriots and leaders, who played a significant role in India's liberation movement.

1(A)4.6 Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94)

Before passing on to other prominent figures of the Renaissance period, mention may be made of the role played by the Bengal's greater writer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the author of the famous national song Bande Matram. Through his writings he awakened the people of Bengal to the real sense and value of ancient Hindu culture.
He depicted mother India as the symbol of the great spiritual power of Indian people and through his Anandamath, Devi Chandhurani and several other novels, he inspired his countrymen to generate and cultivate their inner-spirit for self-sacrifice, self-discipline and to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the mission of integrating the spirit of Hindu religion with patriotic work. He identified the spirit of religion with patriotism. His inspiring messages led his countrymen to acts of heroic self-sacrifice. The word "Bande Mataram" had a magical effect on the minds of the people of not only Bengal but of the whole of India during the pre-independent era and many youths embraced death on the gallows of the British Raj with the words 'Bande Mataram' in their lips. Bankim Chandra may be regarded as the greatest literary genius of nineteenth century India who integrated the spirit of Hindu religion with Nationalism.

1(A)4.7 Sri Ram Krishna Paramhansa (1836-86)

The Brahmo Samaj failed to impress the common masses of India due to two reasons. First, the movement was confined only to a limited number of educated people of India and its impact was superficial as the movement did not come from within but was imposed from outside. The excessive emphasis on reason proved to be a great stumbling block, as true religion is more a matter of realisation than a matter of rational arguments and discussion.
Secondly, under Keshab Chandra the Brahmo Samaj drifted to an altogether different line, ceasing to remain a reform movement within Hinduism. The Brahmo Samaj in real practice, failed to fulfil the cherished desire of Rammohon and Debendranath to restore Hinduism to its original purity and sublimity and to inspire Hindus to live up to the true teachings of their religion. The task remained to be fulfilled by Ram Krishna and his disciple Swami Vivekananda (1864-1902).

Sri Ram Krishna, whose original name was Gadadhar Chatterjee, was born in 1836 in a village of the Hoogly district of Bengal. From his early childhood, he showed a highly sensitive religious temperament and occasionally fell in a trance. He had no formal education and earthly possession and served as a priest of the temple of Kali at Dakhineswar. It was under Ram Krishna and Vivekananda 'a truly organic and fundamental revival of Hinduism' became possible 'within the general body of Hindu tradition' as pointed out by Dr. Karan Singh in his study on Aurobindo. Sri Ram Krishna's own spiritual experiences taught him that all religious paths if truly followed would lead to the same goal of divinity. Besides Hindu yoga, he personally experimented with the practices of Islam and Christianity and in each case he achieved the similar spiritual experience. His child-like simplicity of mind,
his innocent way of expressing the highest truths underlying every religion attracted to his abode an unending stream of humanity. He brought Hindu religion to the doorsteps of the common people and explained to them in simple words that the Jiva, the individual soul, was no other than 'Siva', the universal soul, that every creature was God Himself in a particular garb of name and form. He explained how audacious it is to think of showering mercy on Jiva, who is none other than Siva. One has to regard the creature as God Himself and proceed to serve it with a devout heart instead of taking up the pose of doling out mercy. Undoubtedly, this is the eternal truth that has been proclaimed by Hindu religion throughout the ages. So long, this teaching was confined only to Sanskrit religious scriptures and interpreted only by a limited group of intellectuals well versed in Sanskrit language. Ram Krishna's teachings were based on his personal spiritual experiences and realisation and had no support of the bookish knowledge. In short, to Ram Krishna the conviction that God was in every being and everything and all religions are branches of the same tree was not an intellectual proposition or an inherited dogma but a thing tested by his own actual spiritual experiences. To him, real religion was more a matter of self-realisation (i.e. of direct vision, insight and perception of 'God') than of
intellectual knowledge and discussions. To him, the heart of a person who has realised 'God' overflowed with love for all and has hatred and malice for none. His heart overflows with kindness and sympathy for every being. This truth, which had been greatly deemed during the period, was again upheld by Ram Krishna in a simple way and in simple words. An indivisible faith in God and supreme self-surrender to Him, was recognised by Ram Krishna, to be the key of happiness and joy in life. The great service done by Sri Ram Krishna to Hinduism lay in demonstrating in his own life that the old spiritual tradition was still alive, that it was possible for a human being to realise oneness with God. He did not concern himself with theological discussions and interpretation of scriptural passages, but made religion into a practical affair, pointed out by Suda in his study of the great saint. In short, Ram Krishna being an illiterate poor Brahmin used common sense and his personal spiritual experiences to be the sole guide for reaching the highest 'Truth' or 'God'. He introduced religion into day to day life of common people, and proved that reason often failed to reveal the splendour of God. A God-fearing man is a threat to no-body but a friend of all. Realisation of 'God' to be taken the supreme goal of life on earth. Thus personal purity, integrity and honesty to be counted the supreme values of
life. An unclean heart fails to receive the rays of the 'Supreme light' or 'God'. Personal morality was counted to be the basic foundation of group morality and fountain of spiritual strength and courage of mind as interpreted by Vivekananda, the great disciple of Ram Krishna.

