LAIJPAT RAI'S IDEAS ON SOCIETY AND SOCIAL REFORM.
CHAPTER III

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Instruments of Social Change.

The British rule itself, according to Marx, was the greatest agency working for social revolution in India. By breaking the material basis of the secluded, isolated and exclusive village communities, it caused a social revolution in India and worked as the unconscious tool of history.1 The earlier conquerors of India -- Arabs, Tartars, Turks, Moghuls had all been in turn conquered by the superior civilization of the Hindus who were their subjects. Marx affirmed that the political unity of India, imposed by the British sword, and strengthened and perpetuated by the electric telegraph, the native army, the free press, the Zamindari and Ryotwari settlements, and "in not distant future, the combination of railways and steam vessels, would awaken India to a new social life and a new future."2


2. Ibid., 320-321.
The Social Conference and its Role.

Under the British rule, the agencies working for social reform in India, then were the changed material conditions, English education and the Christian missionaries. But the first attempt at giving an institutionalised form to the urge for social reform on an All India basis, materialised with the establishment of the National Social Conference. The Conference registered progress from year to year. At the 7th session of the National Social Conference, it was resolved that for securing more effective co-operation of Social Reform Associations in the work of the Conference Provincial Branch Committees be established in each Province, with special funds of their own for employing preachers and publishing tracts, collecting information regarding the evil social customs. It was resolved that the Punjab should take the lead in giving effect to that resolution.

The Conference had to fight against age-old prejudices and the progress was painfully slow. But some ground was gained all the same, and it noted with satisfaction in 1901 that the Conference had hitherto served the purpose of bringing into focus the scattered elements of social reform throughout the country and of
keeping the cause of social reform steadily before the country. 3

At the first meeting of the National Social Conference in Madras, it was resolved that among other things, there was the necessity of holding annual national conferences in different parts of the country to consider and adopt measures for the improvement of the social status of Indians and for the eradication of social abuses. Steps were to be taken to organize and establish provincial sub-committees. The disabilities attendant on distant sea-voyages, the ruinous expenses on marriage, limiting the age below which marriages should not take place, the re-marriage of youthful widows, the evils of the marriages of young girls with old wretches, and the forms and evidences of marriages and inter-marriages between sub-divisions of the same caste were to receive special attention. 4

The first sign of sectarianism in the Congress became evident during the preparations for the eleventh session which was to convene in December, 1895, in Poona.


The conflict centred on the issue whether the Congress should or should not be concerned with social and religious reforms.

In 1886 Congress, Dadabhai Naoroji enunciated the view that the Congress was a national political body whose function was to voice the political aspirations of Indians, irrespective of their religious denominations or their social classifications, and that an attempt to discuss social and religious problems, would only generate frictions which could irreparably damage its loose collective unity. Naoroji emphasized that the Indian National Congress comprising of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees and Christians, could not possibly meddle with their peculiar social and religious problems and had, therefore, to confine its deliberations to political questions, which would weld all its members into a cohesive body.5

Henceforth, the Congress adhered to this principle. It was feared that deliberations of this nature would inevitably centre around Hindu social and religious questions and mark out the Congress as a Hindu sectarian organization. In particular, the Congress was anxious to rally the Muslims to its three days annual session in

order to exhibit the validity of its claim that it embraced within its fold the Muslims and represented them. The Congress was envisaged as a secular organisation, which had no authority to recommend, let alone sanction, any religious or social reforms. At best it could function as a forum for recommending social reforms to the Government for initiating legislation, but even this limited purpose was defeated by the fear of arousing fierce resentment from the very people whom the Congress claimed to represent.

Notwithstanding these considerations, Congressmen were conscious of the urgent need for social reforms, and realized the force of Ganade's dictum that "India's social institutions impose a tyranny more oppressive than the most despotic acts of any arbitrary Government."6

*Holding of the Annual National Social Conference immediately after the close of the Congress session, at the same place and in the same pavilion was to be the solution of this dilemma. It was a convenient arrangement, because most of the delegates who attended the Congress session also participated in the National Social Conference. While the Congress confined its deliberations to political issues, the National Social Conference dealt with specific problems*

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pertaining to "Hindu Society."

