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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BRAHMO SOMAJ IN RELATION TO INDIA  
AND  
THE LIBERAL RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT OF THE WEST.

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ty.

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## Preface.

Immediately after the completion of my one year's study in the Divinity School of Harvard University in 1919, one day I learnt the fact that the year, in which William Ellery Channing preached the memorable Baltimore sermon on "Unitarian Christianity", synchronized another important event in my native land, India. That same year Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of the Brahmo Somaj completed his "Precepts of Jesus: A Guide to Peace and Happiness". The strange coincidence led me to a deeper study of the two liberal religious movements in the East and the West. The major portion of the first part of the present study was completed by the fall of 1919. The political progress of India, in the eventful years of the War and the period that followed it, led me to the study of the function of the Brahmo Somaj in relation to India and the larger world outside.

Since 1919, between my return to India and my second visit to this country I have worked on behalf of the Brahmo Somaj and studied more thoroughly the trend of social and religious thought in the East and the West. I have no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that the way in which the Brahmo Somaj and the Unitarian movement have respected and helped each other affords a striking example of international cooperation

towards the upbuilding of a spiritual commonwealth. Harmony and reconciliation of the best and the apparently contradictory elements in Eastern and Western thought can be achieved by appreciation, friendliness, removal of misunderstandings and increase of knowledge. The best example in this direction that I have noticed on the side of the liberal religious movement is the publication of two books by the Religious Education Department of the American Unitarian Association. I hope Dr. Dodson's "The Sympathy of Religion" and Mr. Vail's "Heroic Lives" will make the younger generation of liberals better acquainted with the spiritual beauty of Indian thought and the moral grandeur of the heroic lives of those representatives of the Brahmo Somaj whose message has been one of peace, reconciliation and reconstruction.

In view of the fact that the Centenary of the American Unitarian Association is to be celebrated next year, it will be interesting to note the development of a similar spiritual enterprise in a different part of the world. The British and Foreign Unitarian Association was formed in the same year as the American Unitarian Association. But there was another movement in the East which was younger <sup>than</sup> to these by five years only. In fact the Brahmo Somaj of India is considered as a sister movement by the Unitarians of England and America. It was started at Calcutta about ninety five years ago by a Hindu reformer, Ram Mohan Roy, who had been

in correspondence with Rev. W. E. Channing and Dr. Henry Ware prior to the establishment of the Brahmo Somaj. Ever since the days of Ram Mohan Roy, the relations between the Brahmo Somaj and the Unitarian Movement of England and America have always been very cordial. Successive line of preachers and scholars representing both these movements of liberal religious thought have tried to learn of each other by interchanging their best religious thoughts. They have also tried to cooperate in the field of action whenever possible. Such spiritual commerce was the beginning of the process which was to bridge the gulf between the East and the West.

Now that the two sections of the world are coming to closer contact every day through various international agencies, there are prophets who are predicting a greater conflict which may culminate in the destruction of all that both these two sections hold very dear. Call it by whatever name - civilization, Christianity, dharma will be lost forever, if conditions will precipitate such a crisis through folly, ignorance, and false pride. No other religious movement than the Brahmo Somaj in the East has tried its utmost ever since its birth to eradicate the evils that may lead to such a conflict. In the positive side it has tried its best to develop an appreciation of all that is best in the East and the West with a view to prepare men and women for world-citizenship. The Brahmo Somaj found an ally in this work. The liberal religious thinkers of the West as represented especially

by the Unitarians have always been kind, considerate and helpful in watching the progress of this sister movement. Such friendship has really been of inestimable value for both and the Brahmo Somaj has always appreciated it because of its far-reaching consequences.

The history of the Brahmo Somaj is a story of several outstanding personalities. In the first part of the present study, I have tried to keep the personalities in the background. In the second part, I have to refer to them oftener. It is impossible to leave them on the background when one studies in detail. I have tried my best not to reopen some of the controversial problems, in the history of the Somaj, which agitated the minds of the members so much that their energies were diverted to less worthy channels so far as the spiritual welfare of India and the World was concerned. The present study is just an introduction. I offer this as my contribution towards the commemoration of the great friendship which has for its aim the girdling of the globe by bringing the progressive religious thinkers and workers of the world on a common platform. The present study is also offered as an introduction to a specialised study in some aspect of the history of the Brahmo Somaj.

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Part I.

(Historical).

I.

THE PROBLEM OF INDIA

I. The Nature of the Problem.

"India has never been a nation." So runs the complaint often heard in the West.<sup>1</sup> The reason for this is not far to seek. Even admitting the statement as true we discover that India is a land inhabited by a congeries of people who are in different stages of civilization, are of different races, speak different languages and profess different religions. A land with more than three hundred million people must have problems which will appear bewildering to an outsider.<sup>2</sup> But to the people of India who through inherited traditions and customs are drilled into the idea of Unity, the problems which appear difficult do not appear so. On the other hand the people of India probably have not felt the sting of the problems which contributed to the making of a nation. The idea of a nation as it is understood in the West has no exact equivalent in Indian mind. But there has always been

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1. Prof. Ramsay Muir, President A. Lawrence Lowell, and the Indian Year Book (1915).
2. Population, 315, 132, 537. Religion: Hindus (including Buddhists and Sikhs) about 237 millions, Mohammedans 66 and one half millions, Christians 3 and one half millions, other religions 10 millions. Language: There are nine main languages.



present a strong consciousness of a people - a people which lived, grew, enjoyed and suffered within the boundaries of a land dear to them through numerous associations. So it is evident that if there grows a strong nation in India it will be quite different from the nations of the West. For "a nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose." The course which the Indian nation has already taken is different. It is based on "dharma" which suggests "religion", and yet is not quite what is meant by religion in the West. "It is the essential quality, the permanent, unfluctuating core of substance - the man-ness of man, life-ness of life, as it were..... It applies to the whole system of complex action and interaction, on planes moral, intellectual, economic, industrial, political, and domestic - which we know as India or the national habit."

The fundamental unity of India is a fact, and sooner or later it must be recognized as a fact. No student of history can deny that there has been a unity and continuity in Indian life. "The Hindu, at any rate, from his traditions and his religion, regards India not only as a political unit naturally the subject of one sovereignty (whoever holds that sovereignty, whether British,

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1. Radhakumud Mookerjee - Fundamental Unity of India.
2. Rabindranath Tagore - Nationalism p. 19.
3. Noble, Margaret E. - The Web of Indian Life p. 138.

Mohammedan, or Hindu), but as the outward embodiment, as the temple (nay, even the goddess mother) of his spiritual culture.<sup>1</sup> If that be so the question naturally arising in one's mind is, how is it that, in spite of this fundamental unity as manifested through common traditions, associations, interests and aspirations, it has not made the Indian people a nation.

The answer is not difficult for any student of history. The idea of nation is comparatively recent in the West. "Turning to modern times, in America we find that until the War of Independence there was no American nation."<sup>2</sup> The fact that the Indian people have not been able to make a nation of themselves (in the western sense) does not reflect on their inability or inferiority. The case of Japan which organized itself into a nation within the short period of fifty years is quite different from that of India. The problem of India is far more intricate than the problem of Japan. Besides India has not been afforded sufficient chance to give a full and free expression to her life. But there are ample evidences which will prove conclusively that in the course of the last hundred years there have been sown seeds of a new and real Indian nation which is to enter upon its career after a long night of sorrow and suffering. The seeds sown in the nineteenth century have already begun to send forth roots and branches. It is hoped

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1. Radhakumud Mookerji - Fundamental Unity of India p. 8 (from the introduction by J. Ramsay Macdonald.)
2. Bose, Sudhindra - Some Aspects of British Rule in India, p. 100.

that in the course of the not distant future the tree of the New Indian nation will have a vigorous growth, giving shelter to coming generations and promising richer fruits in future.

In order to trace the development of this birth of a new nation one has to look backward into the pages of history. The beginnings can be traced to three important facts - 1. The new and many-sided contact of the East with the West. 2. The introduction into India of English education. 3. The Renaissance in Indian Religion and Literature as created by the pioneer work of the Brahmo Somaj.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of centuries India became the meeting ground of several great religions - Hinduism or Brahmanism (based on the Vedas), Buddhism, Mohammedanism and Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Though not the youngest Christianity in the course of five centuries failed to make as many converts as Mohammedanism did. The imperial patronage extended to the latter religion by all Mohammedan rulers and emperors had its effect. Christianity had found its way into India long before the English were established as the sovereign power. Though tradition vaguely ascribes to one of the Apostles

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1. "The causes of the national awakening in India are manifold. They may be roughly classed as the direct and the indirect causes. Under the latter class might be included the following: the call of the past, the religious revival, Western education, the growth of the press, the improved means of communication and the influence of neighbouring countries." S. Bose - Some Aspects of British Rule in India. p. 100-101.
2. Vedic Religion - 500 B.C. Spread of Buddhism 550 B.C. - 185 B.C. Spread of Islam 1050-1650. Spread of Hinduism 185 B.C. - 1000 A.D. Spread of Christianity 1450 A.D. -

of the Early Church the work of evangelizing India the state-  
 ment lacks authority.<sup>1</sup> But the presence of the Nestorians  
 in India dates as far back as three centuries preceding the  
 advent of the Mohammedans into India in the eighth century  
 A.D.<sup>2</sup> In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries several  
 Roman Catholic Missions sent by the King of Portugal<sup>3</sup> succeeded  
 in establishing several centers in Southern India. About the  
 same time Dutch and Danish missions were engaged in the work  
 of Christianizing the people in different parts of India.<sup>4</sup> The  
 English and the Scotch missionaries as well as their American  
 colleagues came into India between the last decade of the  
 eighteenth century and the first fifteen years of the last century.  
 The famous band of Serampore missionaries in Bengal found their  
 work progressing in the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

With the advent of the English East India Company's  
 rule, the task of administration of the country required an ever  
 growing number of Indians who could read, write, and speak English  
 and act as interpreters between the English officers and the

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1. "Early ecclesiastical legend going back to the third century A.D. that the Apostle St. Thomas preached in his (Gondophernes) dominions and was there martyred. Another group asserts that he was martyred at Mailapar near Madras." (V. A. Smith - Oxford History of India p. 126). See also Bernhard Pick's The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas.
2. Art. "Nestorius" and Missions", Enc. Brit. Vols. 18 & 19.
3. Moore, E. C. - The Spread of Christianity in the World.
4. Bartholomew, J. G. - A Literary and Historical Atlas of Asia (Everyman's Library) pp. 18-19.
5. Many missionaries, both British and American landed in India, only to be deported by the authorities. This policy was reversed by Act of Parliament in 1812 - Farquhar, J. N. - Modern Religious Movements in India p. 10.

people. But such men were few and far between. Consequently a large part of the work had to be done in Arabic and Persian languages in which the business of the Mohammedan Courts used to be transacted. It was deemed advisable to introduce English education in order to prepare officers for the lower branches of administrative work and to transact the business of commercial houses. The proposal for the introduction of English education was opposed both by Englishmen and Indians though it found support with at least some among the two communities.<sup>1</sup>

The Christian missionaries sent out by the different evangelical denominations of Europe and America had already been in the field when the question of English education came up for discussion. The missionaries were pioneers in this work. The Serampore missionaries under the direction of the Baptists Societies were not only engaged in the work of translation of the Bible and its distribution but they were compiling dictionaries and grammars, setting up a type foundry and a printing press for publications in the Vernacular (Bengali) i.e. the language of the people.<sup>2</sup> During the latter part of the Mohammedan rule the Vernacular languages suffered a great deal. The break up of the Moslem Empire continued this state of affairs.

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1. Macaulay's famous tirade against Oriental learning in connection with the Education Despatch of 1824 is interesting.
2. At a later date the great problem of education drew the government and missions together - Farquhar, J. N. Modern Religious Movements in India.

Early in the last century the impact of the West on India was first felt in a remarkably lively manner. At that time certain parts of India had passed through about fifty years of more intimate contact with the British system of trade and government as represented by the East India Company. This meeting of the East and the West on Indian soil precipitated the contact and conflict of the ideas and the ideals of the two great divisions of the world. The natural outcome was the beginning of a slow revolution which was pre-eminently spiritual in character involving all departments of life.

The new situation in India created a demand for a serious evaluation of western political and religious institutions. The people were very conservative and were bound to the traditions of the past by numerous ties. Everything foreign was no doubt looked with great deal of suspicion. Notwithstanding their attempts to isolate themselves from all foreign influences, the people came in contact with western influences. The old decentralized form of government as exemplified by the village communities was about to be interfered with by the new government. The impact of the West naturally intensified the discord which had existed in the country for sometime. A centralized government which was more or less of an imposition from

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1. 1757, the year of the Battle of Plassey (a village near Murshidabad, Bengal) and the establishment of the East India Co. as a sovereign power.

outside was introduced into India by the English. It must be remembered, as Sydney Webb has pointed out, that the genius of India was towards decentralization. The new system of administration was not an evolution from within. India did not grow into it. It, therefore, created a revolution in Indian Society. The need for an adjustment to the new situation was strongly felt. It meant not only adjustment within but also an adjustment with the direct influences from the larger world of the West. The Brahmo Somaj started in its evolutionary career at this stage. How to create a harmony was its problem.

## 2. The Nation-ward Movement

Little over a hundred years ago, in 1819, India witnessed several important developments. The year is significant. The Hindu College was opened at Calcutta. The Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone founded the Native Education Society at Bombay. And, last though not least, Ram Mohan Roy published his translation of the Upanishads and his "Precepts of Jesus, a Guide to Peace and Happiness."

All these important events were the outcome of the contact between the East and the West in India. Self-consciousness was awakened in her in definite measure and that self-consciousness found expression for the first time through the Brahmo Somaj which was formally opened about ten years later.<sup>1</sup>

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1. "The Brahmo Somaj movement in India is the movement for the spiritual reconciliation resting upon the broad basis of spiritual wisdom laid in the Upanishads" - Rabindranath Tagore's article "Race Conflict", Christian Register, May 15, 1913.