1(A) 4.8 Swami Vivekananda or Narendranath Datta

Narendranath Datta was born in 1863. He received full western education through his school and college. Armed with profound knowledge of Mill, Spencer and other European thinkers, he went to meet Ram Krishna and challenged him to prove the existence of God. Ram Krishna's overwhelming spiritual influences on Narendranath changed his life, he helped him to attain to the pinnacle of religious experience, namely, 'God-realisation'. Vivekananda became the great champion of the teachings of Vedanta and conveyed its messages to the Western World. His famous speeches at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 won him world-wide appreciation and praise and he was recognised to be the true spokesman of India's religious tradition. His speeches revolved round two main points (i) religion and religion alone constitutes the backbone of the life of the Indian people. Self-realisation or realisation of 'God' became the 'sadhana' of Indian people throughout the ages and Vivekananda appealed to the youths of India to rely more on their own 'spiritual strength'
than on Western ideas in building up new India. He observed, "We must grow according to our nature. Vain is to attempt the lines of action that foreign societies have engrafted upon us . . . glory unto God; that it is impossible, that we cannot be twisted and tortured into the shape of other nations". He explained, addressing the youths of his mother country, "Suppose you can imitate the West that moment you will die, you will have no more life". He encouraged them thus, "Thou brave one, be bold, take courage be proud that thou art an Indian". (ii) He glorified his master's teaching that Jiva is an indivisible part of the Supreme Being and therefore service of man is the highest way of worshipping God. Ram Krishna's teachings had an unparalled significance to him. It supplied the rationale underlying the concept of equality, the dignity of individual soul and sympathy for the suffering humanity. He appealed to his countrymen to reassure their faith in the holy truth proclaimed by Vedanta and in the teachings of Ram Krishna and accordingly work with utmost courage and sympathy for the 'fallen and downtrodden' Indians. Like his master, Vivekananda wanted to relieve Hinduism from unnecessary code of rituals and ceremonies and make it a religion of common people based on the reason of mind (common-sense) and zeal of holiness and personal illumination of mind.

Thus "spiritualism" or 'realisation of God in man'
was identified as the highest moral truth by Vivekananda, who insisted that without building up a true 'national character' no improvement in the organic structure of the nation was possible. It was the decline of the character that was responsible for the fall of a nation. Without creating brave, healthy, moral, sympathetic individuals, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with spiritual strength and unshakeable faith in God and with a mind full of sympathy for the destitute, no real progress of India was possible - believed Vivekananda. For propagating the message of Ram Krishna and awakening Indian youths to the significance of the spiritual and cultural heritage of India, Vivekananda with the help of his brother-disciples established Ram Krishna Mission in 1899 with headquarter at Belur and the famous Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati near Almora in 1899. These are the most active spiritual and social service institutions in the country. Thus action, not thought, was regarded by Vivekananda as the vital need of the time and people. This spirit of service imbued with a strong sense of self-help and self-confidence later became the cornerstone of Gandhian philosophy. In this context it may be added that Vivekananda's influence was primarily limited to Bengal only in those days.

1(A)4.9 Swami Dayananda (1824-83)

The founder of Arya Samaj (1875) was a profound
Vedic Scholar whom Rabindranath described as "a great path-maker in modern India" also played a vital role in reviving the Hindu society and Hindu religion in the late nineteenth century. He tried to re-establish Vedic culture and philosophy in idealising the importance of Satya and dharma. He insisted that the world of God was for all, irrespective of caste, creed and colour and condemned idol-worshiping, caste system, untouchability and other socio-religious malpractices as non-Hindu in spirit. The Arya Samaj which he founded aims at the formation of a new national character on the basis of Vedic ideal. Like other Renaissance thinkers, Dayananda wanted to bring a revolutionary change in the conservative thinking of Hindu masses, and to make them conscious of the real values and spiritual truths of their ancient religious Sastras, particularly, of the Vedas. He was an advocate of the Vedic 'Varnashrama Dharma' but bitterly condemned the inequities associated with the caste-system in real practice. Like Vivekananda, Dayananda believed that spirituality governed every sphere of human activity and also could save India and the world. The only way to secure the future of mankind is to make him aware of his essential divinity and ensure that it manifests itself in every sphere of activities of his life. Like Vivekananda, he was against unreasonable superstitions, orthodoxy, caste system or untouchability. Like the former, he defended reason and truth at any cost.
Like Vivekananda, he believed that action to be successful, needed an ideal and spiritual strength. The cause of India's moral and social stagnation was, as Dayananda wrote, in his *Satyarthaprakasha*, due to mutual feud, difference in religion, want of purity of life, untruthfulness and other evil habits, the neglect of the study of Veda and other malpractices. Consequently, like Vivekananda, Dayananda considered purity of character as an indispensable basis of social and national regeneration and emancipation. Dayananda's teachings brought a revolutionary change in the mind of Hindus in Punjab as well as in northern India. It evoked, by and large, a kind of religious nationalism and a sense of unity and solidarity among them. He upheld the superiority of Divine Law over man-made political laws and considered moral authority the supreme backbone of all forms of political authority. He would reject any political authority and law that was not in conformity with the highest standards of Divine Law. He proclaimed, "Let all understand we are the subject to the Lord of the Universe - the king of kings. He is the true king and we are all His Humble servants; may we in this world, through His mercy, be privileged to occupy kingly and other high offices and may He make us the means of advancing His Eternal Justice."37

Like Vivekananda, Dayananda infused a new faith, initiative, sense of moral and social responsibility and a
spirit of self-confidence in the Hindu people of his time. It is interesting to note that some critics regard him as a protagonist of Hindu solidarity and also possibly an opponent of Muslim and Christian faiths. A serious reader of Dayananda would find that although his teachings and enthusiasm contributed to the strengthening the cause of Hindu solidarity, he himself in real sense did not think in terms of Hindu solidarity which would oppose the interests of other communities in India.

l(A)4.10 The Theosophical Society

A sketch of the history of the nineteenth century Spiritual Renaissance remains incomplete, without a reference to another religious movement, that started abroad, namely the Theosophical Society. The society was founded in New York in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steele Olcott. It was under the leadership of a talented Irish lady Mrs. Annie Besant (1843-1933), the society made a memorable contribution towards reviving in English educated Hindus, faith in their ancient religion and literature. She came to India in 1893, made India her home, loved her religion and people, wore Hindu dress, adopted Hindu way of life and worked for the people for forty years and died at Adyar in 1933. Her defence of Hinduism was deeply rooted in her intense love for the religion and its scriptures and tradition. Unlike other Renaissance thinkers, she
accepted Hinduism with all its rites practices - its philosophy, its ethics and everything. She defended idol worship, Shraddha (giving oblation to the spirits of the dead ancestors), doctrines of 'Karma and Reincarnation', Yoga, Devas and Avatars and others and repeatedly pleaded for a proper understanding of them.