When the Congress was about to hold its eleventh session in 1895 in Poona, Tilak who was the leader of the orthodox Brahmans of Poona, and the joint secretary of the Congress Reception Committee, opposed the procedure to hold the Social Conference in the same pavilion of the Congress. Having been forced to resign from the Reception Committee for his opposition, Tilak warned that if the Social Conference was convened in the Congress pavilion "a separate Peoples' Congress would be established in defiance to the Reformers' Congress." He criticized the Social Conference as alien in its inspiration, and its proposed reforms as damaging to the uniformity of Hindu society. He upheld the system of "Varnamandharma" and maintained that social and religious reforms would jeopardize the structural coherence of Hindu society and weaken the forces of nationalism.

He accused the Social Conference of destroying the long cherished customs of Hindu society and added that the Congress should rally the support of the masses by

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9. The organization of social life through well-defined and well-regulated four classes and the organization of an individual's life, within those classes and in the four stages of life.
stimulating religious and patriotic zeal. 10

The threat of a split in the Poona Congress was averted by Banerjee who mediated in his capacity as President-elect of the Poona session, and succeeded in prevailing upon Ranade not to hold the Social Conference in the Congress pavilion. 11

In his presidential speech Banerjee praised Ranade's conciliatory attitude which had averted a crisis which could have proved disastrous for the Congress. 12 He reminded Congressmen that their organization had been criticized for being Hindu-oriented and urged that discussions on Hindu social and religious problems in the Congress were contrary to its claim of being the united representative body of Hindus and Muslims. He warned that if social and religious discussions would be associated with the Congress, it would only cause dissensions and schism in its fragile camp. 13

The Social Reform Movement was philanthropic as well as patriotic. Its aim was no doubt to better the lot of many individuals and classes who suffered from the effects

10. The Bengalee, November 30, 1895.
11. Ibid., Argov, Daniel, op.cit., p.71
13. Ibid., p. 15.
of invidious distinctions based on the accidents of birth or sex or from the consequences of other circumstances. But it should not be forgotten that in bringing about or seeking to bring about this improvement in their condition social reformers tried to render an important service to the nation.14

His Diagnosis of Social ills and their Cure.

Lajpat Rai always took a long range view of things. He convinced that the lasting regeneration of India could take place only if the internal obstacles, which were not the result of the British occupation of India, were removed. Lajpat Rai thought that too much preoccupation with religious matters to the exclusion of secular matters, was the foremost evil. It indicated a scale of values no different from that of the West, but was only an index of national degradation. He strove to remove this psychological handicap. The other malady from which Indian national life suffered, and which engaged his attention was the lack of the spirit of co-operation. Unless it was removed, there was no hope of the success of any political reform. It was the absence of the spirit of national cohesion that had discomfited India before the successive foreign invaders. To achieve

orderly progress, discipline was essential.

Lajpat Rai posed the question that notwithstanding the vigorous and elevating religious tradition and the highest conception of morality why the Indians had been a subject race. His answer was that efficiency of a social organism depends upon the sense of social responsibility. The greater and the intenser the sense of responsibility amongst the individual members, regarding the safety and the welfare of the whole, the greater and the stronger the efficiency of the organism.¹⁵ He asked that why Indian failed to accomplish social reforms by themselves? Greed, selfishness and calculation was the answer. But even those who could think in terms of society and nation did not do so when their own individual interests seemed to clash with the interests of the society.¹⁶ He lamented that there was no consistency between the professions and practice of many eminent social reformers and leaders of society. They did not inspire confidence among the masses since they failed to live up to their

¹⁶. Ibid., p. 57
ideal. 17

Lajpat Rai took keen interest in the reconstruction of Indian society on a scientific basis. Social efficiency, according to him, was the sine qua non of national progress and education was the best means of securing it. In an article on this subject which appeared in the Modern Review in 1908, he said that charity or philanthropy was commonly regarded in our country as an act of religious merit, having little to do with the duties and obligations of citizenship. The idea of "charity" in social work must be replaced by the idea of duty and civic responsibility.