Education and reform, therefore, found visible embodiment in institutions of learning and in the Brahmo Somaj. The latter started at first to reform religious ideas and practices. It wanted to place before the Indian public the supreme value of Unity which had been lost sight of for some time through the worship of numerous deities and through the observance of numerous rites and ceremonies which had lost their meaning and were detrimental to the cause of a people awakening to a sense of its possibilities. In the midst of the corruptions and superstitions which followed centuries of foreign rule, the Brahmo Somaj has stood from its inception as a beacon light calling the people to go forward to a realization of their ancient ideal of Unity (Unity in diversity) and to restore the worship of one God in the family and the nation.<sup>1</sup>

The interests of the Brahmo Somaj and all efforts to educate the people to a consciousness of their own being have been in many respects identical and their influence has been reciprocal. Though their paths have been different both the Brahmo Somaj and the institutions of learning of various kinds established in India have tried to free the minds of the people who came under their influence from the fetters of traditions and superstitions and from the deadening pressure of customs.

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1. One of the later reformers in Northern India used to say that the whole of India could be vitalized through the worship of one living God.



The Brahma Somaj, which started first as a literary society, applying the rules of criticism to the scriptures of the Hindus, blossomed forth later into a society of worshippers of one God. This phase of development was very significant, for its presence made the orthodox Hindu society keenly conscious of its own defects and shortcomings. The religious developments in the Brahma Somaj under its next two great leaders, Debendranath Tagore and Keshub Chunder Sen (its founder and first great leader, as we have seen, was Ram Mohan Roy) made its power felt throughout the length and breadth of the vast land and even beyond.

From its very early days the Brahma Somaj has stood against all forms of idolatry. In later years it has also refused to recognize the division of Indian Society into numerous castes and sub-castes which have constantly tended to weaken the people and prevent the growth of the nation. While it has repudiated caste it has recognized inter-caste dining and marriages. Through the influence of the Brahma Somaj in the year 1872 an act was passed in the Indian legislature validating all inter-caste marriages and marriages between parties which renounced all orthodox faiths. It made

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1. "This law is known in India as Act III of 1872. It does away with idolatrous rites in marriages. It legalizes marriages between different castes and thereby undermines that institution. It sanctions the remarriage of Hindu widows. It makes early marriages impossible by fixing the minimum limit of age. It introduced for the first time the modern institution of civil marriage into Hindu society" - Mozoomdar, Faith and Progress of the Brahma Somaj. p. 34.

polygamy illegal. In its Protestant aspect as a body the Brahmo Somaj has been very uncompromising so far as unjust social customs are concerned. But in its constructive side it has laid great emphasis on family life, training of children, education of women and the creation of a community spirit through the serving of common interests in work and worship. The history of the Brahmo Somaj has made it evident that the whole Indian people can be welded into a living nation worshipping a living God. Practically it has supplied a basis for the birth and growth of a new Indian nation. A study of the Brahmo Somaj is therefore imperative at present for all who want to know about the new Indian nation.

As has already been seen, the Brahmo Somaj is a movement within Indian society (though not within the limits of orthodox Hinduism) which started to reform it in the light of modern experience. It revived the interest of the people in the past glories of India. It showed them the untold possibilities to which the people could aspire if they became a nation united in one God and one country. In its beginning it was a national movement, receiving most of its inspiration from Hindu sources. And yet at the same time it has constantly recognized that there are truths in all religions. The Brahmo Somaj has aimed to be a Universalism eclectic in character. But in the profession of that eclecticism it has been national first and foremost among all the religious movements of the day.

The latest development in the Brahmo Somaj, which is

known as the New Dispensation, recognizes fully this national aspect, but it looks forward to an internationalism which is more concrete and definite. It is universal in its emphasis and does not surrender itself to a narrow nationalism.<sup>1</sup> That is, it recognizes the limitations of a false, narrow and self-satisfied nationalism which may eat into the vitals of any nation and which, in the case of a nation in the making like India, is extremely dangerous. The New Dispensation has shown that there are not only truths in all religions but that all religions are true. The revelation of God cannot be final but is progressive

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1. Two expressions of this type of narrow nationalism may be cited: (1) "The East alone has some knowledge of the truth, the East alone can teach the West, the East alone can save mankind." (Published in Bande Mataram, Calcutta - quoted from memory.) (2) "Nationalism, in theory, is the doctrine that men by their sympathies and traditions, form natural groups, called 'nations', each of which ought to be united under one central government. In the main this doctrine may be conceded. But in practice the doctrine takes a more personal form. 'I belong' the oppressed nationalist argues, 'by sympathy and tradition to nation A, but I am subject to a government which is in the hands of nation B. This is an injustice, not only because of the general principle of nationalism, but because nation A is generous, progressive and civilized, while nation B is oppressive, retrograde and barbarous. Because this is so, nation A deserves to prosper while nation B deserves to be abased.' The inhabitants of nation B are naturally deaf to the claims of abstract justice when they are accompanied by personal hostility and contempt. Presumably, however, in the course of war, nation A acquires its freedom. The energy and pride which have achieved freedom generate a momentum which leads on, almost infallibly, to the attempt at foreign conquest, or to the refusal of liberty to some smaller nation."

Hon. Bertrand Russel. - Principles of Social Reconstruction.  
pp. 50-31

in nature, in the soul of man and in human history. The spirit of the New Dispensation becomes well defined when the progressive character of the revelation of God in history is realized and all other conceptions of final and unique revelations are eschewed or outgrown. It is singularly positive in its emphasis on religious life and religious experience. That is, it has shifted its emphasis from belief to life. One who lives his life under this New Dispensation is a member of a spiritual commonwealth - a republic of free spirits. He can therefore declare, "There is true sense in which I am a Hindu, I am a Buddhist, I am a Christian, or, I am a Mohammedan, etc." It therefore offers a solution to the problem of India which is a problem of races and religions. It stands for nation building as well as international fellowship and good will.<sup>2</sup> The Brahmo Somaj has evolved with the changing times and can therefore adequately meet the situation. In the new spirit as illustrated by the evolution of the Brahmo Somaj, therefore, the new Indian nation which is slowly emerging into the light of day can work out its own destiny. This is undoubtedly the greatest contribution that India has made to the culture of mankind in the nine-

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1. The New Dispensation offers a positive declaration in the place of the old declaration as contained in the Marriage Act III of 1872. According to this act the contracting parties have to disavow faith in all established religions.. There is a considerable feeling against this negative declaration. A civil marriage act without reference to religious persuasion is sought by some today.

2. Cheyne, T. K. - Reconciliation of Races and Religions (A & C Black, London.).

teenth century. A short survey of the history and the present conditions of the Brahma Somaj will be interesting.

## II.

### WHAT IS THE BRAHMO SOMAJ?

The Brahma Somaj is a religious organization founded in the year 1830. The preliminary meetings in connection with this body of worshippers of one God were started in 1828. Ram Mohan Roy its founder was opposed to all forms of idolatry and social wrongs which prevailed in the Indian society of that period. The genius of Ram Mohan Roy was analytic not mystical, and the Brahma Somaj he founded was a Unitarian Hinduism resting on the sacred scriptures of ancient India. He kept caste. What he devoutly desired was that his people should return to the worship of one God.

In 1850 the second great leader, Debendrenath Tagore (father of the poet Rabindranath Tagore), made an important declaration against the then prevailing belief in the Brahma Somaj, in the infallibility of the Hindu Scriptures. Natural theism based primarily on Hindu Scriptures became the religion of the Brahma Somaj. A large number of the members of the

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1. Its beginning in seed form goes as far back as 1816 when "Ram Mohan Roy established a society under the name of Atma Sabha - Intimate Association, for the purpose of spiritual improvement."

K. C. Sin's Discourses and Writings, Part I, p. 15.

Brahmo Somaj still continue to hold to this particular type of theism in all the three sections (the Adi Brahmo Somaj, the Brahmo Somaj of India, the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj).

It should be said before going farther that the Brahmo Somaj in the course of its history has divided (or perhaps it would be better to say has developed) into three organizations as follows: - 1. The Adi Brahmo Somaj, which, as its name indicates, was the "first" or "original" Brahmo society. 2. The Brahmo Somaj of India, (technically so named) which since 1880 has also been called the Church of the New Dispensation. 3. The Sadharan ("General" or "Universal" Brahmo Somaj.)

The "Brahmo Somaj of India" was formed in 1866 and the "Sadharan Brahmo Somaj", which at present has the largest membership, was established in 1878. There are at present over 200 Brahmo Somajes distributed all over India. In Calcutta there are three places of worship. At Bhowanipore, in the suburb of Calcutta, there are two other Somajes, one being a Union Somaj which is maintained by the members of the three sections.

The Brahmo Somaj admits people belonging to different nationalities, as also does the Arya Somaj, an important liberal or progressive religious movement in Northwestern India.

The Prarthana Somaj, a sister church in the Western part of India, has a very influential section of the community among its members. It is practically the same movement as the Brahmo Somaj, though it is not so radical in its methods. Among its members the late Justice Ranade, the late Sir N. G. Chan-

davarker and Sir R. G. Bhandarkar are well known in and outside India.

The number of members of the Brahma Somaj as found in the statistical returns of the census (of 1911) is very small, being only 5,504. There were reasons to believe that the figures were not correct. The result of an independent census taken by the Standing Committee of the All-India Theistic Conference showed that the number was larger (about eight thousand) than what had been represented in the census returns. Though in point of number the Brahma Somaj has a very small constituency, its influence is being felt in every department of Indian life. It has raised the whole Indian society to a higher plane of thought and action.

As has already been stated, the Adi Somaj is the oldest or original organization. Its great leader has always been Debendranath Tagore. Its main principles as stated by him are the following:

1. In the beginning there was naught. The one Supreme alone existed. He created the whole universe.
2. He is the God of Truth, Infinite Wisdom, Goodness and Power, Eternal and All-pervading, the One without a second.
3. In his worship lies our salvation in this world and in the next.

In 1843, Debendranath Tagore introduced the "Brahmic Covenant"<sup>1</sup> which is as follows:

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1. Brahma Dharma, Calcutta, 1876 (quoted in P. N. Bose's Hindu Civilization during British Rule. Pt. I, p. 143).

1st vow: OM. I will worship, through love of Him and the performance of the work He loveth, God the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer, the Giver of Salvation, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, the Blissful, the Formless, the One without a second.

2nd vow: I will worship no created object as the Creator.

3rd vow: Unless disabled by sickness or tribulation, every day, the mind being undisturbed, I will engage it with love and veneration in God.

4th vow: I will exert to perform righteous deeds.

5th vow: I will be careful to abstain from vicious deeds.

6th vow: If, through the influence of passion, I commit any sin then, wishing redemption from it, I will make myself cautious not to do it again.

7th vow: Every year, for the propagation of the Brahmo faith, I will bestow gifts upon the Brahmo Somaj.

Grant me, O God! power to observe the duties of this great faith.

OM

One without a second.

The Sadharan Brahmo Somaj, which is large and important, publishes the following as its statement of faith:

1. There is only one God, who is the Creator, Preserver and Savior of this world. He is Spirit, infinite in power, wisdom, love, justice and holiness, - omnipresent, eternal and blissful.
2. The human soul is immortal and capable of infinite progress, and is responsible to God for its doing.
3. God must be worshipped in spirit and truth. Divine worship is necessary for attaining felicity and salvation.
4. Love to God and carrying out his will in all the concerns of life constitute true worship.



5. Prayer and dependence on God and a constant realization of his presence, are the means of attaining spiritual growth.

6. No created object is to be worshipped as God, nor is any person or book to be considered as infallible and the sole means of salvation; but truth is to be reverently accepted from all Scriptures and the teachings of all persons, without distinction of creed or country.

7. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Men, and kindness to all living beings.

8. God rewards virtue, and punishes sin. His punishments are remedial, and not eternal.

9. Cessation from sin, accompanied by sincere repentance, is the only atonement for it; and union with God in wisdom, goodness and holiness, is true salvation.

The Sadharan Brahma Somaj was established on the 15th May, 1878. The following are the conditions of the ordinary membership of the Somaj:

1. The applicant must be above eighteen years of age.
2. He must agree to sign the covenant of the Somaj containing the four principles of the Brahma faith.
  1. Its immediacy or freedom from all doctrines of mediation or intercession.
  2. Its independence or freedom from the fetters of all infallible books or men.
  3. Its catholicity or its broad sympathy for all truth whenever found, and its warm appreciation of the great and good of every land.
  4. Its spirituality or freedom from all external forms and ceremonies.
3. His private character must be pure and moral, for breach of morality in private life makes a member liable to forfeiture of membership.

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1. Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahma Somaj, 1891, p. 5.

Among some of the most important members of the Adi and the Sadharan Brahma Somajes, the following names are very well known: - Sir J. C. Bose and Sir P. C. Roy (both well known scientists), the Rt. Hon. Lord Sinha (formerly Under Secretary of State for India, in England and Governor of Bihar and Orissa, India), Dr. P. K. Roy, Principal H. C. Maitra, Sir K. G. Gupta (formerly member of the Secretary of State's Council), Mr. R. Chatterje (Editor, The Modern Review), Mrs. Sarojini Naidu (author of "Golden Threshold", "Broken Wing", etc.) Dr. B. N. Seal, (Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University), the late S. N. Shastri, Rev. H. C. Sarkar of the Sadharan Brahma Somaj; the late Mr. S. N. Tagore (the first Hindu member of the Indian Civil Service), the late Sir Ashutosh Chandhuri, Sir Rabindranath Tagore (of the Adi Brahma Somaj).

It has already been mentioned that the New Dispensation is the latest development in the evolution of the Brahma Somaj. It was declared in 1880. It evolved out of the Brahma Somaj of India which had been the second church in the Somaj.

A question which will suggest itself to an inquisitive reader is this: "What is the New Dispensation and what is its relation with the Brahma Somaj?"

An answer to this question in brief, as given by some of its most distinguished leaders, since its inception in 1880, will make the points not only clear and definite but we think also interesting.