She established the Central Hindu College at Benaras which became the nucleus of the Benaras Hindu University when it was founded by Pandit Malvayiya. Under Besant's initiative a great many religious Sanskrit works had been translated into English. She popularized the concept of Home-Rule for India and believed that India had a spiritual mission of her own which she should carry over to the lands across the sea i.e. to the European countries. Her English translation of the Bhagavadgita as well as famous Hints on the Study of the Bhagavadgita are testimonials of her ardent faith in Hindu philosophy. She pleaded for religious basis of morality and religious education.

She repudiated the Western concept of nationalism which to her was nothing but capitalism. To her, nation was a spiritual entity with a deep inner life. She had an inner perception of India's spiritual heritage and a vision of her glorious future. She stood for common friendship between India and England. In short, Dr. Besant's
contribution towards the revival of Hinduism. Her unquestionable support to all elements of Hinduism helped the English educated Hindus to renew their faith in their religion. The English educated youth who saw nothing but evil in everything Hindu and good in everything foreign, found new meaning in their religious truths from the teachings of Dr. Besant, who appeared on the Indian scene, at the right moment of history.

1(A)5.1 The peculiar features of the Indian Renaissance

It must be admitted, that the principles followed and teachings propagated by the different exponents of Hindu revivalism were not identical. There were, for example, wide divergences between the ideals of Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, between Dayananda and Dr. Besant, but all of them were exponents of the cardinal tenets of Hindu spirituality and ethics. They did not advocate or suggest any radical change on modern socialist line, in the Hindu social structure and defended strongly the spiritual and moral values underlying the religion. They wanted to revive the old scriptures and someone offered a scientific interpretation of their teachings. Although many of them recognised the devastating consequences of traditional caste system, no one among the thinkers would plead for a radically equalitarian casteless society. A romantic longing for the spirit of the past is the dominant principle of the
exponent of Hindu revivalism. They insisted that the political and economic and social reform of the country should be in close conformity with the spiritual tradition of her people. The economic and political implication of their teachings was the assertion of non-interventionism. The concept of state interference in social and economic life was quite unfamiliar to their ideals. Instead, they wanted to infuse the spirit of 'religion' or 'spiritual values' to the future programmes of reform. In short, they insisted that Indians should not imitate the West but follow her own spiritual way of solving her political, economic and social problems in future.

1(A)5.2 Difference between Indian Renaissance and European Renaissance

The Renaissance in Europe was mainly intellectual and less religious or secular in character. As pointed out by V. P. Varma, Renaissance in Europe gave "to man a new consciousness of dynamic power in place of the humble reliance on the grade of God". While the Middle Ages were burdened with the doctrine of original sin, the European Renaissance raised man to a higher status and dignity. Henceforward, in Europe, one notices the beginning of a new scientific approach to the problem of cosmology. "But the renaissance in India was characterised primarily by moral and spiritual aspirations"38.
Summing up, the main service rendered by the Renaissance thinkers of India lay in helping the Indians to shed their inferiority complex from which they were greatly suffering in those days and in rousing the Hindus to a sense of the greatness of their religion and spiritual tradition. All of the thinkers had an inner perception of India's great spiritual past and a vision of a glorious future, they infused enthusiasm in the minds of Indians to work for it.

This spirit of enthusiasm for reform and improvement started by Ram Mohun was still in full swing when Rabindranath and Gandhi were born in the latter part of nineteenth century. As one knows from the Autobiography of Gandhi, this zeal for reform led him to start meat-eating with his elder brother and his friends secretly. Gandhi has narrated his experience of the first day of meat-eating thus, "So the day came. It is difficult to describe my condition. There were, on the one hand, the zeal for reform and the novelty of making a moment's departure in life. There was, on the other, the shame of hiding like a thief to do this very thing". Gandhi as a child believed as he wrote that "if the whole country took to meat-eating, the English could be overcome" as meat-eating enables a man to be strong and daring. Or

*The underline has been given to emphasise the words.
in other words, to become physically and mentally strong enough to fight out the English from India became the motto of the day. After the failure of the revolt of 1857, as pointed out by Dr. Karan Singh in his study on Aurobindo, Indians could realise that in order to drive out the British the "other methods based on a regeneration of the Indian spirit itself" would be required in the long run.

Rabindranath also mentioned the spirit of reform in describing the age in which he was born. He wrote, "I was born in 1861. That is not an important date of history, but it belongs to a great epoch in Bengal, when the currents of three movements had met in the life of our country. One of these, the religious movement, was introduced by a very great-hearted man of gigantic intelligence, Raja Rammohon Roy. Rabindranath described the movement as 'revolutionary' as Rammohon tried to reopen the 'channel of spiritual life' which had been obstructed by several rituals and "practices lacking spiritual significance." Rabindranath acknowledged that he was influenced by the spirit of his age, "I was born and brought up in an atmosphere of the confluence of three movements, all of which were revolutionary."

*The underline has been given to emphasise the words.*
In short, if every man is the child of his time, then Rabindranath and Gandhi were no exceptions. They were the two noble products of their age, commonly known in Indian history, as the nineteenth century Spiritual Renaissance period.