In a pamphlet entitled "Pressing Need of India," published in 1907, Lajpat Rai pin-pointed social apathy and lacked of social sense as being the root causes of India's social and national backwardness. The need of the country was to create among the people a lively awareness of their

17. To quote Lajpat Rai: "We know that men who denounced the institution of child marriage in the vehement language they could command, were at the same time conscious of the fact that they had themselves already fixed a date for the marriage of their seven years aged girl with a boy of a similarly tender age. We have known of great patriots rolling wealth, possessing palatial residences, enjoying the blessing of a good fixed income, never moving their finger to reduce misery that was next door to them." (Ibid. pp. 56-57).
social and national obligations.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Famine Relief and Other Social Reform Activities.}

Famine relief programmes brought out a significant aspect of Lajpat Rai's personality. In 1896-97 the Central Provinces were in the grip of a severe famine. Lajpat Rai was deeply moved by the reports that a large number of Hindu orphans and waifs were passing into the hands of Christian missionaries. The proselytising activities of the missionaries caused much concern. There was no Hindu agency for the protection of the destitute children. He started in February 1897, the Hindu Orphan Relief Movement for the relief of orphans of the Central Provinces. The movement was begun under the auspices of the Arya Samaj but it soon won the hearty co-operation of the entire Hindu community irrespective of caste and creed. The emissaries of Lajpat Rai succeeded in rescuing about 260 destitute children from Jabalpur, Bilaspur and other districts. They were brought to the Punjab and lodged in the Arya Samaj orphanage at Ferozepur and the newly established Hindu orphanages at Lahore and Amritsar. This was the first time that philanthropists among the Hindu community made an attempt at organized charity.

The failure of the monsoon in 1898 and 1899 again caused widespread scarcity. The famine of 1899-1900 was much worse than that of 1896-97 and it affected large areas in the Punjab, Rajputana and Kathiawar and Central Provinces. Heart-rending accounts of the sufferings of the famine-stricken people reached Lahore. Lajpat Rai again undertook the work of providing relief to orphans and other destitute children. In an appeal to the public, he said, that a nation which could not protect its own orphans and waifs could not claim respect at the hands of other people. The Hindu Orphan Relief Movement was resuscitated. By the end of the year 1900, more than 2,000 orphans were rescued and brought into well-organized orphanages which provided food, clothing and educational training. The most striking feature of the organization was the plan for industrial projects to find remunerative employment for the orphans as well as for helping the industrial development of the Punjab. Though the movement had the co-operation of a large number of devoted workers, the main credit for its organization went to Lajpat Rai. In his case the impelling motives were humanitarian as well as service to Hinduism. The campaign caused friction with the Christian missionaries. Lajpat Rai's

19. The Tribune, Lahore, October 24, 1899.
contention was that Christian missionaries should not claim any Hindu orphans unless the Hindu agencies declined to take them. He put forward this claim before the Indian Famine Commission of 1901 on behalf of the movement. The Commission accepted his views and recommended in its report that deserted children and orphans should not be made over to persons or institutions, if their own religion failed to take charge of them.  

During the months following the fateful Surat Congress, he worked with dedication for the relief of famine-stricken people of the United Provinces. Freedom from obligations of an active political life, helped Lajpat Rai to devote his energies to educational, social and humanitarian causes. In the famine of 1896-97 and 1899-1900, his activities had been largely devoted to the relief work among Hindu orphans. In 1908 their scope was widened to include general relief irrespective of the community or creed of the sufferers. The relief work was well-organized and met with remarkable success. He had to travel widely to collect funds and supervise the work of famine volunteers. He organised famine work independent of Government support. Visiting famine-stricken villages in the Punjab, he supervised the setting up of local centres from which volunteers (mainly

members of the Arya Samaj) distributed money, food, and clothes. His appeal for funds was met by contributions from merchants in Bombay, Delhi, Allahabad, Lahore and various other towns, as well as from Indian merchants in Rangoon, Singapore, Zanzibar and Nairobi. Reviewing the success of the operation, Lajpat Rai underlined the valuable training it had provided in self-help, particularly as a lesson in breaking away from dependence on the Government.