1. It is the religion of the Brahma Somaj.

2. It is national and universal.
3. Its main characteristics are:
  - a. Immediacy;
  - b. Synthetivity and Catholicity;
  - c. Subjectivity.
4. It is not a sect added to the numerous sects.
5. It is not confined to one country or people, its prophets are to be found in America and Europe as well as India.
6. The objects of the New Dispensation are:
  - a. To reconcile and harmonize the various systems of religion in the world.
  - b. To make all churches in the East and the West one undivided and universal church of God.
  - c. To trace the unity of all dispensations.
  - d. To trace the line of logical succession among all the prophets in ancient and modern times.
  - e. To reduce the truths of all scriptures to one eternal and unwritten scripture.
  - f. To give a rational explanation of the Symbolism and Sacramentalism in which the ideas of great minds are fossilized.
  - g. To construct the science of Religion by adopting the comparative method.
7. It believes in "the church universal which is the depository of all ancient wisdom and the receptacle of all modern science; which recognizes in all prophets and saints a harmony, in

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1. P. C. Mozoomdar "Faith and Progress of the Brahma Somaj".
2. P. C. Mozoomdar "Life and Teachings of K. C. Sen" p. 350.
3. K. C. Sen's Lectures in India.
4. B. N. Sen, "Spirit and Principles of the New Dispensation" p. 2.
5. *ibid.*
6. From K. C. Sen's New Dispensation, quoted in B. N. Sen's "Spirit and Principles of the New Dispensation."

all scriptures a unity and through all dispensations a continuity; which abjures all that separates and divides, and always magnifies unity and peace; which harmonizes reason and faith, "practical mysticism," (Yoga) and "devotion" (Bhakti), asceticism and social duty, and which shall make of all nations and sects one kingdom and one family in the fulness of time.

8. It is "a science, the most prodigious, manifold and essential of all sciences....Its fulness is in the future, its church is in unborn generations, its community is in the best and wisest of every nation."
9. Its relation with the Brahmo Somaj, as stated by Keshub Chunder Sen, is as follows: -  
 "The Brahmo Somaj is the church of the New Dispensation. They are identically the same institution in the religious world." "Their identity and distinction nothing can better indicate than the analogy of the mind and the soul." The Brahmo Somaj is the mind - the organization. The New Dispensation is the soul - the spirit of the organization - its motive power, its dharma.

Of the representatives of the New Dispensation known in the West the following names are worth noting - the late Rev. P. C. Mozoomdar, the late Professors B. N. Sen and Mohit Chunder Sen (author of Elements of Moral Philosophy and the excellent introduction to Rabindranath Tagore's works in Bengali), the Rev. P. L. Sen (the first Brahmo Somaj Fellow,

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7. K. C. Sen - New Samhita (Pocket Edition) pp. 81-82
8. K. C. Sen - The New Dispensation, Vol. II, p. 67
9. K. C. Sen - The New Dispensation, Vol. II, p. 77, (1916)

Manchester College, Oxford) Principal T. L. Vaswani (of Dyal Singh College, Lahore, and of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar's and the Maharaja of Patiala's Colleges), Dr. B. C. Ghosh (Lecturer in Philosophy of Religion, University College, Calcutta), Dr. D. N. Mallik (Professor, Presidency College, Calcutta), H. H. Maharani Sunity Deby, Mr. N. C. Sen (Educational Adviser to Indian Students in England), H. H. Maharani Sucharu Deby, of Mourbhanj, the late Maharaja Col. Sir Nripendra Narayan Bhup, Maharaja Sir Jitendra Narayan Bhup and Prince Victor Narayan of Cooch Behar.

Besides its educational institutions the Brahmo Somaj maintains a large number of social and philanthropic activities in different parts of India.

In almost all the large Presidency towns the Brahmo Somaj has permanent places of worship.<sup>1</sup> In smaller cities there are congregations which meet in public halls or in private residences. These churches or congregations do not have settled ministers as in the West. Laymen often conduct the weekly services. Itinerant ministers (or missionaries as they are usually called in the Brahmo Somaj) travel from one city to another, and sometimes spend a part of the year in single

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1. Presidency towns or chief towns of provinces like Bengal, Bombay, Madras, United Provinces, Burma.

places ministering to the moral and spiritual needs of the community. There are very few churches in India which have regularly settled ministers.

The Brahmo Somaj is a missionary body with central organizations at Calcutta. The missionaries are held responsible to the central organization as well as the congregations which they serve. In Presidency towns like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lahore, Rangoon and Karachi, the ministers are chosen by the congregation, with the approval of the central body in some cases. The missionary councils are important inasmuch as they look after the spiritual needs of the community.

A great deal of the missionary's time is taken up by what is known in the West as pastoral work. The missionary is called upon to conduct services in homes on special occasions like birthdays, engagements, marriage, death, cremation, death anniversaries. In India the unit being the family, on such occasions all the members as well as friends and relations participate in these celebrations. On some of these occasions at the end of the service light refreshments are served or the guests are treated to a hearty meal. Besides his pastoral work the missionary has other duties. He keeps himself engaged in some literary work, teaching, social service or executive work in connection with the Brahmo Somaj.

As a rule the missionaries do not get anything equivalent to the salaries of the West. Some of them receive

an allowance which covers all their expenses. The Brahma Somaj does not enjoin celibacy on the part of its missionaries. The majority of them are married. Some of the missionaries with their families live in the community houses maintained in connection with the Brahma Somaj headquarters.

The Service in the Brahma Somajes is conducted in the vernaculars of the different provinces. In the anniversary season observed at Calcutta, during January, arrangements are made for services in Bengali (the language of Bengal), in Hindi (which is a sort of lingua franca understood by large section of the Indian people), and in English. The anniversary season draws a large number of people to Calcutta from every part of India. Besides lectures and street singing processions, the Brahma Somaj arranges special service in this season. The order of service in the Brahma Somaj includes hymns, invocation, adoration, prayers, meditation, readings from scriptures and great authors, sermon and benediction.

The annual meeting of the representatives of the various Brahma Somajes is known as the All-India Theistic Conference. It holds its sessions simultaneously with the Indian National Congress, the All-India Social and the Industrial and a host of other Conferences. This gathering, in the last week of December which is known as the national week,

brings to the place of meeting all the different types of people from the various provinces of India. The anniversary season and the conferences therefore afford opportunities for the development of a closer fellowship among people from the different parts. These have helped a great deal in the work of nation building. It is one of the significant facts which clearly prove the trend of the time-spirit that at one of the recent sessions of the All-India Theistic Conference, held in Lucknow, Maharani Sunity Deby (the gifted daughter of Keshub Chunder Sen of Cooch Behar, presided over the deliberations of the meetings.

A United Brahmo Somaj and the Cooperation  
of the Unitarians of the West.

The late Rev. Protap Chunder Mozoomdar's efforts towards bringing about a better understanding and mutual regard among the three sections of the Brahmo Somaj resulted in the formation of a Brahmo Somaj "Union", a Brahmo Somaj "Union", largely social in its nature. It is hoped that through this Union, and also through other agencies, increasing intercourse, fellowship and co-operation between all sections may be promoted. It is also interesting to note a growing spirit of co-operation between the Indian Brahmo Somaj and the Unitarian of England and America. In



1895-96 the Rev. J. T. Sunderland of America was sent by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association to India on a definite mission of fellowship and good will to the three Brahmo Somajes, to convey to them brotherly greetings from the English Unitarian churches, and to confer with them as to ways in which the Unitarians of England could most effectively do missionary work in India through the Somajes - in other words, help the Somajes in their great and important mission of giving to India an enlightened, liberal, progressive, ethical and spiritual religious faith.

The English Unitarians had long felt that they ought to be doing more for India religiously than they had done in the past. But how? As a result of their acquaintance with Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chunder Sen, Mr. Mozoomdar, and other Brahmo leaders, who had visited England, they had become deeply interested in the Brahmo Somaj, and had come to recognize in it a religious movement similar in principles, in spirit and in aims with Unitarianism. Why then, in their desire to aid India, should they go there and organize Unitarian churches, thus unnecessarily duplicating agencies. Why not rather give their aid to the native, liberal theistic churches already established on the ground? It was because this was their attitude that the English Unitarians sent Mr. Sunderland to India to ascertain in what ways they could best co-operate

with the Brahma Somajes, and thus have a part in promoting liberal religion in India. One of the ways suggested by Mr. Sunderland, based on suggestions received from the Brahma Somajes, was the establishment of a scholarship in Manchester College, (the Unitarian Theological School) in Oxford, to be occupied by a succession of young men sent there by the Brahma Somajes for advanced religious study in preparation for the social and religious work of the Brahma Somaj. This suggestion was adopted by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and has been in operation ever since.<sup>1</sup>

Several years later, at the suggestion of Mr. Sunderland and on the recommendation of Professor B. N. Sen of Calcutta, Dr. F. C. Southworth, President of the Theological School in Meadville, Pa., secured the establishment of a similar scholarship in that institution<sup>2</sup> for the purpose of training Brahma scholars in America. The first Brahma Somaj scholars came to England and the United States in 1896 and 1906. Those who have studied at Oxford (nine in number) have been the following: the Rev. P. L. Sen, Mr. B. C. Pal, the Rev. H. C. Sarkar, the Rev. V. R. Shinde, Dr. V. A. Sukhtan- kar, Mr. S. Haldar, Professor P. S. Bose, Mr. A. K. Chak- ravarty, Mr. D. N. Mitra.

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1. Report of the Brahma Somaj Committee.
2. Sen, B. N. - The Pilgrim, Essex Hall, London, 1907.

Those studying at Meadville (six in number) have been Professor G. S. Rao, Professor B. M. Sehanavis, Rev. J. K. Koar, Rev. K. S. Rao, Rev. S. Roy and Mr. L. Guru, These English and American trained men as a whole are rendering very valuable service to the Brahmo Somaj, and several have already risen to eminence.

### III

#### THE BRAHMO SOMAJ AND ITS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

The founder of the Brahmo Somaj, Ram Mohan Roy, was a friend of the famous group of Serampore Christian missionaries. His "Precepts of Jesus - A Guide to Peace and Happiness" was first published by the Baptist Mission Press. A controversy between the author and Dr. Marshman arose over some statements made in the book. At the refusal of the Baptist Mission Press to re-print the work, Ram Mohan Roy was compelled to set up a printing establishment of his own. His book was later published England, in 1824, and in the United States of America in 1828, by the Unitarians. This was the beginning of a relationship between the founder of the Brahmo Somaj and the outside world.

Rev. William Adam, a Baptist missionary in India, and close friend of Ram Mohan Roy, through the influence of the latter changed his Trinitarian faith and became a Unitarian.

Mr. Adam in cooperation with Ram Mohan Roy opened a place for Unitarian worship at Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> Before the foundation of the Brahmo Somaj both Ram Mohan Roy and Mr. Adam corresponded with Dr. W. E. Channing, of America. At the Berry Street Conference of Ministers held in Boston on May 31, 1826, Dr. Henry Ware appealed for moral and financial support of this work in India. Mr. Adam later came to the United States and joined the faculty of Harvard College as lecturer in Oriental literature. During his last days Mr. Adam was the minister of the First Unitarian Society in Chicago.<sup>2</sup>

Ram Mohan Roy and his movement succeeded in attracting the notice of not only the Unitarians of England and America but a larger circle of scholars and enquirers who for the first time came in contact with "the first brilliant product of European influence in India."<sup>3</sup> The Brahmo Somaj being a movement contemporaneous with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and the American Unitarian Association, both of which were founded in 1825, has always been recognized by these two bodies as a sister movement in India.

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1. Farquhar, J. N. - Modern Religious Movements in India and Cooke, G. W. - Unitarianism in America.
2. Information supplied by Prof. W. W. Fenn of Harvard Divinity School.
3. Dutt, R. C. - Literature of Bengal, p. 138  
Carpenter, M. - Last Days of Ram Mohan Roy.  
Collet, S. D. - Keshub Chunder Sen in England.

The missions of Ram Mohan Roy to England in 1830 and of Keshub Chunder Sen about forty years later, opened the way for a gradual understanding and appreciation of Indian life and thought. Later the four visits of Protap Chunder Mozoomdar to England and three to the United States<sup>1</sup> drew the East and the West closer. In the United States funds were raised for the support of Mr. Mozoomdar's work in India. There is no doubt that the visits of these eminent Brahmo leaders to England and America gave to the men and women of the Brahmo Somaj a better appreciation of the West, and helped them to assimilate the best in Western culture and civilization. Theirs has not been the way of slavish imitation or utter rejection of the ideas and ideals of the West. They have always tried to understand the point of view of the West without surrendering their own, and thereby have succeeded in broadening and deepening their own life and thought.

Between 1855 and 1886 the American Unitarian Association maintained a missionary in India in the person of Rev. C. H. A. Dall. Mr. Dall started schools, held Unitarian services, and circulated Unitarian literature, especially the writings of Theodore Parker and Dr. Channing. The second generation in the Brahmo Somaj came under the influence

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1. Mozoomdar, P. C. - Tour Round the World.

of these American thinkers, and their names, and later those of R. W. Emerson, F. W. Newman and James Martinean, became household words in many Brahmo homes.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Dall did not establish any Unitarian Churches in India. After his departure from India the Unitarian mission was closed, as the American and British Unitarians considered the Brahmo Somaj to be practically their own<sup>2</sup> movement, expressing itself in terms of Indian thought.

The British and Foreign Unitarian Association sent three representatives to India between 1896-1901. They were Rev. J. T. Sunderland, Rev. James Harwood and the late Rev. S. Fletcher Williams. The reports submitted by them contained many sidelights on the religious and social situation in India.<sup>3</sup> The last named representative stayed in India for about three years, rendering very valuable services to the cause of progressive religion. The last visit of Dr. Sunderland to India, in 1913-14, as the Billings Lecturer of the American Unitarian Association (during which visit he was elected President of the

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1. Reports published by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.
2. Christie, F. A. - Art. Unitarianian, American Journal of Theology, 1917.  
Cooke, G. W. - Unitarianism in America, pp. 296-302
3. Reports published by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, London.

All-India Theistic Conference) was also fruitful in deepening the fellowship between the India Theists and the Unitarians of the West. Rev. Mr. Richards, a Unitarian minister in England, resigned his pastorate in 1910 and came to teach English literature at the Dyal Singh College, Lahore, one of the best colleges in Northern India managed under the auspices of the Brahma Somaj. From time to time the unitarians of England have helped in the famine relief work conducted by the Brahma Somaj; and in the building of several Brahma churches, especially during the earthquake of 1898.