Both Rabindranath and Gandhi were nursed in the traditions bequeathed by Raja Rammohon Roy. They had the great humanitarian ideals before them released by Prahasma Ram Krishna based on his personal spiritual experiences, they had the political ideals enunciated by the unsuccessful revolt of 1857, the image of mother India as a symbol of 'spiritual force' of Indian people glorified by the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and the ideas of patriotism, liberty, democracy and the current of European political thought which, by and large, formed their intellectual diet coupled with the increasing repressionary policy followed by the English ruler towards Indian people after the revolt of 1857 and all these and similar factors, only led to a better appreciation, by the thinkers, of their rich spiritual heritage and an increasing faith in the efficacy of Indian ways (with deep metaphysical implications) of solving her social, economic and political problems. This age is described by Rabindranath as the age of 'aspirations', the entire stress of which lies not in achieving only intellectual information and knowledge but in the ideal of
growing from within spiritually, a life of transformation from ego-centric nature, to a more complete universal man. Both to Tagore and Gandhi the ethical and inner discipline of man was much more important than his intellectual and academic attainment. Without the former, the latter has no meaning. Both Rabindranath and Gandhi believed that there were subjects where reason could not take man far and things had to be accepted on faith. Their attitude was, by and large, something Supra-rational. This, however, does not mean a total rejection of the intellect. It simply means going beyond reason. As Gandhi observed, "Faith then does not contradict reason, but transcends it. Faith is a kind of sixth sense, which works in cases which are without purview of reason."\(^4^5\)

Rabindranath like Gandhi, felt that reason had limitations in describing things that transcend it. In defining his religion Rabindranath wrote, "All that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge."\(^4^6\). He added that he could not satisfactorily answer questions about the problems of evil or what happened after death. "And yet I am sure that there have come moments when my soul has touched the infinite and has become intensely conscious of it through the illumination of joy."\(^4^6\) Rabindranath added,

*The underline has been given to emphasise the words.*

\(^{3520}\)
that mere information of facts, mere discovery of power belongs to the outside world and not to the inner soul. 47

Like most of the Renaissance thinkers, Rabindranath and Gandhi represented the sentiment of 'revivalism' and advocated moulding of Indian life on the ideals and truth of the past scriptures like the Vedas, the Upanishadas, the Gita and the Puranas. On the other hand, as pointed out by V. P. Varma, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Europe, the stress was not in the revivalistic resumption of substantive body of conclusion arrived by Plato, Aristotle or Cicero but on the incorporation of free unhindered intellectual enquiry of the Hellenic Spirit. 48

Or in other words, unlike the Renaissance thinkers of Europe, Rabindranath and Gandhi as the true spokesmen of their age, uphold the ideal of 'spiritualization' of India's social, economic and political thoughts and actions. This sentiment of 'spiritualization' or 'revivalism' as already been discussed was generated as a reaction against the great challenge thrown by an alien, arrogant and materialistic civilization which was politically dominant and economically powerful.

In conclusion, it may be pointed out that the present chapter deals primarily with the revival among Hindus only, as the reference of Muslim upheaval is irrelevant to the purpose of the study. Similarly, any study of Aurobindo,
Bipin Chandra Pal, Tilak and other revolutionary thinkers has been purposefully avoided.

The Spiritual Renaissance, in later days, assumed a political revolutionary tinct. In Maharashtra, a new 'Swarajyya' cult developed, in idealizing old Sivaji tradition of heroism and patriotism. In Bengal, it developed on the traditional mystic 'Sakti' or 'Kali' cult. The underlying spirit of the trend was 'revolution' both from within and outside, and for this purpose cultivation of 'power' and 'physical force' was overemphasized and glorified. But Gandhi and Tagore in their thoughts and ideals did not belong to these groups.

As the true representatives of the Spiritual Renaissance period, both Gandhi and Rabindranath stood for the regeneration of Indian mind from within in close conformity with her traditional spirit of 'dharma' or 'religion'. This process of growth is undoubtedly slow but surely permanent, progressive and peaceful as the thinkers believed it to be. Like most of thinkers of Renaissance period, Rabindranath and Gandhi, had an indivisible faith in 'God' which they inherited from the spirit of their age as well as from the rich religious traditions of their respective families.

In addition to it, the varied experiences of their
personal lives, their personal acquaintances with the richest thoughts of the Eastern and Western world, their personal readings of the innumerable books and other source materials of true knowledge and above all their own sensitive and receptive minds ready to admire and communicate with the best and highest in everything and every being contributed largely to the strengthening of the religious bent of their minds.
REFERENCES I(A)


6. This point has been elaborately discussed in Chapter II of this thesis which deals with the religious thoughts of Gandhi and Tagore.


10. This point has been widely discussed in Chapter II of this thesis.


12. In this context, it must be clearly stated that the scholar got an identical definition of the term 'spirituality' or 'religion' from her readings on Gandhi and Tagore. In this case, she had been least influenced by the writings of J. P. Suda, as she got that book at the last stage of writing her thesis.


21. Ibid.

22. *Modern Indian Political Thought*, p. 413.

23. In this context it must be pointed out that Nehru was not a pure materialistic thinker as he recognised also the role of mind (not God or 'super power') in determining the history of man. Commenting on Marx and Lenin, Nehru wrote, "I realized that the moral approach to a changing one and depends upon the growing mind and an advancing civilization, it is conditioned by the mental climate of the age. Yet there was something more to it than that, certain basic urges which had greater permanence. I did not like the frequent divorce in communism, as in other, practice between action and these basic urges or principles." *The Discovery of India*, pp. 13-14.


25. The Black Acts were intended to establish the equality of 'white' and 'black' people before the law, which drew frenzied opposition from the Europeans. The controversy brought into focus the humiliating and subordinating position of 'black' Indians vis a vis to their 'white' masters.


In this book the author points out that in his early youth Ram Mohan got a heavy mental shock when his elder brother died, and his wife sacrificed her life on the pyre of her dead husband. From this time on he began to crusade against the inhuman custom.

A serious reader may consult (a) The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda in 8 vols., published by the Advaita Ashrama, Almora, and (b) The Life of Swami Vivekananda 2 vols. by his Eastern and Western disciples, Advaita Ashrama, Almora, 1933.

Among the three revolutions mentioned by Rabindranath the other two were (i) 'literacy' started by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and (ii) The Great Revolt of 1857.


47. Ibid.

48. V. P. Varma, Modern Indian Political Thought, p.5.
APPENDIX I(A)

Vivekananda: Meaning of Spirituality

"I am no politician or political agitator. I care only for the spirit".