In the Swadeshi Conference held in December 1907, at Surat, he harped on this theme:

"The highest dictates of patriotism require that we should help the destitute and the wretched. By sharing what has been given to us with our countrymen in distress, we should conclusively establish our claim to speak for them and to demand their co-operation with us in the ensuing struggle."24

The Government did not look upon his philanthropic work without suspicion. He as well as his famine relief emissaries were kept under strict surveillance and doubts were entertained in Government circles regarding the use of famine relief funds for political purposes.25


23. Ibid., p. 145.

24. Ibid., p. 145.

25. Ibid., p. 145.
These suspicions were unfounded as the volunteers had strict instructions not to carry on any religious or political propaganda. Lajpat Rai suspected, and not without justification, that the authorities disapproved all types of philanthropic and national work which was likely to bring popularity to the leaders.  

Reform Versus Revival.

During the end of the nineteenth century, a controversy raged between the social reformers and revivalists. Lajpat Rai in his essay 'Reform or Revival' has authoritatively summed up the respective positions of both schools of reformers. He wrote:

"The present quarrel over 'reform or revival' between the reformers seems to me to resemble, at least in parts, the above mentioned wordy polemics between the Pandits."  

The wordy weapons were sometimes changed and while the reformers took their stand on 'reform on rational lines' the revivalists pleaded for 'reform on national lines.' They seemed to agree on reform, as the force of the difference was centred on the words 'rational' and 'national.'


They uselessly dilated upon the soundness of reform and the danger and risk of revival, and vice versa. A class of people who had already established a name for themselves did not like to give up the name they had got patented and by which they had gained distinction. These latter gentlemen called themselves reformers and insisted upon certain social changes being introduced in the name of 'reform' and reform only. The other class who had lately come into prominence called themselves 'revivalists' and they swore that any change in the social customs and institutions of the community could only be introduced under the shadow of revival. They thought they could not tolerate reform. The result was that while the former taunted the latter as 'revivalists and reactionaries,' the latter mocked the former as 'reformers and revolutionists.' Both classes contained amongst them great and good men, men with pure motives and noble intentions. They were generally prominent men -- well read and deep in the lore of history. Both classes, were to all appearances sincere in their convictions and efforts, but to the great misfortune of the country and the nation they could join their heads, and work amicably. The truth was that the so-called reformers were mostly in faith and in religion 'Brahmos.' They were the earliest in the field and fought for reform while the

28. Ibid., p. 47.
revivalists were the products of a wider diffusion of Sanskrit literature which had taken place principally within the last quarter of a century. Their study of scriptures afforded them sufficient and strong evidence of their ancestors having enjoyed a great and glorious civilization in which most of the present evil practices and customs, the bane of modern Hinduism, were absent. They, therefore, looked to the past for light and guidance and pleaded that a revival might lead them into that haven of progress. The revivalists were naturally popular in Hindu society as they took their stand on the authority of the Hindu 'Shastras' and thus threatened to oust the reformers.

The reformers felt that the revivalists were driving the nation back to superstitions and low and debased forms of worship from which English education, contact with Western religion, and a study of the master minds of the West extricated them with such desirable success. The reformers had based their religious propaganda on the same basis on which their social programmes rested, i.e., rationality. The revivalists having taken to the defence of the so-called national, had extended the same base to the removal of social evils. So far as real social reform was concerned, both lines of work led to the same conclusion. It was not fair to entangle social reform in the quarrel