In 1923-24, Dr. W. H. Drummond, Secretary of the International Congress of Religious Liberals made an extensive tour through India. In all centers of liberal thought he was welcomed by the members of the Brahma Somaj. On his return from India Dr. Drummond reported before the meeting of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association the state of the present religious situation in that country. In his opinion India stood on the threshold of a great religious awaking in which the teachings of Jesus were to play an important part.

Besides the cooperation to which reference has already been made, the Brahma Somaj has several times sent delegates to the International Congress of Liberal Religious Thinkers and workers. The late Prof. B. N. Sen represented the Brahma Somaj in the Congress held at Geneva in 1905. The meeting of

Professor Sen (the then Secretary of the Brahmo Somaj Committee) with President Southworth at that conference was significant. It resulted in the establishment of a fellowship at Meadville for a Brahmo Somaj student, who was to devote his life in furtherance of the social, religious and educational work of that body. At the Congress held in Berlin in 1911 the Brahmo Somaj sent three representatives, the Rev. P. L. Sen, Prof. T. L. Vasmani and Principal H. C. Maitra. The Brahmo Somaj was also fortunate in having one of its most distinguished members, Dr. B. N. Seal (formerly King George V Professor of Philosophy at the University of Calcutta) as its representative at the Universal Races Congress held in London in 1911. Dr. Seal read the first paper on the "Meaning of Race, Tribe and Nation," at the opening session.

In the course of the last forty years, there has been growing a number of Unitarian churches amongst the Khasi people in the eastern part of India. The Khasis belong to the Tibeto-Burman stock. The Orthodox Christian missionaries have been successful in converting a large section of these semi-

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1. Proceedings of the International Congress of Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers at Geneva, 1905; Ibid at Boston, 1907. Report of the World Congress of Free Christianity and other Religious Liberals at Berlin, 1911; The Pilgrimage of the Spirit, Boston, 1920. Inter-Racial Problems (Papers submitted before the Universal Races Congress, London, 1911.)



aboriginal people into Presbyterian and Baptist forms of Christianity. The late Mr. H. K. Singh who had come across some Unitarian literature through the postal mission of the Brahmo Somaj decided to start Unitarian Churches amongst the Khasis. He came in touch with the Unitarian leaders in England and America and the encouragement offered by them resulted in the formation of a group of churches. The Sadharan Brahmo Somaj also worked in the Khasi Hills district, The Unitarian Churches and the Brahmo Somajes in that region co-operated amongst themselves. For many years the work of oversight of some of the Unitarian Churches was delegated by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association to Rev. Nilmony Chakravarty of the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj.

The Brahmo Somaj therefore has always tried to keep itself in touch with the liberal thinkers and workers in the West and thereby succeeded in keeping abreast of the current of modern life and thought.

#### IV

#### EDUCATION IN INDIA AND THE BRAHMO SOMAJ.

The work of constructive educational reform dates back to 1817. The man who more than any other was the originator of the movement was Ram Mohan Roy. The famous Scotch missionary Alexander Duff also played an important part in

educational work. Macaulay's historic Educational Dispatch of 1835 opened the way for the introduction of English education. Through this new education the contact between the East and the West was brought nearer home. The Educational Dispatch of Sir Charles Wood (1854) made provisions for an extension of education to classes which previously had not had an opportunity to attend school. It also provided a scheme for University higher education.

For a period those availed themselves of Western education saw everything good in English customs and culture. They began to speak and write almost exclusively in English. They imitated foreign dress and customs, like drinking. The educated classes neglected their own language and literature, philosophy and religion. This was quite contrary to the spirit of the founder of the Brahma Somaj. The result was disastrous in many cases. As ~~it~~ often happens under such circumstances, that the worst part of a foreign civilization is more easily imitated than the best, many so-called educated young men, inebriated with the wine of western civilization in its cruder and worse aspects, wholly left their old moorings. This imitation of the vices of the West made the older and orthodox <sup>1</sup> section of the society suspicious of the virtues of the West. Happily, this reaction was

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1. Dutt, R. C. Literature of Bengal, p. 240.  
 Mozoomdar, P. C. - Life and Teachings of Keshub  
 Chunder Sen, Calcutta, 1887, p. 1-40.

largely counteracted through the vigorous activities of the Brahmo Somaj, and later by those of religious Societies like the Arya Somaj, the Theosophical Society and the Ramkrishna Vivekananda Movement. The Brahmo Somaj has always stood for the best in the two civilizations. It has opened the eyes of the Indian people to a revaluation of their own ideas and ideals in the light of a better appreciation of their past and present, and a more hopeful and robust outlook for the future. It has always tried to remain true to the idealism enunciated by its leader Keshub Chunder Sen, "Gather ye the wisdom of the East and the West."

The Brahmo Somaj, therefore, supplied the keynote to a modern view of education in India. It started schools and colleges in different parts of the country. Education (at home and school) for both boys and girls is provided by all members of the Brahmo Somaj. Practically there is no illiteracy in the Brahmo Somaj. The percentage of literacy among their women is higher than in any other Indian community. The Brahmo Somaj has had also the unique advantage of sending a large number of its sons and daughters to the West for study and travel; and these along with the members of the other communities, have contributed not a little to the progress of the

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country.

Notwithstanding what the Brahma Somaj and other religious societies (including the Christian missions) have done in maintaining schools and colleges, on the whole the progress of education has not been as it should have been. Education as controlled by the Government is neither free nor compulsory in British India. Some of the premier Native States (like Baroda and Mysore) have made provisions for free compulsory primary education. After a century and a half of British rule in India only about <sup>6</sup>94 percent of the people can read and write. And it cannot be denied that without the activities of private agencies and individuals the progress in education would have been very much slower than it has been. The amount spent on education by the Government is strikingly small in comparison with the Government's other expenditures, especially those for military purposes. In some provinces a part of the educational expenses is met from the revenues received from the liquor trade. Educational workers and temperance workers have entered their protest against such assignments, but they are threatened with curtail-

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1. "As the new learning was one of the chief instruments in hastening the Renaissance in Europe, so the introduction of foreign education has contributed to the awakening of India. Moreover hundreds of Indian students who had been educated abroad, came home with their minds richer and their outlook widened." S. Bose - Some Aspects of British Rule in India, p. 104.

ment of educational appropriations in case the revenue from liquor and drugs fails.

The Brahma Somaj has supplied an incentive to the cause of education by making people think for themselves. Consequently there is a great demand for education wherever the Brahma Somaj has been active. It has recognized the value of popular education through evening schools, industrial schools and the press. Though its efforts, considering the vastness of the land, have been small, yet it has done a great deal of pioneer educational work which has attracted the attention of other reform organizations.

Of the many schools and colleges in different parts of India some of the most successful ones are conducted by the Brahma Somaj. Attention has been called in America to the famous school of Rabindranath Tagore. This school is located at a beautiful spot selected by the second leader of the Brahma Somaj (Debendranath Tagore) about 100 miles from Calcutta. The most recent development in India in the direction of internationalism in matters of educational and culture, has been the opening of the Vishwabharati, the International University at Spantinikepan (the Abode of Peace). Wellknown

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1. For an excellent account of the school read W. W. Pearson's "Shantiniketan" (Macmillan and Co.), and Rabindranath Tagore's "My School in Personality" (Macmillan & Co.)

European savants, like Professor Sylvian Levey of Paris, M. Winterniz of Prague, Stella Kirmach of Vienna and others have been cooperating with Indian teachers and scholars in the work of teaching and research. The University is open to men and women. Rabindranath Tagore (according to the memorandum of the association of Visvabharati) has been at present translating into action one of the fondest hopes of the leaders of Brahmo Somaj, that of the Union of the East and the West. Teachers and also scholars from the West have been invited there to cooperate in bringing to fruition the high ideals of world brotherhood and world culture. In such movements one can notice how the influence of the Brahmo Somaj has been successful in checking all kinds of narrow nationalistic excesses.

## V

### WHAT HAS THE BRAHMO SOMAJ DONE FOR THE WOMEN OF INDIA?

In ancient times women occupied a high place of honor and responsibility in the Hindu household. Illustrations will not be found wanting to prove that women took active interest in administration, literature, philosophy, and art. The Hindu equivalent for wife means "one's own half" and "one's coworker in the performance of dharma." But in the course of the last few hundred years of foreign

rule the position of women became different. Women left the side of their husband and engrossed themselves entirely in the work of their home, without the stimulation from any broadening influence, while the horizons of their fathers, husbands and sons were enlarging. This had a seriously detrimental effect upon the women of India.

The Brahma Somaj, for the first time in the Indian history of the last century, championed the cause of women. Its founder, Ram Mohan Roy, "wrote on the rights of Hindu women in ancient times, and it was his prolonged endeavor to abolish the custom of Sati that brought him to prominent notice with the rulers of the country." Through the persistent efforts of the leaders and members of the Brahma Somaj education among women has been spread. As a result of this they have again really become helpmates to their husbands. Women to-day join in the congregational worship and singing of the Brahma Somaj. They meet in conferences, conduct journals for their own benefit, and open and teach schools. To crown all, in recent years we notice a great awakening among all women, even those outside the Brahma Somaj. The Brahma Somaj has to-day several women preachers and public workers.

In the sphere of literature, art and music women

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1. Dutt, R. C. - Literature of Bengal, p. 147.

are contributing a fair share. There is an increasing number of poets, novelists, dramatists and writers of juvenile literature coming from the ranks of women. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, whose works are entirely in English, has made her mark in English literature and has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. She presided over the Madras Provincial Conference in 1918. A great worker in the cause of ~~Hindu~~ Hindu-Moslem Unity, she has recently undertaken a mission to South Africa and other parts of British Colonial Africa. On her return to India she has pleaded for sobriety and understanding on both sides. She has also advocated restriction of emigration from India. The entrance of women into civic and political life of the country is sure to have a beneficial effect on the entire Indian society. The recruitment from the ranks of women to the study of medicine, surgery and nursing is daily increasing. Some of the women have studied in colleges with men and have come out at the top of the list of successful candidates at examinations.

Certainly women are coming to their own. They have begun to take interest in the political, social and industrial advancement of their country. The organization known as the Bharat Stree Mahamandal, or the All-India Women's Association, has been trying for some time past to carry the light of educa-



tion to many homes through its band of teachers. A woman's University has recently been opened. Women have also been taking an active part in the recent political movements. Lady Jagadis Bose's efforts at raising the standard of education of girls are bearing ample fruits.

The new recognition given to woman had its beginning in the Brahmo Somaj. But a great deal of work remains to be done. "Where poverty is most bitter there is little or no distinction between man's work and woman's. In India, where the average income is ten dollars a year, where millions live on one meagre meal a day, the woman of the family, where the income is the smallest and the supply of food the scantiest, cannot stop to question whether or not the work she gets is adapted to her frail body...She must take it or starve. So it is that in India many of the women of the laboring classes leave their homes at sunrise and work until sunset at any work which is possible for them." <sup>1</sup> Work for laboring class women, and for that most unforunate class of women who have to live outside the pale of society for what is known as their sin, has not yet been taken up in earnest. The exigencies of the time clearly point out to the necessity of redeeming some good human material which will be

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1. Margaret E. Burton - Women Workers of the Orient. p. 42.

found in these classes, and utilizing it for the good of the country. One writer very truly describes the work of the Brahma Somaj thus: "The Brahma Somaj is not great in its infinite possibilities in the future; and all its hopes lie in its women and its young men."

## VI

### WHAT HAS THE BRAHMO SOMAJ DONE FOR THE MASSES OF INDIA?

The Brahma Somaj was the first indigenous religious organization in India which took active steps to educate the masses and improve their conditions. The Christian Missions of course kept themselves busy with work among the masses, but the Brahma Somaj had the unique advantage of striking at the root of the problem, as its leaders and workers were conversant with the internal situation, and were not concerned with bringing about artificial conversions. Through their preachings and Sankirtans (or street singing processions) the Brahma Somaj has an easier access to the heart of the people than do the Christian Missions. The religion of the Brahma Somaj is a simple faith and its devotions are in line with some of the devotional movements "which seek a reconciliation of the old with the new ideals in a deeper synthesis." The movements inaugurated by Nanak, Chaitanya, Kabir, Ramana, Tukaram may be considered as the forerunners of the Brahma

Somaj. It must not be forgotten that "in all these movements there is the repeated call to the people to forget all distinctions of castes and creeds."<sup>1</sup>

The Brahmo Somaj therefore is not a church of the "rationalists" or "intellectuals" of the land. Owing to the extreme want of men and money it has not been able to carry out its program fully. Undoubtedly, increasing attention will be paid to work among the masses of the people. The President of the All-India Theistic Conference (1916), the Honorable Dr. Nilratan Sarkar, voiced forth the sentiment of the community when he drew the attention of the Indian theists to the problem of mass education through (1) the preaching and observing of "certain simple practical rules of conduct, (2) and through the institution of certain festivals and popular gatherings, with singing, reciting, play acting, dancing, eating and drinking, etc., to enlist the instinct for social play for the service of social religion. The Indian theists must adapt these methods, Dr. Sarkar urges, to modern social wants in the Indian village environment. A popular religion for the Indian masses of to-day must be based on Bhakti, or devotion to God, without

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1. Tagore, Rabindranath - "Race Conflict", article in Christian Register, Underhill, Evelyn - Introduction to R. N. Tagore's "Kabir". Kennedy, M. T. - The Bhakti Movement in Bengal (Young Men of India, July 1918).

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definition of creed or ~~dogma~~...." The Brahmo Somaj is in a position to fulfill such demands.

The Depressed Classes Missions, the Mission for the Backward Classes, the Working Men's Institutes, the Social Service Leagues, and other agencies which have been working for the betterment of the condition of the masses, owe their inspiration largely to the Brahmo Somaj. The educational work begun by the Brahmo Somaj in the seventies is still carried on in different parts of the country. The Arya Somaj has also done very valuable work in these directions in recent years. In concluding a stirring appeal to young India delivered at Lucknow in 1868 Keshub Chunder Sen said, "Now comes your own work. Let the nation now reform itself through its Brahmo Somaj. This is your own work and none can do it for you. No foreign help will avail unless you help yourselves." This gospel of self-help has become one of the key-notes of the new Indian nation. During the last two decades Rabindranath Tagore (the youngest son of the second leader of the Brahmo Somaj) has become the chief exponent of this view. The world famous Indian leader Mahatma M. K. Gandhi, is also an eminent worker in this field of self-help. Though not a member of the

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1. President's Address, All-India Theistic Conference published in the Modern Review, Jan. 1916.
  2. An Appeal to Educated India.
  3. Professor Gilbert Murray - "The Soul as it is, and how to Deal with it." - Hibbert Journal, Jan. 1918.
- Haridas Mazumdar - G andhi, the Apostle .  
J. Doke - An Indian Patriot in South Africa.  
Romain Rolland - Mahatua Gandhi.