"To advance towards freedom, physical, mental and spiritual, and help others to do so is the supreme prize of man. Those social rules which stand in the way of unfoldment of this freedom are injurious and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily".

_Ibid._, p.753.

"The essence of my religion is strength (soul force). The religion that does not infuse strength into the heart, is no religion to me, be it the Upanishads, the Gita or the Bhagvatam".

_Ibid._, p.699.

"Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian and proudly proclaim, 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother. Say 'the ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahman Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother. Thou too clad with but a
rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice, 'The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's Gods and Goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age ".

The Life of Swami Vivekananda.

Rabindranath on Swami Dayananda

"... Swami Dayananda, the great path-maker in modern India, who through bewildering tangels of creeds and practices - the dense undergrowth of the degenerate days of our country - cleared a straight path that was meant to lead the Hindus to a simple and rational life of devotion to God and service for man. With a clear sighted vision of truth and courage of determination, he preached and worked for our self-respect and awakement of mind that could strive for a harmonious adjustment with the progressive spirit of the modern age and at the same time keep in perfect touch with that glorious past of India when it revealed its personality in freedom of thought and action, in an unclouded radiance of spiritual realisation".

Dayanand Commemoration Volume, Ajmir, 1933, p.2.

Swami Dayananda on the Superiority of Divine Law

"Let all understand, we are the subjects to the Lord of the Universe - the king of kings. He is true king and we are all His humble servants. May we in the world,
through His mercy, be privileged to occupy kingly and high offices and may He make us the means of advancing His eternal justice".


**Aurobindo**

"The passionate aspiration of man upward to the Divine has not been sufficiently related to the descending movement of the Divine leaning downward to embrace eternally its manifestation . . . . in our complete affirmation we must not minimize the part of the pure spiritual impulse".


"Our leaders and our followers both require a deeper sadhana, a more direct communion with the Divine Guru and Captain of our movement, an inward uplifting, a grander and more impetuous force behind thought and deed. It has been driven home to us by experience after experience, that not in the strength of a raw unmoralized European enthusiasm shall we conquer. Indians, it is the spirituality of India, the sadhana of India, *tapasya, jnanam, sakti* that must make us free and great. All these great things of the East are ill-rendered by their inferior English equivalents - discipline, philosophy and strength. *Tapasya* is more than discipline, it is materialization in
ourselves by spiritual means of the divine energy creative, preservative, and destructive. Jnanam is more than philosophy, it is inspired and direct knowledge which comes of what our ancients called dristi, spiritual sight. Shakti is more than strength, it is universal energy which moves the stars, made individuals. It is the East that must conquer in India's uprising".

CHAPTER I (B)

THE THINKER'S FAMILY BACKGROUND AND OTHER INFLUENCES

1(B)1 Rabindranath

The Tagore family is reckoned among Calcutta's oldest and most respected families of long standing. Originally they were Radheya Brahmins of the Shandilya Clan from Kanauj with the surname Bondyopadhyya. At one time they were known in the Brahmin community as Pirali (from the Persian 'Pir Ali') Brahmins. It was believed that during their official duties during Muslim rule, in the seventeenth century, they might have eaten and drunk with the Muslims. With this fact in mind the conservative Brahmins avoided all kind of social inter-relation with them and the customs exist even today.

Rabindranath's grand-father Dwarkanath succeeded in amassing great fortune and wealth and was called as 'Prince'. He was consulted by the government upon practically all questions of public welfare and he lent his personal and financial support to every important work of public benefit. He visited England and Europe twice in his life and was received warmly by the head of the states and dignataries and eminent figures of the countries of his visit. He died in London in 1846. However, during the closing years of Dwarkanath's life, his business suffered tremendous loss.
Debendranath, the elder son of Dwarkanath and the father of Rabindranath, had to inherit the great financial burden when he became the head of the family after his father's death. He was advised by his legal aides to avoid the burden by unscrupulous means, but Debendranath faced the creditors with utmost honesty and dignity of mind and promised them to pay off the last pie of their debt. Not only he succeeded in repaying the money to the creditors but even paid back with interest - his father's promised contributions to various institutions. As we know from the writings of Rabindranath, Debendranath was a man of deep religious virtues and discipline, often passing his time in profound religious meditation, had little attractions for earthly belongings. He lived almost entirely by himself, thinking and communicating with 'God' only, often undertook long religious tours and was rarely found at home. Not without reason, he was called "Maharshi" or the 'Great Saint'. After Rammohon's death, as a great follower of him, he became the head of the Brahmo Samaj. As a man of strict religious discipline, a man of profound religious learnings with his deep devotion to truth, purity of mind and heart, he left an abiding impression upon the formative mind of young Rabindranath as one knows from the writings of the poet on his father, as well from the works of many of the biographers of Rabindranath. Debendranath taught
his children the virtues of 'simple living and high thinking', encouraged them to love and adore 'truth' and 'God' at any cost, infused in them a sense of strict religious discipline and rules. Under the kind guidance of Debendranath, the children used to recite hymns from the Upanishadas, attended the daily prayers during morning and evening time. Rabindranath wrote in his preface to Sadhana published in 1913, "The writer has been brought up in a family where text of the Upanishadas are used in daily worship, and he has had before him the example of his father, who lived his long life in the closest communion with God, while not neglecting his duties to the world".

Rabindranath lost his mother in his early youth and the poet, as one known from his writings, failed to recall the memories even of his mother's death in detail. So it were the father's influences and memories that one notices often mentioned by the poet in his many writings.