29. Ibid., p. 50.
which was really based on differences in religious views. Let the 'reformers' by all means if they liked, ridicule the religious views of the revivalists; and criticise or hold them to derision. But it was, not to say the least, graceful and fair to talk of them contemptuously in matters of social reform. The same was the case of the revivalists. In his famous Amraoti speech the great social reformer justice Ranade ridiculed the revivalists in the following words:

"What shall we revive? Shall we revive the old habits of our people when the most sacred of our caste indulged in all the abominations, as we now understand them, of animal food and drink which exhausted every section of our country's zoology and botany? The men and gods of those old days ate and drank forbidden things to excess, in a way no revivalist will now venture to recommend. These instances will suffice to show that the plan of reviving the ancient usages and customs will not work out salvation, and is not practicable. Besides, it seems to be forgotten that in a living organism as society is, no revival is possible." 31

Lajpat Rai underlined the injustice of the observations quoted from Justice Ranade's Amraoti speech:

"Cannot a revivalist, arguing in the same strain, ask the reformers into what they wish to reform us? Whether they want us to accept the divorce laws of Christian society or the temporary marriages that are now so much in favour in France or America?"

30. Ibid., p. 51.

Whether they want us to substitute the legal 'niyoga' (32) of the Mahabharata period with the illegal and immoral 'niyoga' that is nowadays rampant in European society? In short, whether they want to revolutionise our society by an outlandish imitation of European customs and manners. The revivalists do not admit that the institutions which they wish to revive are dead burnt and gone."

Lajpat Rai argued that no revivalist had ever pleaded for the institutions selected by Justice Ranade as the butt of his attack. He agreed with Ranade's summing up of the position of revivalists which occurred in an earlier part of the same address:

"On most of the points which are included in our programme, our own record of the past shows that there has been a decided change for the worse and it is surely within the range of practical possibilities for us to hope that we may work up our way back to a better state of things without stirring up the rancorous hostilities which religious differences have a tendency to create and foster."34

32. According to this doctrine (as enunciated by Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj) a person could cohabit with another of the opposite sex for raising of issues, when marriage had failed to fulfil its legitimate purpose. Accordingly a widow could "raise up two children for herself and two children to each of four men united to her in Niyoga," while a widower could "raise up two children for himself and two to each of 4 widows. Thus, 10 children may be begotten by each pair of human beings." A bachelor or a maid were not allowed to practice Niyoga. However, the doctrine never put into practice by the Arya Samajists and remained a dead letter even in the life of Swami Dayanand (Charanjiva Bhardwaj, An English Translation of Tta Sātvat vata Parkash, 1908, pp.156-58).


34. Ibid., p. 54.
Lajpat Rai pointed out that it was exactly that working our way back which the revivalists aimed at. The real significance of these words - 'reform' and 'revival,' if any, Lajpat Rai argued, seemed to be in the authority of authorities from which the reformers and the revivalists respectively sought their inspiration in social matters. The former were bent on relying more upon reason and the experience of European society, while the latter were disposed to primarily looking at their 'Shastras' and the past history when the nation was at the zenith of its glory. On his part he was prepared to take inspiration from both these sources though he preferred to begin with the latter and call in the assistance of the former mainly to understand and explain what was not clear in the latter.

As far as the strongest reforming agency in the Punjab was the Arya Samaj which accepted both, there was not much difference between reform and revival. To them reform was revival and revival was reform. They attached importance to nationality or 'to national lines,' but subject to the important proviso that the reforms proposed were not irrational. To quote Lajpat Rai: "The Arya-Samajits shall have nothing irrational though it may even have the look of being national. They want everything national which is rational as well." 35