Brahmo Somaj, he has expressed great admiration for its leaders. He has also been very successful in awakening, in the minds of the Indian public, a great respect for the teachings and personality of Jesus Christ. He has carried this forward even amongst the Moslem section of the Indian community. Nothing could have given more satisfaction to the leaders of the Brahmo Somaj than the speedy realization of their hopes in the matter of Indian unity as has been demonstrated by the achievements of Mahatma Gandhi in this direction. It is no wonder, therefore, that Mrs. Annie Besant who is at present an Imperialist and has no sympathy for Mr. Gandhi's program will say thus: "I who tread the path of the warrior, not that of the saint, who battles against Enthroned Injustice by assault, not by meekness, I recognise in this man, so frail and yet so mighty, one of those whose names live in history among those of whom it is said: 'He saved others; himself he could not save.'" "Gandhi has shamed us Christians", so says the American Bishop Fisher of the Methodist Church in India.

## VII

### INDIAN LITERATURE AND THE BRAHMO SOMAJ.

If in any department of Indian life during the past hundred years there has been manifest a constantly growing

vigor and power, it has been in its literature. Almost all the provincial languages like Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Telegu have shown wonderful signs of vitality and progress. One can agree very well with the late Mr. R. C. Dutt, in what he said about Bengali literature, and apply it to the rest of Indian literature.

Writes Mr. Dutt, "We now enter upon the brightest period in the annals of Bengali literature. The British Conquest of Bengal was not merely a political revolution, but brought in a greater revolution in thought and ideas, in religion and social progress."<sup>1</sup>

The literary movement has been closely connected with the Brahma Somaj from the very beginning. Ram Mohan Roy was virtually the first writer in modern Bengali prose. The discourses of the leaders of the Brahma Somaj, especially those of Debendranath Tagore, Keshub Chunder Sen and Protap Chunder Mozoomdar, will have a permanent place in Bengali literature. The Brahma Somaj has also contributed much to the lyrical literature of India through its hymns. From the days of Ram Mohan Roy down to the present day the total output of its hymns and Sankirtans form quite an important original contribution to literature. These hymns and songs express not only

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1. Dutt, R. C. - Literature of Bengal.

original thinking but intensity of feeling quite unsurpassed in previous literature. The world has already become familiar with the poetic beauty of Rabindranath Tagore's hymns. The hymns of the late Rev. T. N. Sanyal have also enriched the literature of the land. Most of the well known modern poets and dramatists of India have come under the influence of the Brahmo Somaj. The first weekly penny paper was started by the Brahmo Somaj. In the realms of art and music its members have made important contributions.

Missionaries and members of the Brahmo Somaj have studied systematically the different world religions, their prophets and their scriptures, and embodied their researches and studies in books and magazine articles. Contributions along this line have always been regarded by the Brahmo Somaj as of a great value in the way of preparation for a larger national life.

In this connection it may be pointed out that orthodox Christianity has almost failed to contribute anything permanent to the literature of India (except the poems of the late Miss Toru Dutt and Mr. Tilak, the Marathi poet). Its hymnody is very poor. Even the thought and language of its prose, as well as of its metrical compositions, show a peculiar stiffness which is due to some extent to a slavish imitation of foreign thought and form. The relative influence of

Christianity and of the Brahma Somaj on Indian literature may form an interesting study.

A review of the literary activity of India can be had from the following table: "In 1915-1916 India produced 12,140 books in English and in the Indian languages. The details are:

	English.....	2,441
	Bengali.....	1,981
	Hindi.....	1,663
Modern	Urdu.....	1,164
Vernac-	Tamil.....	1,114
ulars	Gujrathi.....	1,035
	Marathi.....	877
	Telegu.....	730
	Punjabi.....	572
	Sanskrit.....	462
Classical	Arabic.....	53
	Persian.....	<u>48</u>
	Total.....	12,140

The number of presses in the whole of India was at the date named above, 3, 237; of newspapers 857 and of periodicals, 2,927." The publications of the Brahma Somaj as printed in the majority of the languages mentioned above have a fairly good circulation. In fact, the Brahma Somaj has a steady income from the sale of literature. For some time the Brahma Somaj worked in cooperation with the Postal Mission of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.



## VIII

## WHAT HAS THE BRAHMO SOMAJ DONE FOR THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT?

As in education, so in the field of politics, the Brahmo Somaj has played a great part. Though its contribution to the political life of India has been rather indirect, it has helped greatly to create an All-India consciousness; especially was this true in the seventies and eighties. The journeys undertaken by the missionaries of the Brahmo Somaj, their preachings and writings in the Vernaculars, showed how people could be united in a common bond of union. The use of the vernacular in the service of the Brahmo Somaj and its later wide employment by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, of the Arya Somaj, proved that the educated people could reach the masses in their own language more effectively than through the medium of a foreign tongue like English. Swami Dayananda Saraswati took up the idea from a suggestion offered to him by Keshub Chunder Sen during the former's visit to Calcutta. The successful use of Hindi as the lingua franca of a large section of the Indian people, overthrows the argument, often used, that Indian unity is rendered impossible by the variety of languages in the country. Religious and political unity and progress have always been simultaneous in India.

The death of Keshub Chunder Sen, in January, 1884, witnessed the expression of a truly national spirit, when

thousands, some of them from distant parts of the land, followed his body to the place of cremation and joined in mourning his loss. The next year, in 1885, the Indian National Congress was established to voice forth the hopes and aspirations of a people growing into a consciousness of their nationality. The reasons for the organization of the National Congress were many. The Vice-royalty of Lord Lytton (1876-80) aroused discontent in the country. "The imposition of the Vernacular Press Act commonly known as the Black Act, and the uncalled for hostilities with the Amir Sher Ali of Afganistan, which culminated in the Second Afgan War, were the subject of much adverse criticism among the most moderate but enlightened Indians in all parts of the country. It was recognized that the people should organize themselves to ventilate their grievances." "The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon (1880-84) gave the necessary stimulus and encouragement." In the beginning the movement received the support of such Englishmen as John Bright and O. O. Hume. Among the Indian leaders of the movement were Dadhabai Naoroji, W. C. Bonnerjee, P. M. Mehta, K. T. Telang, A. M. Bose (a prominent member of the Sadharan Brahma Somaj) and B. Tyabji. The fundamental principles of the Congress were (and are):

Firstly, the fusion into one national whole of all

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the different and discordant elements that constitute the population of India.

Secondly, the gradual regeneration along all lines, mental, moral, social and political, of the nation, and

Thirdly, the consolidation of union between England and India, by securing the modification of such conditions as may be unjust or injurious to the latter country.

The Congress is a deliberative body which holds its sessions every year during the Christmas vacation. It reviews the work of the government, and through its resolutions offers constructive suggestions for the improvement of the government, and for definite reforms in matters relating to sanitation, agriculture, education, etc. Its influence has been considerably felt by the government because it represents the opinion of the educated classes of India, who are practically leaders in every sphere of life. The educated classes have been subjected to constant attacks not only by "irresponsible critics in the press, but even by gentlemen who have held high and responsible office in India." They have been described as quite opposed to the interests of the masses, which is far from being true. They have also been charged with being disloyal to the British Government. A significant answer to this was given by Lord Sinha, the Under-Secretary of State for India (the first Indian raised to English peerage) in "a remarkable speech at the Savoy Hotel, London." "I should like to take this opportunity to enter a solemn protest, not so much against scornful

sneers or offensive epithets, for these may be left to be their own answer, but against the idea that appears still to prevail in certain quarters, that the educated classes of India are unfriendly to British rule. If by British rule is meant autocracy and domination in the name and under the garb of efficiency, we are opposed to it. We should not be worthy of our education if we were not."

In recent years in the Indian National Congress there has been certain divergence of views regarding the methods of political action. A certain class of Indian nationalists do not approve of the idea of petitioning the government for the adoption of much needed reform measures. They think that the begging attitude of the leaders has made the Government more hostile to the Congress work. They, therefore, advocate the policy of self-help. Repeated disappointments in carrying out reform proposals and in fulfilling promises announced by the Indian Government and by the British Parliament, have driven a certain class of men to this view. They want to abandon the policy of "mendicancy" as they call it. On the other hand a class of young men have organized revolutionary (militaristic) propaganda because of their disappointment in not having achieved their political rights. Finding some of the important channels through which they de-

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1. Christian Science Monitor. April 24, 1919.

sired to express their emotional and volitional life (freedom of speech and of the press) blocked to a great extent, they adopted extreme measures, - measures contrary to the whole trend of Indian thought and culture. A wise statesmanship like that of Lord Hardiage (Viceroy of India, 1910-16) could have averted this danger. Rabindranath Tagore pointed out in emphatic terms in the year 1908 and after, that such an extreme course would show an entire misreading of Indian history on the part of these youthful revolutionaries. Mr. M. K. Gandhi, the champion of the Indian Passive Resistance movement, in South Africa and the Non-Violent Non-Cooperation movement in India held similar views and wanted to lead the people on paths of peace. While a small class of revolutionary young men would thus sever all connection with the British Empire, the Congress did not desire anything of that kind until recently.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary what is desired, and what practically all India wanted and asked for, was Home Rule within the British Empire, - Home Rule like that of Canada, Australia and South Africa. As showing how universal is this desire of the Indian people, it may be noted that the All-India Moslem League, the National organization of the 57 million Indian Mohammedans, has united with the Congress in its demand for Home Rule.

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1. At a meeting of the Congress held in August, 1920, a policy of non-violent non-cooperation with the government was adopted. It was a protest against the excesses committed by the military forces under martial law in the Punjab and other parts of India in the spring of 1919. Even then the Indian National Congress was not dogmatically opposed to the British connection.

A joint session of the two bodies held in Bombay in September, 1918, passed the following resolution: "Resolved, that this (United) Congress declares that the people of India are fit for responsible government, and repudiate the assumption to the contrary contained in the report on Indian Constitutional Reforms."

It is one of the most remarkable signs of this unity that Hindus and Mohammedans have fraternized in public places like streets, temples and mosques during recent years. The Brahmo Somaj feels confident that the progressive social and religious ideas, for which it has stood and fought for nearly a century, are about to be recognized by the majority of the people of India, as the best possible means for attaining nationhood. The new nationalist program, therefore, tries to mitigate the rigor of caste distinctions. It also repudiates

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1. A notable example of fraternization between Mohammedans and Hindus is published in The World and New Dispensation, May 29, 1919. "A distinguished Mohammedan lays the foundation stone of a Hindu Temple. On the 30th of December, 1918, a very interesting and unique function took place at Jalalpur. The Hindu temple of Nandadulal Jieu at that village, being in a ruinous condition, Vaisnava Bhaktas of Calcutta and of the locality made arrangement for erecting a new temple in place of the old one, and the 30th of December last was fixed for laying the foundation stone of the same. At 2 P.M. Khan Bahadur Moulvi Asanulla, Inspector of Schools, Presidency Division, arrived at the place. His devotion was well known to the organizers and he was unanimously elected president of the meeting. He delivered a touching speech permeated by love and devotion and then amidst sweet Sankirtan laid the foundation of the temple. This is a unique event in our religious world and marks great progress in the liberalization of religious ideas.

in theory and practice the irreconcilable relation of the Hindu and the Mohammedans. And last though not the least, the programme gives full scope to the women of the land for cooperation in the service of the Indian people. These are a few of the points in the constructive programme of the Indian National Congress. These show the vitality of a new nation in the making - a nation which many hope will be able to transcend the sordid and selfish limitations of a nationalism so characteristic of the West and which Japan has so successfully imitated.

## IX

### CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST PART.

I have surveyed the story of the Brahma Somaji in the briefest compass possible. I have also tried to show how its influence has affected different departments of Indian life; how it has leavened the whole Indian Society and given to it a new tone; and, above all, how much it has done to awaken the self-consciousness of a nation. In the course of less than a century it has discovered the organizing principle of national life - the reconciliation of races and religions through the recognition of God in man and woman. The other progressive religious movements have accepted a few phases of its ideal and have achieved important results. The ideal in its entirety was

not accepted by the Indian people in the beginning. There was a great deal of opposition to it on all sides. The catastrophic changes brought about by the world war pointed to the immediate necessity for the acceptance of it as the only practicable goal toward which the whole nation could move if it hoped to be a power for enduring good and service to sister nations. The programme of the Brahma Somaj, therefore, deserves the attention of all interested in India.

In the nineties a well-known Indian speaker declared:  
 "India is not dead but sleepeth!"<sup>1</sup> There were many in those days who did not believe that she was either dead or asleep, but knew that she was awake. Today one can boldly assert that India is wide awake. Indeed, not only men but women and children, princes and peasants, students and clerks, employers and laborers - all give evidence of being awake and conscious of what is happening in the world. India's only prayer today is that she may never experience that sleep which knows no waking. To politicians and diplomats, press reporters and "globe trotters", novelists and Christian missionary propagandists, this fact seems to be an enigma - a marvellous mystery of the present century! But it should be remembered that everything is not veiled and mysterious in India as it is represented by

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1. Mr. B. C. Pal (formerly Brahma Somaj scholar at Manchester College, Oxford) at present Editor, the Bengalee, Calcutta, and Member of the Indian Legislative Assembly.



interested propagandists. Hindu and Mohammedan unity is a fact. Left to themselves they are not going to "cut each other's throat". The reconciliation of races and religions - the ideal of the Brahma Somaj as represented in its latest development, has been accepted. Hindus and Mohammedans, Buddhists and Christians, Jews and Parsis have united to work out their own salvation with diligence. Mahatma Gandhi stands not only for Hindu-Moslem unity but a wider "Hindu-Moslem-Jew-Christian-Parsi" unity. The programme of the Brahma Somaj will be worked out. The voice of the sceptic and unsympathetic exclaims: "It is stranger than fiction!" But who does not know that truth is stranger than fiction. India stands today in broad daylight, with her children numbering more than 315 millions - a united nation, reaching forward to new achievements.