Although, Tagore was born in a rich and affluent family he and his brothers were brought up in a simple inexpensive atmosphere common to every middle class family of the time. The children ate simple food, dressed in simple clothes and taught to be satisfied with limited articles. The poet wrote, "Our food was the plainest. Our clothes' list would make a modern child turn up his nose. Till our tenth year was over, we wore no socks or boots
on any account whatsoever. On cold days we merely hitched one more cotton jacket over our underwear. With all these we never felt ourselves neglected”⁷. Undoubtedly, this spirit of simple living was infused by Debendranath in Tagore’s family which was unknown in Prince Dwarkanath’s time. "Dwarkanath lived lavishly and entertained regally”⁸ was mentioned by Krishna Kripalani*. He was not without reason called 'Prince' who was not only lavish and extravagant in spending and entertaining guests but loved to display his wealth and splendour before foreigners and guests who usually used to come from the top of the then ruling hierarchy and society of Calcutta.

Although brought up in circumstances of increasing luxury and pomp which reached their peak when Debendranath attained his youth, he had little attraction for earthly comforts and possessions, and used to spend his time in reading the Upanishada and meditating on ‘God’ and ‘Truth’. As written by Krishna Kripalani, "While the son Debendranath, God-intoxicated was laying the foundations of a reformed Church, the father continued to dazzle his countrymen with his ostentatious ways"⁹. It was at this time, Dwarkanath gave a grand ball in honour of Miss Eden, the sister of the

*Krishna Kripalani married Nandita, the grand-daughter of Rabindranath.
Governer-General, Lord Auckland, "the extravagant splendour of the event was for long talk of the town".10

Thus it was under the influence of his deep religious minded father, Rabindranath learned to develop a true religious approach to life and mind. As one knows from Rabindranath's writings, Debendranath had never stood in the way of his children's independence and guided them to recognise, accept and love truth by themselves. Rabindranath wrote, "Until I should myself develop the critical faculty to decide that a particular thing was improper, he (father) preferred to remain silent". Nor did he like that his children should blindly accept anything as right and fitting. "He held that only when we were convinced of the truth, should we put our trust in it and bestow our regard upon it", wrote Rabindranath about his father.11 But what left the deepest and most abiding impression on the boy's sensibilities, was the father's chanting, every morning, of the rich and beautiful verses of the Upanishads. Rabindranath recalled seeing Debendranath sometimes in half-sleep, softly passing by his bed, wrapped in a red shawl, with a lamp in his hand, on his way to Veranda where he sat in his meditation, "at what hour I could not make out", wrote Rabindranath. Before the Sun rose, Maharshi woke up boy Rabindranath and practised with him Sanskrit declensions. A rich spiritual atmosphere would be generated as the father
recited the verses in dignified rhythm and the boy, sitting by, intoning with him, felt himself lost in it. Debendranath also helped the poet in studying Sanskrit grammar, astronomy, and selected pieces of Sanskrit, Bengali and English literature during the day. In the evening, when the two of them sat in the veranda, the boy Rabindranath would sing to the father the devotional hymns so dear to the Maharshi, and the latter with bowed head and folded hands lost himself in deep contemplation*12. In short, from early boyhood, Rabindranath inherited from his saintly father a deep faith in the existence of a deeper spiritual meaning, an yearning for experiencing an endless delight in communicating with 'God' or the 'Infinite' or 'Brahma' which is pervading the world of nature and men. As one knows from Rabindranath's writings, these instinctive delights that he experienced in childhood, became for him a life-long spiritual treasure. Later in life, this yearning was transmuted into an yearning for realisation of self, which was nothing else but the unknown and the beyond to the poet.

Reading and recitation of, among other things, the Ramayana of Valmiki in the original Sanskrit, of Kalidasa's

*This picture of the father and son painted by Gaganendranath Tagore in his magic color and charm, can be found in Rabindra Rachanavali Vol. XVII p.318.
Sakuntala served only to sharpen his yearning for communicating with 'Brahma' or the 'Infinite'. When the poet was only eighteen, he was suddenly seized by an intense spiritual elation which awakened his mind with a joy unfelt before. The poet recorded this memory in vivid details in his writings. Thus in early childhood, Rabindranath drew his spiritual inspirations from the most robust and intellectual mind of his father who, as described by Krishna Kripalani, was a man 'God-intoxicated', or whom Prince Dwarkanath used to call as a man knowing nothing but "Brahma Bhrama the whole day".

1(B)2 Family background of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Gandhi wrote in his Autobiography, "The Gandhis belong to the Bania caste and seem to have been originally grocers. But for three generations, from my grand-father they have been Prime Ministers in several Kathiawad States."

As we know from Mohandas' writings, his father Kaba Gandhi was a member of the 'Rajasthani Court,' served for some time as a Prime Minister in Rajkot and then in Vankaner. He was a pensioner of the Rajkot State when he died. Kaba Gandhi was a lover of his clan, truthful, brave and generous. He was incorruptible, earned a name for strict impartiality in his family as well as outside. Mohandas wrote about his father, "My father never had any
ambition to accumulate riches and left us very little property. His father had a great religious toleration and although known as a conservative Vaishnav, he often used to visit and take his children to the 'Haveli' as well as to the temples of 'Shiva' and 'Rama'. Kaba Gandhi had friends from different communities. He had many Muslim and Parsi friends who often used to come to visit him and to discuss about their own faiths with him. Mohandas' father used to listen to all these discussions with profound interest and respect. Gandhi recorded, "I often had a chance to be present at these talks. These many things combined to inculcate in me a toleration for all faiths."

But it was the 'saintliness' of his mother, that left a permanent influence on the growing mind of young Mohandas as he himself acknowledged it in his Autobiography, "The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious. Many of the biographers of Gandhi have focussed light on this aspect of Gandhi's early life. Pyarelal has written in his study on Mahatma Gandhi, "He (Gandhi) revered his father, but his mother he adored ... His father to him was embodiment of uprightness, his mother of piety ... His mother became the core of his inner being. Her affection forged bonds that continued to protect and influence him even when physically she was away and even ceased to be."
The other incident which captured Gandhi's young imaginative mind was the play of Harishchandra which he had the chance to witness on getting his father's permission. Kind Harishchandra's 'truthfulness' and saintly character impressed him, whom he tried to imitate throughout his whole life. Gandhi wrote recalling the memory of his childhood, "Still both Harishchandra and Shravana are living realities for me, and I am sure I should be moved as before if I were to read those plays again today". Thus from early boyhood, Gandhi's young mind was experiencing a kind of spiritual bewilderment and groping which led him to try to read and understand Manusmriti which was amongst his father's collection. When young Mohandas asked one of his elders to explain some points, the superior answered him, "These questions ought not to be raised at your age". At this, Gandhi wrote that he was silenced but was not comforted.