35. Ibid., p. 51
Depressed Classes and Hindu Society.

In his article "The Social Genius of Hinduism," he held that the solution to India's social inequality lay neither in the imitation of the West nor in the Arya Samajist attempt to bring about the revival of India's past. He argued that originally the division of the four classes in the Hindu Social structure enabled each class to sustain and supplement the other, by performing its own separate functions in the framework of mutual dependence and as parts of the same social organism. In other words, the Brahmans were to teach all, the 'Katrrias' were to protect all, the 'Vaisyas' to produce and trade for all, and the 'Sudras' to labour for all, while preserving the oneness of society. But the system degenerated because of the selfish interests of the Brahmans, who created invidious social distinction. It was preferable to remove the abuses created by the Brahmans rather than seek inspiration from the model of western society. Deploiring the existence of the Untouchables, he stressed that it was useless to hope for any Hindu national solidarity as long as there were Untouchables, and stressed the need to remove at least the sting out of their name. The boasted claim of Hinduism for its tolerance became nullified when Indians

lacked tolerance of the Untouchables. The agitation for political rights was trivial in comparison to the apathy towards the monstrosity of untouchability.

According to Lajpat Rai, the cause of the depressed classes combined in it the best of religion, the best of humanity and the best of nationalism. No greater wrong could be done to a human being endowed with intellect than to put him into circumstances which would make him believe that he was eternally doomed to a life of ignorance, servitude and misery, and that in him any sort of ambition for his betterment was a sin. No slavery was more harmful than that of mind, and no sin was greater than to keep human beings in perpetual bondage. It was bad enough to enslave people, but to create and perpetuate circumstances, which prevented them from breaking their chains and becoming free was perfidious. 38

There could be no real progress when an important limb of the nation was atrophied. So long as the depressed classes remained where they were, there was no hope of any improvement. 39 He charged the Hindus:

"You dare not be uncivil or unkind to Mohammedans or Christians, but you are insolent towards your own

39. Ibid., p. 223.
people whom you think you can defy without any fear of retaliation." 40

He sounded a note of warning to the Hindus that Christianity promised the Untouchables release from their subjection to the most relentless form of social tyranny and that the Untouchables were turning their backs upon their Hindu oppressors by embracing Christianity. In 1912, Lajpat Rai visited the shacks of 'Domes' (one of the lowest Untouchable castes in the United Provinces) together with high caste Arya Samajist friends, ate their food and drank their water, and admitted them to the Arya Samaj. 41 Presiding over the Depressed Classes Conference held at Hardwar in March 1913, Lajpat Rai said:

"We are today being pressed down by the dead-weight of the ignored depressed classes; we must float or sink with them. In their strength is our strength; and in their weakness our fall." 42

He urged the abolition of untouchability by advocating the investiture of the sacred thread upon the Untouchables. He denounced Untouchability as a blot on Hinduism and an


affront to God, who resides in every human being, and pleaded that it should be eschewed in our social life and even in our thoughts.

From the Nationalist point of view, the Arya Samaj had done the utmost for the betterment of the lot of the down trodden. The social ideas of the Arya Samaj were the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, the equality of the sexes, absolute, justice and fair play between men and men and nations and nations, equal opportunities to all according to their nature, 'Karma' and merit, and love and charity towards all. In pursuance of those ideals it took great interest in the social uplift of the lower classes. It raised the banner of revolt against social evils, tenacious orthodoxy and an entrenched and crafty priesthood. Lajpat Rai carried forward the ideals of the Samaj in both social and political fields. He repudiated the caste system based on birth and declared: "The rigidity of the Hindu caste system is the bane of Hindu society."

Ever since 1901, Lajpat Rai had taken interest in the education and uplift of the depressed classes. In 1924, long before the word 'Harijan' came to be coined, he set up All-India 'Achut' Sudhar Mandal, and directed all members of the Servants of the People Society to bend their

energies to this task of social reconstruction. In an impassioned plea to young men to lend a helping hand in this sacred work Lajpat Rai said:

"The real basis of the uplifting of the untouchable classes is 'Education.' Education will awaken them to a realisation of true facts, education will lead them to purity of thought and action; it will enable them to realise their proper rights and obligations." 44

Social Reform and Swaraj.