India no doubt has had her dark ages, and yet it is difficult to designate any entire period as a dark age for the whole of India, as some writers have done. In the last century the contribution of Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Comparative Religion has already been accepted and appreciated by many who have worked in this field. An adequate estimation of the contribution of Debendranath Tagore and Keshub Chunder Sen to the sources of Psychology and the Philosophy of Religion has not yet been completed. When it is made, it will be sure to reveal the depth, originality and many-sidedness of the religious experience of these two great sons of India. India has reasons to be proud of

the achievements of her sons, but this pride is not a narrow national pride. Here nationality and rationality have joined hands. She may well be proud that she has not sacrificed her rationality to nationality.

In the twentieth century, Rabindranath Tagore is an outstanding figure in world literature. He has shown to the Western world the richness and the beauty which not only stimulate the human mind but also unify the ~~human~~ human personality in its quest for realization (Sadhana). The religions of India enjoin discipline, but it is a discipline which is free and spontaneous like the spontaneity (lila) of God. What is needed to-day most in India is that spontaneity. Whatever forces retard this process of spontaneity, whether in religion or politics, in social or economic life, must be removed and overcome.

In the field of Science the works of Dr. B. N. Seal, Sir J. C. Bose,<sup>1</sup> Sir P. C. Ray and a host of other workers from the younger generation, have proved conclusively that the Indian genius is constructive and synthetic. It has already gained recognition from those scholars and scientists who have no

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1. Dr. J. T. Sunderland writes in the Christian Register - "Dr. Bose believes that the Indian mind is well adapted to scientific study and research, and that India is an excellent field for original scientific work. He hopes to raise up under his own immediate supervision a body of trained young men of exceptionally high qualifications who will

other interests save those of the republic of kindred spirits.

I must say a few words with regard to the many misrepresentations concerning India which are circulated in the West through the press, pulpit, platform and printed page by certain interested press reporters, travellers, preachers and Christian missionaries. These misrepresentations have already done immense harm to the cause of bringing about a better relation between the East and the West. Notwithstanding the prophecy of imperialists like Kipling that "the twain shall never meet" except under the stress of military life, there is every reason to believe that they are bound to meet. They have already met on the higher platform of thought. After the termination of the war the world has become very doubtful about unity and fellowship worked up under the pressure of militarism. The meeting of the East and the West, will be hastened when poets like Kipling cease to sing in that strain, and when ignorant or prejudiced persons cease to make distorted and baseless

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(Footnote continued from p. 59)  
devote their lives to the task of bringing India once more to the front in scientific achievements. Even more than that, - he hopes to make his institute of service in some degree to other lands and to universal science, and not alone to India. It possesses better facilities for carrying on certain specific lines of scientific research than are to be found anywhere else in the world, and he wishes to have these put to the widest use. In a private letter he writes: 'It is my desire to have the facilities of the Institute offered free to scholars from all parts of the world. I feel that the nations of the world ought to be brought nearer to one another through knowledge. I should welcome scholars from America.'

statements concerning India and its people. A new interpretation of India to the Western world is a pressing need of the age. And this interpretation must be conducted in a non-partisan spirit, a spirit which, while thoroughly national, aims also to be in the fullest sense, international. The Brahma Somaj is capable of rendering this service and it can claim in this work as allies the Unitarians of England and America.

As regards Christian Missionaries it is high time that their friends and supporters in their own lands should know the truth first hand, instead of through the colored glasses of some of their representatives, who instead of making friends among the Indians, alienate a large and influential section of the people and make them hostile to the beautiful teachings of Jesus - the value of which every intelligent Hindu recognizes. The practicability of Jesus' teachings has been adequately demonstrated in the recent political upheaval. Christian missionaries will do well to remember that if, instead of preaching certain theological dogmas about Christ, they will try to live like him and to imbibe his spirit, their mission will be more fruitful, even if they are not able to show greatly increased figures in their conversion statistics. The Brahma

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1. Sunderland, J. T. - Christian Mission in India: Will India Become Christian? - The New World, March 1898.
- Pratt, J. B. - India and Its Faith.
- Fleming, D. J. - Marks of a World Christian.

Somaj has no quarrel with the Christian missionaries. It has received a great deal of inspiration from them. It has also endeavored as far as possible to co-operate with them. When the officers of the Salvation Army were thrown into prison by the English government officials, the Brahma Somaj not only raised its own voice of protest against the unjust action, but succeeded in arousing the whole Indian community to a united condemnation of it. Some of the Christian missionaries have left their denominations to help the people in the struggle for freedom.<sup>1</sup> They have been trying to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and wherever they have gone they have received a cordial welcome. Jesus is no longer looked upon with suspicion as a foreign divinity.

As Keshub Chunder Sen in the last century declared it to be his mission to vindicate India, Asia and Jesus Christ, so a new vindication of India seems to be devolving on the present and the coming generations.<sup>2</sup> There is no worse enemy for a nation in the making, than self-conceit and over-estimation of its own strength; but there is nothing so harmful as abject humiliation and a sense of inferiority poured into its ear in

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1. Rev. C. F. Andrews (of the Cambridge Brotherhood), Mr. F. E. Stokes ( a Quaker from Philadelphia), the late Prof. W. W. Pearson (of the London Missionary Society's College, Calcutta), and others.

2. Sen, Keshub Chunder - Asia's Message to Europe, in Lectures in India, Vol. II, Third Edition, Calcutta., B.T.S. p. 362.

season and out of season. This harm has been done by certain interested groups who cater to the reading public of the West. There is a considerable amount of good literature relating to India. For those who want to study India and its problems a bibliography will be found at the end of the book.

There are many who like Rabindranath Tagore believe that the main Indian problem is social. There are others who think that it is political or industrial. Doubtless there is a great deal of truth in all these views. To me, the main Indian problem seems a human one, with social emphasis, but one which includes the political and the economic. India as a part of humanity has to face almost the same problems, whether social, political, religious or economical, as are to be found in other countries. The problems of race, religion and nationality require a solution everywhere. The Brahma Somaj has offered a solution, and the working out of its programme in India will be eagerly watched. The terrible world war has revealed the fact that the different nations are parts of the body of humanity. They cannot stand apart from one another, but if they can get a standing place at all (as in some kind of a League of Nations) they must stand as equals. Any distortion, defect or disease

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1. Tagore, Rabindranath - Nationalism p. 117.
2. "The existence of great civilized communities denied self-government is not only a menace to democracy, but to peace. The European world is still in danger of fighting to determine who shall be the masters of those communities. There is only one way to settle that - for no one to be their masters."

--Norman Angell.

in one part of the body is sure to deface or injure the whole body, if not today at least in the near future. Five years after the termination of the World War we must take time to pause and consider. In the midst of a world suffering terribly from the effects of war, into which India was drawn and in which she played her part, she stands to-day before the bar of humanity not begging for pity on account of her sufferings and sorrows, but asking for justice, which is the cause of God and Man. India pleads for herself and for humanity in the words of Keshub Chunder Sen --

"Whence this plaintive and mournful cry, which so profoundly distresses the patriot's breast? It seems that a whole continent is writhing in agony beneath the lash of oppression, and sending forth from the depths of its heart a deep wail of woe..... Who is it that weeps? Do ye hear? It is India that weeps. Nay, not India only; all Asia cries. Behold the sweet angel of the East, into whose beauty the very colors of heaven seem to have been woven, - the fair East, 'in russet marble clad,' lies prostrate a bleeding prisoner! Who can measure the length and breadth, the height and depth of Asia's sufferings? She has no peace; she knows no consolation. And what is the burden of her complaint? The desperate onslaught of Europe's haughty civilization, she says, has brought sorrow into her heart, ignominy on her fair name, and death to

her cherished institutions. Many there are in Europe who hold that all beyond the Ural, to the remotest shores of the Pacific is afflicted with moral leprosy, that Eastern humanity is black as an Ethiop's skin, the soil of Asia yields nothing but wretchedness and iniquity, and that chaos and darkness, twin sisters, hold their sway over the whole land.....Her scriptures tell lies, her prophets are all imposters, her people, - men, women and children, - are all untruthful and deceitful..... The entire continent is given to ignorance and barbarism and heathenism; and nothing good, it is said, can come out of the accursed land..... Europe has for many long years been fighting and warring with Asia, and like sworn foe, carrying on depredations into the uttermost part of the East. Most sanguinary and deadly has this war been, verily it has no parallel in the annals of the world. It has perpetrated frightful havoc among the nations of the East. Even now the war rages with unabated fury. Europe, why do thy eyes still roll in wild fury and insatiate antagonism, as if bent upon Asia's total annihilation? The night is over, and light has dawned upon the horrors of the battlefield. Dost thou not see, O Europe, to what an appalling extent thou hast carried this work of national slaughter? What a heartrending spectacle of bloodshed and carnage, degradation and misery, is here opened to our view! Alas! Before the formidable artillery of Europe's aggressive civiliza-



tion the scriptures and prophets, the language and literature of the East, nay her customs and manners, her social and domestic institutions and her very industries have undergone a cruel slaughter. The rivers that flow eastward and the rivers that flow westward are crimson with Asiatic gore; yea, with the best blood of Oriental life. Enough, Stay, Europe. Desist from this sanguinary strife. No more war. This flag of the New Dispensation I hold before thee is a flag of truce and reconciliation.<sup>1</sup> There shall be no more war, but henceforth peace and amity, brotherhood and friendliness." (Asia's Message to Europe.)

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1. A representation of the flag of the New Dispensation can be seen on the cover of P. C. Marceendar's "The Heart Beats", Boston, Geo. H. Ellis.

"I avow my faith in Theism, and (so) become a member of the Brahmo Somaj."

Declaration signed by Keshub Chunder Sen and Charles Henry Appleton Dall in 1871.

"The wide universe is the temple of God, a heart full of pure thoughts is the best place of pilgrimage, truth is the everlasting scripture, faith is the foundation of religion, goodwill is the supreme discipline."

Gour Govinda Roy of the Brahmo Somaj of India.

"Wherever a man comes, there comes a revolution. The old is for slaves. When a man comes, all books are legible, all things are transparent, all religions are forms. He is religious. Man is the wonder worker."

Ralph Waldo Emerson in the "Divinity School Address."

## Part II.

## (Theological).

It is extremely difficult for an outsider (one who has no Hindu background) to understand the intricacies of Hindu theology. The presence of technical terms and the names and attributes of gods and goddesses with their quasi-divine forms make the mythology (on which theology is based) so complicated that even very few Hindus have an intelligent conception of its ramifications and symbolism. Owing to the mythological way of thinking which prevails among the masses in India to a considerable extent even at the present day, the significance of the Hindu deities is seldom understood in its fulness. On the other hand the dominance of a monistic Vedanta philosophy (in its various forms e.g. non-dualistic, absolute, modified, etc.) among the intelligent classes has a tendency to obscure the power for making distinction especially in the matter of practical morality. This state of things is to be deplored because of the lack of clear thinking which results from the inability to make distinction. Of course, the intelligentsia do not lack any power to make very subtle distinctions in all metaphysical discussions. William James observed this in the course of his remarks about the Vedanta philosophy.<sup>1</sup> This difference between the intelligentsia and

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1. James, W. - Pragmatism. (a)

the masses created a dualistic social philosophy. It encouraged a pantheistic theology and created a polytheistic ritual for the masses. The weakness of such a system has not been fully comprehended by the intelligentsia until recently.

Between the establishment of the Brahma Somaj (about seventy-five years after the gain of ascendancy by the English as a political power) and the reign of Akbar the Great (1556-1605) whose ideas of harmony of religions and a "Divine Monotheism" offered a theme for Tennyson's Akbar's Dream, there were several religious movements somewhat protestant in their nature which emphasised the Bhakti (or loving devotion, faith) element in religion. These devotional religious movements as inaugurated by Nanank, Ramanand, Kabir, Chaitanya, Tukaram, Namdeva and others were monotheistic though they tried to link up with the ancient ideals of the Upanishads in some way or other. They were humanistic in their outlook and they also aimed at reformation of both the Hindu and the Mohammedan societies (e.g. the mitigation of caste restrictions or its total abolition).<sup>1</sup> They were the forerunners of the Brahma Somaj.

When the Brahma Somaj started on its career of reformation, it claimed to revive the worship of the Brahman, the

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1. Carpenter, J. E. - Theism in Mediaeval India.  
Bhandarkar, P. G. - Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems.

Supreme Spirit of the Upanishads, the Param Brahma of the Vedanta philosophy. This Brahman is neuter, attributeless. It is described as neti, neti, (not this, not this) in the Vedanta. According to this philosophy the Brahman who can be worshipped is saguna (with attributes). He is the Aparam Brahma. The Brahmo Somaj resuscitated the worship of the saguna Brahma but it did not reject the nirguna. Owing to the protestant character of its origin it stressed the nirguna aspects more than the saguna ones. The complaint that the Unitarians stress the negative aspect of theology was applied to the Brahmo Somaj by its unfavorable critics. Along with the restoration of the Unitarian worship, the use of all forms of symbols, sacrifices, and even certain kinds of musical instruments used in the polytheistic or popular Hindu worship, was prohibited. Hindu orthodoxy did not find anything revolutionary in those procedures so long as the social system was untouched. But the formal opening of the Brahmo Somaj was almost synchronised by the legal abolition of the rite of Suttee (i.e. the self-immolation of the widow on the funeral pyre of her husband). The measure was legalised through the agencies of the Government by the founder of the Brahmo Somaj. That was the first frontal attack which Hindu Orthodoxy received at the hands of the Brahmo Somaj. Theologically, the position taken by the Brahmo Somaj was not an innovation. Hindu society has

always tolerated differences in belief. The Brahma Somaj failed to evoke sufficient theological opposition at first because the majority of the members conformed easily to the social practices of Hindu orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> The crux of the problem lay there.

Hinduism is a vast socio-religious system with all kinds of beliefs. So long as one conforms to the practices, he is a Hindu whatever belief he may hold theologically. Here again is a dualism which may appear quite contrary to a monistic philosophy. The Brahma Somaj in the next stage of its development tried to remove this contradiction. Through contact with deism and rationalism (European) it finally grew into a kind of ethical idealism.