But one thing took deep in him - the conviction that morality was the basis of things, and the truth is the substance of all morality. Truth became his sole objective. Gandhi wrote that, "It (Truth) began to grow in magnitude every day, and my definition of it also has been ever widening".

Thus like young Rabindranath, Gandhi had enjoyed the freedom of experimenting with 'Truth' by himself and in that
case the role of his parents is no less negligible than that of Rabindranath's parents had on the poet. In fact, the true, honest, vigilant everdisciplined personality of Kaba Gandhi coupled with a liberal mind and an affectionate heart ultimately led Mohandas to confess voluntarily his sin of meat-eating before him, when he was sick and confined to bed. Mohandas has narrated the incident as follows: "He (Father) read it (the paper of confession) through the pearl drops trickled down his cheeks wetting the paper". For a moment his father closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note. He had sat up to read it. He again lay down. "Those pearl drops of love cleansed my heart and washed my sin away," added Gandhi. Gandhi also explained that this sort of "sublime forgiveness" was to him an object lesson in Ahimsa.

Speaking in a summary manner, if human life is, by and large, moulded according to the peculiarities of his individual family tradition or if human life is synoptical recapitulation of his family environment, and the forces of his time, then to trace the growth of the two great souls like Rabindranath and Gandhi one has to attach more value to the environment and influences of their families and the time in which they were born and brought up. Nihar Ranjan Ray wrote, "Tagore could not be anything else but what he came to be. Sociologically speaking, he was a
product of history, and of the social environment in which he found himself.  

If that was true of Rabindranath, the same was also true of Gandhi who was only seven years younger than the poet by birth and who was born like Rabindranath, with an inward looking contemplative, quiet, somewhat withdrawn, lonely in mind and bearing and intensely personal in his reactions and responses, caring more for inner life of man than for his material externals.

Other sources of influence

Along with their rich, religious family environments and cultural background in which the thinkers grew up, their personal reading of various books on religion, philosophy, art, literature and science also contributed to the sharpening of their intellectual talents and creative thinking.

Both Gandhi and Tagore were not only prolific writers but were voracious readers. Both of the thinkers were deeply influenced by the teachings of the Veda, the 'Upanishads', the 'Gita' and other religious literature. Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism as well as the teachings of the great liberal thinkers of medieval India like Kabir, Nanak and others also influenced them. Both Tagore and
Gandhi gave their adoration to all those who had despised sectarianism and accepted man as the symbol of 'God' to love and serve.

Gandhi who was a 'Vaishnav' by birth, developed his gospel of 'ahimsa' as the spirit of his religion. Rabindranath himself acknowledged that he was deeply influenced by "Vaishnava's" ideal of love and this influence is discernible in Tagore's attempt of writing poetry after the pseudo-name Vanusingha. Very early in life, Rabindranath made a careful study of *Upanishads* under the kind and intellectual guidance of his father and his own spiritual career, his *Sadhana* had found in them inspirations and sustenance. As pointed out by Pandit Kshitimohon Sen, Rabindranath's faith in *Upanishads* finds its reflections in his *Naivedya, Gitanzali, Gitmalye* and *Gitali*.27

The influences of the *Upanishads* on Gandhi's life is also worthy of study. Gandhi read Max Muller's translation of the *Upanishads* for the first time somewhat in 1894-98 in South Africa. When he was in Petoria jail in 1909, he read the *Upanishads*, Patanzali's *Yoga Darsan*, the *Gita*, the *Bible* and some thirty books of some of the best authors - Tolstoy, Carlyle and others.28 While in Yarvada Jail, he read about 150 books on different subjects including religion.29 It was here he learnt the *Isopanishad* by heart.30 It remained his constant source of
inspiration and Gandhi loved to quote often its first verse. Recitation of some of the verses of the Upanishads was part of his daily prayers. Some thirty three excerpts under the heading, 'Upanishad Smaranam' had been included in Ashram Bhojanavali (a booklet of prayers and songs which were recited in his Ashram). Gandhi commented, "If only the first verse in the Isopanishad were left intact in the memories of Hindus, Hinduism would have lived for ever".31

Commenting on the influences of the Upanishads on him, Rabindranath himself wrote, "To me the verses of the Upanishads and the teachings of Budha ever have been things of the spirit and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth. I have used them both in my own life and preachings".32

The Gita to Gandhi was "key to the scriptures of the world".33 He described the 'Gita' as his 'mother', "my Kamdhenu my guide, my open sesame".34 The Gita's ideal of Karma Yoga was a constant source of inspiration to his life. Gandhi idealized its ideal of renunciation of the fruit of action and found therein the gospel of love and dedicated service to others. He gave an allegorical interpretation to the Gita. The battle of Kurukshtetra is a spiritual fight that is going on every day in the mind of man between his ego-centric impulses and higher impulses, between good and evil. He observed, "The Gita distinguished
between the power of light and darkness and demonstrates their incompatibility.\textsuperscript{35}