All his life Lajpat Rai emphasised that Indians should qualify for enjoying Swaraj. His first appeal was to the Hindus. He advocated social efficiency which implied that Indian people in general and Hindus in particular should shed many of their evils. As the Hindus formed a majority of the population of the country he was very much concerned with their social problems. He thought it neither possible nor desirable for non-Hindus to dabble in suggesting social reforms among the Muslims. To make the country fit for freedom, Lajpat Rai stood for Social reforms calculated to raise the Hindus to a position when they would be able to discharge the onerous obligation of supporting democratic institutions. He believed that as most of the evils to be combated 'were not found in the

ancient times, 'he and other Arya Samajists were right in appealing to the authority of the 'Shastras' for their eradication. He saw no harm in the Hindu attempts at reconverting Hindus who had accepted Christianity or Islam. Both the Muslims and Christians had been converting Hindus to their faiths. It did not lie in their mouth to object to Hindus doing the same.

**Emancipation of Indian Womanhood.**

Apart from reform among the depressed classes, another great need of the society was to take the best care of the mothers of the community. To ensure a happy marriage, both the boy and the girl should have attained the age of maturity and understanding, to be able to make a free, judicious choice and to know and understand each other. Both must be in good health and economically able to stand on their feet. Girls had as much right to freedom and education as boys. Men and women had equal rights and obligations. Equality did not however connote functional uniformity nor did it mean equality at all levels. Physical and mental differences are and will be there and it was beneficial for both sexes and also for the world. Woman was in no way inferior and was entitled to equal opportunities of progress.

45. Ibid., p. 157.
State and Social Reform.

Lajpat Rai did not want to depend upon Government for social amelioration. There were four methods of making conscious efforts for reform. The first was the method of tradition based on the old texts and interpreting them to suit the requirements of the times. This was the method of Dr. Bhandarkar, of the Arya Samaj and of Swami Dayanand. This was a suitable method for dealing with the masses, and making them feel that there was the old continuity. The Social Conference followed this method in connection with the question of widow-remarriage. Another method was that of appealing to and rousing the conscience of the people. A third method was that of enforcing reform by means of penalties imposed either by the caste or by the State. The last was the method of cutting adrift from the rest, and forming a new camp. This fourth method was the most radical and unconventional. Lajpat Rai accepted the first three and hedged the fourth one with certain limitations. Lajpat Rai was firmly convinced that in order to be effective the social and moral regeneration of India must result from inner forces. Its tendencies must be moulded by the accumulated influences of the past and of the present. Lajpat Rai looked to legislative help merely as the last resort; but where it was indispensable, he would not shrink
from invoking State interference. On the contrary, his contemporary Malabari laid main stress on State intervention, which raised a storm of controversy among both reformers and revivalists. On the question of State intervention Lajpat Rai's approach was nearer to Ranade. Like him, Lajpat Rai would not hesitate to use the instrumentality of the State to bring about social reform. Actually in reply to Miss Mayo's mud-raking book, Mother India, Lajpat Rai lamented:

"In India the reformers are working against prejudice and ignorance without absolutely any help from the state. In fact, the alien bureaucracy have devised new methods of perpetuating the old system and making it subserv their own end."47

Objections against the interference of the State in social matters were by no means flimsy. First, social

46. Moved by the evil effects of infant marriage, such as enforced widowhood, physical break-down, disease, giving up of studies on the part of the boy husband, the birth of sickly children, poverty and dependence, a disorganized household and over-population, Malabari had submitted in 1884 two notes on 'Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood in India' to prominent persons, both official and non-official, protesting against the cruel customs and suggesting certain remedies for their eradication. Malabari demanded from the State temporary aid and co-operation, hoping that national conscience would be slowly awakened by the urgency of reform. (Malabari, B.M., 'Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood in India,' p. 9).