Though there are individuals in the Brahma Somaj who lean towards different schools of philosophy, Indian and European (e.g. those of Shankar, Ramanuja, Madhva, Chaitanya, Kant, Hegel, Eucken, Bergson), the main note has been ethical idealism. Like the liberal movement in Christianity, the Brahma Somaj has allowed freedom to all its members as regards their choice of philosophy though it has never moved away from its theistic (or rather monotheistic) theology. The theism of the

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1. For an account of the earliest opposition see Ram Mohan Roy's "A Defence of Hindu Theism in reply to the attack of an Advocate for Idolatry at Madras."

Brahmo Somaj in contrast with the polytheism and pantheism of popular Hinduism is a new product. It is synthetic, idealistic, humanistic and subjective - objective. Above all it is a new way of life which has been made possible on account of the meeting of the East and the West on Indian soil.

In the early days of the Brahmo Somaj, the Vedas, the Scripture of Hinduism were recognized as authoritative. Selections from the Vedas were read by Brahmin readers only at the weekly meetings which later developed into service of worship. But the readings were given an anteroom so that the members of the congregation belonging to castes other than the Brahmin would not be able to listen to the sacred reading. Such a practice was quite in keeping with Orthodoxy as it accepted the claim of Brahmins<sup>1</sup> only to their right to the reading and hearing of the divine love. This shows the conservative tendency of the early days. Such a state of affairs had a parallel in the history of New England Unitarianism. "The Unitarians were liberals in theology but conservative in everything else. That does not put the case quite fairly for theologically, the Unitarians, while liberal, were not progressive. They believed that they had returned to the oldest and purest form of Christianity,....."<sup>1</sup> The case was exactly similar as regards

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1. Fenn, W. W. - Religious History of New England, Section "The Unitarians".

the early Brahmos. They believed that they had restored pure or unadulterated Hinduism. Unfortunately historical knowledge concerning Hinduism was very inadequate in those days. Consequently the Brahmos could entertain such ideas. As regards its appeal to ancient Hindu Scriptures, the early Brahmos resembled the Unitarians. The Unitarians of England and America, therefore, recognized them as fellow Unitarian Hindus.

The Supreme Spirit with all his attributes is the object of worship in the Brahmo Somaj. He is Ishwar, Bhagavan and is also addressed as Hari in the Church of the New Dispensation. It is to be noted that the Brahman of the Brahmo Somaj is not impersonal but He is both personal and impersonal. The former element, of course, is more stressed in all prayers addressed to Him. But the Brahmo Somaj strongly repudiates the theory of incarnation in a special sense i.e. it does not believe in any exclusive human mediator or savior who equals God. It rejects the Hindu and the Christian theories of incarnation.

The Hindu theory of avatar (incarnation) is different from the Christian, though it is an adjunct to the personal God conception. Instead of one incarnation the Hindu claims ten. It begins with the fish incarnation and passes through the tortoise, the boar and the dwarf, until it comes to Ram, Krishna,



and Buddha. The theory fits in with the Hindu world cycles.<sup>1</sup> These incarnations are the manifestations of the Aparam Brahma. He has three functions creation, perservation, and destruction. Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, the three personal aspects of the godhead are represented by the Hindu Trimurti (three figures or images). The representation of the first aspect i.e. Brahma has four faces. This<sup>alone</sup> God has four faces. The three functional deities are symbolic of Hindu trinity. They are interdependent as regards their functions when they are without any reference to their devotees but are independent when they are in relation with their devotees. Here is a distinction which will be helpful in preventing the confusion which is likely to arise. These gods come into prominence in the Puranas, a vast body of popular literature to which scriptural significance is attached by the orthodox Hindus.<sup>2</sup> Some of them at least are of very recent origin. They are considered as the fifth Veda and are meant only for those who are outside the group of the twice borns i.e. the first three original castes (the priest-scholar, the warrior-statesman, the farmer-trader). In its early days the Brahmo Somaj rejected this body of literature so far as their scriptural value was concern<sup>ed</sup>. In a way the Puranas were banned

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1. Martin, E. O. - The Gods of India, pp. 107-118.  
Nivedita and Coomarswamy - Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists.  
pp. 389ff.

2. The more important ones about eighteen in number deal with cosmology, theology, history, morals, etc. The earliest ones date about two or three centuries B.C.

for their three hundred and thirty million dieties. In this way the Brahmo Somaj prepared the way for its Unitarian theology. Their Unitarian fellow workers in the West were not confronted with three hundred and thirty million gods and goddesses.

The Vedas and the Upanishads which supplied the basis for Brahmo theology are a collection of different kinds of literature like the Scriptures of different religions.<sup>1</sup> The Upanishads contain many metaphysical and moral discussions. They are even called Vedanta in as much as they are placed at the end of the Vedas in the same way as metaphysics was named by Aristotle. The Upanishads do not discuss any particular type of doctrine only (e.g. monotheism, tritheism, materialism, pantheism), but their pages are replete with all kinds of doctrines. Any one with a favorite theory of his own can read into it what he wants. Certain parts of the Upanishads at least reminds one of Plato's works or the more modern writings of G. Lowes Dickinson.<sup>2</sup> The Brahmo Somaj from its early days very naturally sought support for its monotheism in the Upanishadic texts (e.g. ekamevadwitiyam or Brahma is alone and has no second; OM tat sat or Brahma alone is true; Satyamjnanam-anantam or true, wise, infinite).

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1. Denssen, P. - The Philosophy of the Upanishads.
2. The Modern Symposium, Justice and Liberty, etc.

But later when it was discovered by Devandranath Tagore that there had been other elements besides monotheistic, a thorough study was made by scholars trained at Benares, the seat of ancient Hindu learning. The result was the relinquishing of the sole authority of the Vedas in the matter of proving the monotheism of the Somaj. That was in 1850 and it marked the end of a definite period.

Reason and heart were appealed <sup>to</sup> by the leaders of the Somaj. Vedantism was discarded no doubt but not the Vedanta. By Vedantism was meant pantheistic doctrines and texts which might be used by the opponents of the Brahma Somaj in support of polytheism. Pantheism was banned from the Brahma Somaj and the writings of Debendranath Tagore and Keshub Chunder Sen show<sup>ed</sup> that they dreaded pantheism almost as much as they did polytheism. The Brahma Somaj next turned more aggressively towards the West, near and far.

First of all a book of scriptural readings was compiled by Debendranath Tagore. It was based on Hindu scriptures but all passages which <sup>had</sup> any pantheistic tinge or referred to the doctrines of Maya and Avatar (Incarnation) were expunged and portions were recast with a view to fit in the monotheistic scheme.<sup>1</sup> Here is <sup>a</sup> notable example. A litany which forms part

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1. Autobiography of Mahrshi Debendranath Tagore, p. 85  
Faith and Progress of the Brahma Somaj. p. 27.

of the order of service in the Adi and the Sadharan Brahma Somajes was remodelled thus:

The original as taken from the Mahanirvantantra.

"Thou art real existence, Thou art the refuge of all worlds, salutation to Thee. Thou art intelligenc, Thou art the Self of Universal forms, salutation to Thee, salutation to Thee. Thou art one without a second, Thou art the giver of salutation, salutation to Thee. Thou art the great One, the all-pervading and free from all attributes, salutation to Thee."

"Thou art the one great guide, Thou art the one great object of worship, Thou art the only cause of the world, and the Universal form art Thou. Thou art the one creator of all, the protector, the destroyer. Thou art One, the highest, the unshaken, the immovable and free from all modifications."

"Thou art the Fear of fear itself, Terror of terror itself, Thou art the goal of all living beings, Thou art the purifier of all that purifies, Thou alone art the appointer of all those who rule on high places, Thou art greatest of the great, and the protector of the protectors."

"Oh Thou great God! Oh Lord! Thou art in every form, Thou art indestructible and inscrutable. Oh Truthful one! Thou canst not be reached by any of our senses, our mind cannot comprehend Thee, Oh Thou, undecayable one! All-pervading and

unmanifested is Thy nature. Thou art the manifester of all the Universe and ruler thereof, protect us from all evils, Oh Lord!"

"Thee one alone do we constantly remember. Thy one name do we constantly recite. Thee, Oh witness of the Universe! we humbly adore. Thou art the Supreme and the Absolute Lord, the ship in this ocean of the Universe, we take shelter under Thee." (III 59-63).

A comparison of the above with the following revision made by Debendranath Tagore will prove what the discarding Vedantism means:-

"O Thou Spirit of Truth and First Cause of this universe, thou Essence of wisdom and the support of all that is, we salute thee. Thou art our saviour and only God, the One without a second, eternal and all pervading Brahma, we salute thee. Thou alone art the refuge of all things, Thou alone art worthy of homage, Thou alone art the protector of this universe, and self-revealed; Thou alone art the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe, Thou alone art the most high, fixed and unfaltering of purpose. Thou alone art the terror of all terrors, and terrific amongst those that terrify; Thou alone art the goal of all creatures and the purest of the pure; Thou alone art the ruler of the mighty, higher than the highest, and defender of those that protect. Thee we meditate upon, Thee we worship, thou art the witness of this universe, before thee we

prostrate ourselves. O thou One and only Spirit of Truth, Thou upholder of the universe, Lord of all, wholly self-reliant, Thou ship amidst the ocean of this life, we cling to Thee alone as our only refuge."

A comparison of the two passages quoted above will show that the fourth paragraph of the first selection has been dropped entirely from the second one because of its predominantly pantheistic character. Again, important changes have been made in the first part of the second selection to fit in the cosmological argument without betraying the slightest leaning towards pantheism. In the first selection (Paragraph I) appears the expression "free from attributes" which is a qualification of the nirguna Brahma. This has been replaced in the second selection by the attribute "eternal". Deben-dranath in his Autobiography writes: "According to the Brahm-dharna, God is the creator, not the substance of the world". Indian philosophy has developed the conception of substance. Western philosophy has been concerned more with personality.

The Brahmo Somaj rejects the idea of a Savior or Savior-God. It's stress on immediacy places it on the same level as the movement of the Quakers.

The situation in the Brahmo Somaj had a strong resemblance to the position which was later taken by Charles Voysey, who had been<sup>a</sup> curate in the Church of England in the sixties.<sup>1</sup> In his extreme reaction against the Trinitarian orthodoxy he started a Theistic Church in London (which had among its friends Charles Darwin and Sir Charles Lyell). In the book of service which he compiled, he left out all references to the New Testament and Jesus. He based his Theism on the Old Testament. Jesus was his bete noire. There are others who also leave Jesus out of all consideration. For example, the Positivist Calendar of Saints has Buddha, Paul, and the Church Fathers but no mention of Jesus Christ. An English Positivist told me that Jesus Christ was considered God by the Christians. According to Positivist opinion, Jesus Christ belongs to the group of divinities like Zeus, Horus, Adonis, Appollo, Ra, Vishnu, Shiva. Therefore he could not have any place in a calendar of human saints. The reaction of the second leader of

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1. Theistic Annual (1873) Edited by P. C. Mozoomdar.

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the Brahma Somaj and of others inside that body was similar. Reject every name which has the least semblance to the savior conception for it has been noticed again and again <sup>that</sup> saviors usurp the throne of the most high God. Of all countries in the world, India has the largest Mohammedan population. The members of the Brahma Somaj have imbibed the spirit of Islam to a certain extent. They are uncompromising in their protestant attitude to a Man-God, a Savior-God conception.

In this stand against popular Hindu idolatry, the leaders of the Brahma Somaj show a striking similiarity with Luther's attempt to reform Christianity. Many in India today deplore the way in which the members of the Somaj were forced out of the orthodox Hindu community. Reformation from within was impossible unless they compromised their main principles. The opposition from the orthodox Hindus did not develop so fully until the younger generation led by Keshub Chunder Sen outlined and put into practice a definite programme of social reform. The difference in respect of anthropology was greater than that in theology. Hence the opposition of orthodoxy was directed more to the social programme than to the theology of the Somaj. The religious history of New England affords similar illustration.

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1. "The Divinity of Jesus Christ, Christ the only Mediator and Savior of mankind, such doctrines were repugnant to his austere Monotheism." - Autobiography of Maharahi Debendranath Tagore, Introduction, p. x.



With the taking of every new step, the God of the Brahma Somaj also moved. He could longer remain "the God of our forefathers, the Supreme Spirit" only. He became endowed with attributes, metaphysical and moral. Debendranath Tagore's contact with the Sufi and Sikh religious literature enriched the content of the term God. Later Keshub Chunder Sen's study of the Bible, his contact with the Christian missionaries and writers, his friendship with the sadhus and bhaktas (saints and devotees) of India, and last of all his correspondence with the Unitarians and Theists of the West, intensified the God consciousness to such an extent that the movement took a new term. In 1876, it became a devotional movement, a movement of the people and came in line with its predecessors.

The bhakti movement in the Somaj was also opposed by certain members.<sup>1</sup> The result was a split. The Sadharan Brahma Somaj which grew out of the protest against the devotional developments in the Somaj decided to stay at the same place where the Brahma Somaj of India had stood in 1866. It is to be remembered that Keshub Chunder Sen followed the analytic method in the first part of his life. The rest of the members followed Keshub.

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1. The beginnings of bhakti can be traced in the Upanishads. See Sir R. G. Bhandarkar's Vaisnavism, Saivism and other Minor Cults. The bhakti movement in its beginning was opposed by the Seceders from the Brahma Somaj of India who formed the Sadharan Brahma Somaj. The marriage of Keshub Chunder Sen's daughter to the young prince of Cooch Behar was the immediate cause of the secession.

Rationalism was a characteristic of the members of the Brahmo Somaj from the very beginning. Those who had left the present society could not but be rationalists. But the followers of the devotional development in the seventies wanted something more than mere rationalism. They wanted to reconcile it with faith just as the idealistic philosophers of Europe tried to do. But the Brahmo Somaj was primarily a religious movement. It was not a school of philosophy though it always sought the aid of philosophy and science. It needed emotional stimulation in its worship and way of living. Besides, the appreciative study of Christianity as represented by the life and teachings of Jesus and his followers had made a great difference in the lives of a great many. They could not remain satisfied with Deism, and Natural Theism alone. They need<sup>ed</sup> a Spiritual Theism which was to be based on Pure or Natural Theism as they put it. In fact, those who followed the devotional trend never abandoned their Pure Theism.