Although Tagore's voluminous writings do not contain more than half a dozen references to the 'Gita', he regarded it undoubtedly one of the basic books of Indian life and thought, a most potential and vital source of knowledge and wisdom. In his famous study entitled \textit{A Vision of Indian History}, he interpreted the war of 'Kurukshetra' as a struggle between two ideals i.e. the cult of ritualism supported by the Brahmins and the religion of love and freedom of mind as propagated by the Kshatriya clan. "The ideal which was supported by the Kshatriya, opponents of the priesthood is represented by the Bhagavad Gita.\textsuperscript{36} In the words of Tagore, it was the "ideal with its freedom and courage of intellect and above all its heart, comprehensive in sympathy and generous in self-sacrifice". Rabindranath explained that "This shows, that, according to India, the mission of divine power in this country is to bring reconciliation, through moral influence, between races that are different - never to acquire dominance over others through physical prowess and military skill.\textsuperscript{37}"

Gandhi developed his gospel of \textit{ahimsa} on this ideal

\textsuperscript{*The underline has been given to emphasize the words.
of utilizing moral pressure as a kind of instrument to redress an evil. Gandhi read \textit{ahimsa} in \textit{anasakti} and his allegorical interpretation of the \textit{Gita} was directed to deduce 'non-violence' from it. Like Rabindranath, Gandhi believed that the \textit{Gita} advocated the supremacy of moral power over physical force. Gandhi added that the message of the \textit{Gita} was to be found in the Second Discourse where Krishna spoke of a balance state of mind, "The fight Krishna speaks of is a spiritual fight". Like Rabindranath, Gandhi considered the \textit{Gita} as essentially a gospel of non-violence for though it opened in a war-like setting, in the ultimate analysis it proved the futility of war based on physical force or military skill.

The thinkers' metaphysical positions had nothing unique or original about it. This is the central position taken by Indian philosophy in general. It is therefore futile to search for the foundation of the thinkers' thoughts in other philosophies than in Indian philosophy. The \textit{'Upanishads'}, the \textit{Gita}, Jainism, Buddhism, the spiritual heritage of India, her eternal quest for achieving unity amidst multitudinous diversity permeated with a spirit of communion with the 'Infinite' or 'God' - contributed by and large, in shaping and nurturing the broad outlook and humanitarian ideal - the two great souls exhibited in their lives, thoughts and accomplishments. They were only fellow
followers of a great tradition of India which was re-emphasized and glorified by the eminent Renaissance thinkers of the nineteenth century.

However, this does not underrate the Western impact on them. Gandhi had translated Ruskin and Plato, loved to quote Thoreau, admired Mazzini, read Edward Carpenter and in short, he was familiar with the best intellectual knowledge of Europe and America. Gandhi himself observed, "I have but endeavoured humbly to follow Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, Emerson and other writers besides the masters of Indian philosophy". But a serious reader of Gandhi might have noticed that Gandhi's acquaintances with the Western thoughts and its influences upon him was in no way fundamental but was only confirmatory. As for example, Emerson cannot be regarded as a fundamental influence on Gandhi, as his conception of 'Ultimate Reality' had its roots in Indian philosophy. Besides that, it must be remembered that what Gandhi borrowed from others he always made them his own by giving new interpretation and meanings according to his personal observations and experiences of life. So it would be wrong to give too much attention or attribute too much importance to the outside influences on Gandhi, whether indigenous or foreign. Gandhi was never an armchair philosopher nor a strict theoretician or a professional politician in the true sense of the term. His
whole life as well as his mind followed an evolutionary process of growth and he accepted things as they had been tested through his vision of 'Truth' and 'God'. He earned knowledge by living it and had rightly called his Autobiography, "My Experiments with Truth".

The same was also true to Rabindranath. Like Gandhi, he was a great genius who picked up the best from the different thought currents, absorbed many influences indigenous and foreign and integrated them in his personality and achievements in his own way. As Nihoranjan Ray says, "Tagore's life . . . pursues a course of evolution, and all its various phases are reflected clearly in his creative works".

From his early youth, Tagore was quite familiar to the English literature as in his family they were cultivated with utmost interest and enthusiasm. Rabindranath translated Macbeth when he was only fourteen years old. He had also good command over Sanskrit but he had not come to his "own religion" through the "portals of passive acceptance of a particular creed owing to some accident of birth" as stated by Rabindranath in defining his religion. He explained that owing to his "idiosyncracy of temperament", it was impossible for him to accept any religious teaching on the ground that people of his "surroundings believed it to
be true". The poet added, "I could not persuade myself to imagine that I had a religion simply because everybody whom I might trust believed in its value". Gandhi repeated the same truth in different words, "Man is not to drown himself in the well of Sastras, but he is to dive in their broad ocean and bring out pearls. At every step he has to use his discrimination".

The thinkers declined to be bound by the rigid or given rules of 'Shastras' if they were not in conformity with the reasons of their minds. Thus to both Rabindranath and Gandhi, a true 'religion' or 'Dharma' was more than that were written in 'Shastras'. It was identified with true knowledge which was evergrowing and ever living. Gandhi observed, "I have grown from truth to truth". On another occasion, he commented, "I am myself daily growing in the knowledge of Satyagraha". Similarly Tagore wrote, "My religious life has followed the same mysterious line of growth as has my poetic life". He added that a true religion does not wait "for some scientist for its introduction to us". In the same way one experiences the 'touch of the Infinite reality' when he feels within himself the grace of "pure truth, of love or goodness, not through the explanation of theologians, not through the erudite discussions of ethical doctrines".
REFERENCES I (B)


3. Debendranath's role as the head of Brahma Samaj has been discussed in the preceding pages.


(b) Niharranjan Ray, An Artist in Life, University of Kerala, 1967, p.78.


7. Ibid., p.268.


9. Ibid., p.27.

10. Quoted from Ibid.


12. Ibid., p.318-323.

13. Ibid., p.396; The Religion of Man, Visva Bharati, Calcutta.


15. Ibid., p.1.

16. Ibid., p.2.


18. Ibid., p.2.


32. Tagore wrote in the preface to *Sadhana* published in 1913.


34. M. K. Gandhi, *All Religions are True*, p.175.


42. *Ibid.*


44. N. K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, Ahmedabad, 1958, p.VI.


46. *The Religion of an Artist*, p.17.