questions were none of the business of the State. Lajpat Rai did not accept this plea. Social questions might sometimes lead to grave consequences. A community was not likely to prosper if its social abuses led to the misery of the individual. In social matters the State was not to intervene at every stage, but obnoxious inhuman and cruel customs were not to be tolerated. The second objection advanced was that social evils were not such as to warrant State action. Lajpat Rai did not agree with this viewpoint. The enormity of the evils might have been exaggerated, but no body could deny the deplorable condition of depressed classes and the evils emanating from infant marriage. The third argument was rather funny that the parties who suffered did not complain. Lajpat Rai wondered how this plea could be put forth when those who suffered had neither any opportunity, nor the ability to give expression to their feelings. If they had been educated and taught to make decisions for themselves, there could be no doubt as to what their opinion would be. Fourthly, it was argued that assuming that State interference in social matters was justified, a foreign Government should not be allowed to interfere. Lajpat Rai opined that if the foreign Government enacted some ameliorative social measures on the initiative of the people, there was no question of interference by a foreign Government. Interference on popular initiative in most urgent matters
should be rather welcome. People opposed to State interference argued that institutions and customs must grow and must not be made to conform with foreign ideals to order. To this, Lajpat Rai would reply that there could be no reforms on foreign lines; all reforms aimed at simply restoring the spirit of our old institutions adapted to the needs of the time. The early celebration of child-marriages, the forcible disfigurement of the widow, and the absolute prohibition of remarriage in the higher castes, the occasional and local practices of polyandry and polygamy, were all admittedly corruptions of recent growth, unknown to the best days of our country's history. Internal dissensions, the upheaval of non-Aryan races, and the predominance acquired by 'barbarous' Scythians and Mohammedan conquerors degraded the condition of the female sex, deprived them of their right of inheritance and freedom, and made woman dependent on man's caprice, instead of being his equal and honoured helpmate.

Social Reform and Political Progress.

Like Ranade, Lajpat Rai believed in the intimate relations between social reform and political work, in the interdependence of the two, since political freedom was after
all, a consequence of national efficiency. National efficiency could not be achieved without the appropriate social and economic conditions as will make the nation as a whole, self-confident, self-reliant, physically fit, normally reliable and intellectually alert. Reiterating his position he wrote:

"Socialist, Fascist and Bolshevik countries alike recognise that it is the duty of the state to see that its people are not illiterate. Indians no more love illiteracy and ignorance than do the masses in the Western countries. But it must be recognised that progress in literacy in India as in the West can not be altogether without compulsion."  

He saw a close connection between social and political questions in free and self-governing countries. But in countries where a foreign nation held the sway the case was different. Here the question of advancing social reform by legislation was always a very delicate one. Both the rulers and the ruled approached it with a great deal of natural timidity. While considerations of policy and finance checked the zeal of the former, the latter was suspicious of

48. The People, (Lahore), January 10, 1926.
49. Ibid.
50. Lajpat Rai, Unhappy India, pp. 11-13. Also, Lajpat Rai said: "As schools must be provided by the state so must the hospitals. But even more the state must take measures not only to prevent the spreading of a disease but also to make its appearance impossible." (The People (Lahore), October 3, 1926).
too much interference in its domestic affairs. Imperial interests left no time and opportunity to the former to enter into the spirit of the people. In a country like India, however, where social life was so much mixed up with religion, the difficulties were still greater in the way of any legislative action in social matters. In the West the boundary line between social and political was very thin. But in India the close connection of religion with social life made the difference. In India the safest and the best way to effect social reform was by universal education.

Lajpat Rai was opposed to the reactionary tendency which regarded social laws as not the handiwork of man, but looked upon them as coming from time immemorial. He held the dependent status of women, the customary limits of the age of marriage, the prohibition of marriage of widows in the higher castes, the exclusive confinement of marriage of one’s own division of the sub-castes into which the country has been split up, the ignorance and seclusion of women, the appropriation of particular castes to particular professions, the prohibition of foreign travel, the inequalities between the sexes, the jealous isolation in matters of social intercourse as regards food and even touch, indiscriminate charity to certain castes, for all
these and many other alienations from the old standards one could not hold the old lawgivers responsible.

Lajpat Rai, however, wanted to avoid extremes. If he was no blind worshipper of the past, equally opposed was he to a violent break with it. He believed in the process of growth, and he wanted to preserve the national ethos. He proceeded very cautiously, and was eager to maintain unity among reformers and revivalists.