In order to understand this development one will have to estimate the influence of Deism and European philosophers on the leaders of the Brahmo Somaj. Born in the latter half of the eighteenth century Ram Mohan Roy caught the spirit of the French Revolution. He might have been also familiar with the writings of English Deists and the continental Rationalists. The rationalism of Ram Mohan brought on him the opprobriousness of orthodox Hindus and Christians notwithstanding the fact that he preserved caste

and the sacred thread, leaned on the authority of the Vedas, and accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior though not as the Supreme Deity. A somewhat similar case was that of Descartes, the founder of modern philosophy, who did not antagonize the church but left open the way to recognition by the church. Ram Mohan Roy's position was somewhat similar. That is the reason why after ninety-five years, an orthodox Hindu describes him thus: "He combined in himself the best elements of European and Asiatic ideals. In spirituality he was a Vedantist, and in morality he was a follower of Christ." <sup>1</sup> Because of his Vedantism, he is considered today as a Hindu of Hindus. Sir John Woodroffe's (Arthur Avalon) statement bears this out.<sup>2</sup> Referring to the Shakti<sup>3</sup> of Tantra, he writes "it is a form of Vedanta, for all which is truly Indian must be that". The problem of Ram Mohan Roy is baffling indeed as Keshub Chunder Sen pointed out in one of his discourses. Keshub realised it fully and tried to harmonise Ram Mohan and Debendranath as Sir William Hamilton tried to reconcile Scottish and German thought as represented by Reid and Kant.

The name Theistic Church which the Brahma Somaj adopted from the time of Debendranath Tagore was used in refutation of the charge of deism, atheism, etc., preferred against it by many

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1. Sen, D. C. History of Bengali Language and Literature, pp. 717-719.
2. Woodroffe, Sir J. G. - Shakti and Maya, p. 14.
3. Sorley, W. R. - A History of English Philosophy, p. 237.

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sincere religionists, Hindu and Christian. Some of them thought the Brahmos could not pray to God.. Rev. C. H. A. Dall, the American Unitarian Missionary in India, in his short account of the Brahmo Somaj described a meeting of young men, which had been held in a Calcutta College during the young days of Keshub Chunder Sen, with a view to discuss the need for prayers. The meeting was presided over by Rev. Mr. Long, a Presbyterian Missionary and a good friend of Indian agricultural laborers. At that meeting besides Messers Long and Dall, there was another orthodox Christian missionary. Young Keshub Chender Sen introduced a resolution to the effect that Hindu young men were to cultivate the habit of prayer. The chairman, Mr. Long, disallowed it because he could not see how young Keshub and his friends could offer a prayer to God unless they prayed to the Trinity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Mr. Dall sympathised with Keshub Chunder but could not do anything to reverse the judgement of his orthodox Christian brother missionary. The remaining member of the Christian missionary group sided with Mr. Long. On the other side orthodox Hindus thought that the formless God of the Brahmos could not be worshipped. No wonder that rationalism developed among the

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1. Sen, K. C. - Lectures in India, Vol. I. "The Brahmo Somaj Vindicated."

younger generation. They were trained in the school of European logic and philosophy. That training was reflected in their speeches, writings, and actions.

Accepting the assertion for arguments sake, that the early Brahmos were Deists and Rationalist, it cannot be denied that like their Christian predecessors of Europe they did a great deal of jungle clearing in the field of Hindu mythological - theological notions. That was their contribution to modern Indian thought and its soundness could not be doubted. The discussions carried by the members of the Brahmo Somaj amongst themselves were marked by a clearness and sharp logic which brought conviction to many. The debates between the liberals as represented by the Brahmo Somaj and the orthodox of both Hindu and Christian persuasions helped increase the membership of the Somaj (1) by bringing over to their own side many young men from the ranks of orthodoxy (2) by preventing certain young people from an open avowal of orthodox Christianity. Deism or Rationalism at least could claim some share in that work. Orthodox Hindu opinion was divided as to the value of the prevention of young people's open avowal of Christianity. The majority liked the negative aspect of the Brahmo Somaj in so far as it prevented their friends and relations from breaking away entirely with Hindu traditions, while the minority considered the members of the Brahmo Somaj as worse than the Christians because in their opinion

the Somaj had no religion at all. Such views prevail even today. Though the Brahmo Somaj is not <sup>an</sup> anti-Christian organization as the revival movements, many prefer Brahmo Somaj to Christianity. Even orthodox Christians rejoice because they consider it as a half-way house.

The emotional type of Sufi mysticism (e.g. that of Hafiz, Sadi and other Persians) was favoured by Deber<sup>n</sup>dranath Tagore. But his mysticism had no room for pantheism. Just as the theistic or modified Vedantism of the Ramanuja School repudiated the absolute non-dualistic Vedanta of Skankar, so the theism of the Brahmo Somaj repudiated the excess of emotionalism which characterizes Sufism and finally lead to pantheism. To this strain was added the rationalism of the younger school, the members of which belonged either to the second generation of young men who had a more thorough contact with the newly introduced English educational system. Though there was no scope for religious instruction, the Bible and especially the New Testament played an important part in the spiritual make up of some of those young men. That influence was, however, an indirect one. The younger generation selected for their spiritual sustenance the writings of Renan, Seeley, Parker, Newman and others of the

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1. Parekh, M. C. - From Brahmo Somaj to Christianity.  
Farquhar, J. N. - Modern Religious Movements in India

same group.<sup>1</sup> Such studies had for their background the works of Paley, Reid, Mansel, Sir William Hamilton, Tulloch, Victor Cousin, Morrell, M'Cosh, Abercrombie, Locke, Kant, Bain, Mill.<sup>2</sup> Under the circumstances, it was not at all surprising that the young men would look forward to the writings of European rationalists for adequate support of their changed ways of thinking and living. In as much as they were not going away from religion but were trying to bring reason and religion together, their attempt was rationalistic just as the attempt of the English and the Scotch Diests had been in Europe. Moreover, like their European predecessors, the active leaders and thinkers of the Somaj wanted to posit something like an "unconditioned", "practical reason", or "absolute" a knowledge of which had to be attained through "intuition", "common sense", etc. The faculty psychology held its sway and conscience became the moral faculty par excellence. It was the voice of God in the soul of man. The story of Theodore Parker's boyhood days came to be recognized as a favorite illustration of conscience. One can recognize today in such illustrations the point of contact between the liberal religious thought of India and the West.

The doctrine of "common sense" or "intuition" was con-

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1. Sen, K. C. - Lectures in India. Vol. I. p. 40.
2. Ibid. pp. 44-45.

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sidered fundamental to Brahmoism. Keshub Chunder Sen in the course of his writeups, discussions and lectures emphasised these doctrines again and again. The orthodox Christian controversialists derided the views of the Brahma Somaj because of their unholy alliance with the subjects of the Devil - the Diests, the Rationalists, the Unitarians. The religion of the Brahma Somaj could not even hold the candle before Christianity which was the revealed religion. The doctrine of intuition, was ridiculed by the Christians. On the other hand, as it has been already stated, the conception of a God who can be worshipped without the mediating agency of an idol, image, or a person was a monstrosity in the opinion of many orthodox Hindus. But the leaders and thinkers in the Somaj thought that they had found a rock on which they could rear their faith.<sup>2</sup> The doctrine had some correspondence with the intuition (nididhyasan) and super-consciousness theories of the Vedanta and the Yoga systems of Hindu philosophy. Keshub Chunder Sen developed this aspect in his "True Faith", "Brahmagitopanishst", and "Yoga: Subjective and Objective".

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1. Sen, K. C. - Lectures in India, Vol. I. pp. 43-49.

"This power or eye sight which enables us to see the spiritual realities of God, is what I call Intuition..." Sen, K. C. - Lectures in India. Pt. I. p. 161.

2. "The Brahma perceives these revelations by the spiritual faculty or faith that is in him." Mozoomdar, P. C. - Faith and Progress of the Brahma Somaj. p. 2.

"When did the Brahmos teach that their whole theology was intuitional? The germs only and the germs not merely of the religion of the Brahma Somaj, but of Christianity, Hinduism, and Mohammedanism alike, are intuitions; the peculiarity of the Brahmos being that they build their faith thereon without the supernatural and historical groundwork which belong distinctively to each of the rest." Ibid, pp. 72-73.



For a full appreciation of the important part played by the God idea one will have to go to the Order of Service. The attributes of God are definitely related and meditated upon in the course of the Service. The item of Adoration is the most important part of the Order. It is original and has philosophical significance. (See Appendix D)

The God idea developed in the Brahma Somaj through the spiritual experiences of Keshub and the Brotherhood of theists which he had organized. The present study will not afford an opportunity to deal thoroughly with that phase of development.

The recognition of the Motherhood of God along with the Fatherhood was not an innovation after the declaration of the New Dispensation or even after Keshub's meeting with the Hindu devotee or sage of Dakhineswar, Ramkrishna Paramhansa.<sup>1</sup> The term Mother, with reference to God, had been used by Keshub and other Brahma preachers in the course of their discourses but it remained unnoticed on account of the absence of emphasis which characterized the later devotional development.<sup>2</sup> From God the Father to God the Mother was an important landmark in the history of the Somaj.

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1. Mozoomdar, P. C. - Faith and Progress of the Brahma Somaj, chap. Divine Maternity. Noble. M. E. - Kali, the Mother.
2. Sen, K. C.- Lectures in India, Vol. I, p. 159.

To refer to God as Mother was considered a sacrilege by many even in the Brahmo Somaj. They suspected the recrudescence of the worship of Kali, Parvati, Uma, Durga, the consort of Shiva, in that new emphasis on the Motherhood of God. Others thought it was a compromise with orthodox Hinduism. While a few even remarked with a show of wisdom that it was the beginning of the "Back to Hinduism" movement. They thought that if Keshub's life had been spared a few more years he would have led the prodigal children to their Mother's home. Not even one of those doubts was fulfilled in the course of the last forty years' history. The members of the Brahmo Somaj are free to address God as their Father or Mother, Friend or Leader, Teacher or Savior. There cannot be any lapse as regards their monotheism. Those who really lapsed went out and joined some of the orthodox denominations. The soul of a Brahmo soars high but like points of a compass, it is true to the kindred points of God and Humanity. The universe of the Brahmo is a theo-centric universe.

The same criticism may be applied as regards the doctrines of inspiration, great men (i.e. prophets, saints and martyrs). An atmosphere of suspicion was created in which the Brahmo Somaj could not function truly. That was nothing new.

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1. Lectures in India, Vol. II, Our Faith  
p. 178.

pp. 167-168,

There had been "Christ peril", "caste peril", "idolatry peril" but something more was left in store for the Brahma Somaj. The peril of inspiration, the menace of Great Men doctrine bothered not a few. <sup>1</sup> They sought refuge in rationalism. Theirs was a truly backward movement. Keshub's movement was always forward looking.

It is impossible to discuss in detail the controversies either social or doctrinal, which were slowly crystallizing (1876-1896). The effect of such controversies, so far as the future progress of the Brahma Somaj was concerned, was simply disastrous. It weakened the structure that had been raised for the purpose of reestablishing the worship of God and the service of man. <sup>2</sup> Theological controversies due to suspicion, jealousies, intense emotionalism and inadequate knowledge have already done such harm in the Brahma Somaj that in future if it wants to function it will have to accept a simple, direct and social programme which will not give risk to intricate theological discussions. Such a programme, on the basis of which the Brahma Somaj may extend its sphere of influence and activity in India, has been drawn up by the present writer after years of study and searching of heart. It will be found

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1. Lectures in India, Vol. II, Lectures "Great Men", "Inspiration", "Am I An Inspired Prophet?"
2. In his Atmajibani (Autobiography); Pandit Shiranath Shetri has pointed out that since the secession of the Brahma Somaj from the Brahma Somaj of India, the Brahma Somaj as a united body has not yet been able to recover from the evil effects of such a procedure.

in Appendix C. In the opinion of the writer it is his positive contribution to the problem which confronts the Brahma Somaj at present.

## II

## Jesus Christ and the Brahmo Somaj.

The question is often asked what about the position of Jesus Christ in the Brahmo Somaj. The Adi and the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj are silent about Jesus. The foreign tinge of Christianity prevented the acceptance of Jesus' teachings in a direct way in those two wings of the Brahmo Somaj, though the Sadharan Brahmo Somaj has a more receptive attitude towards the teachings of Jesus than the Adi (or the original) Brahmo Somaj. There was a time when Debendranath Tagore, the chief Minister of the Brahmo Somaj opposed the idea of introduction of Jesus Christ into the Somaj. His fear was due to his extreme monotheistic susceptibilities. In the course of his famous sermon preached on the occasion of the opening of the Mandir of the Brahmo Somaj of India, having paid many compliments to Keshub Chunder's services to the cause of theistic religion, he cautioned the members of the Brahmo Somaj that Jesus should be kept out of the Somaj. It disappointed the younger group but it pleased the old. In those days a kind of "Christ-peril" developed amongst the orthodox Brahmo Somaj members. That attitude is still to be found in some of the members of the different Somajes.

It was Keshub Chunder's unique genius, receptivity to spiritual truths whatever their source might be, and above all his fearlessness which made him an admirer and (as he called himself)

"a servant of Jesus". He suffered persecution at the hands of very dear friends. But in season and out of season he bore testimony to the supreme significance of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ in leavening the moral atmosphere. Not only that, in his New Dispensation he placed Jesus Christ at the centre of world's prophets and saints. He did not formulate any statement like "the leadership of Jesus" or "the Spiritual authority and leadership of His Son, Jesus Christ" as done by the leaders of the Unitarian and the Universalist thought in the United States of America. But in his love for Jesus and his teachings, he was so outspoken that he was considered by many of his own countrymen to <sup>have</sup> gone beyond the limits of pure Hinduism or even pure Brahmoism whatever that might be. The position of those who wanted to follow the lead of Keshub became all the more difficult. Besides their opponents in the orthodox Hindu and Christian folds, for the first time they met a strong opposition from their own group. It must be remembered that in the first half of the last century, the "Unitarian Vedantists" were described as Socinians by many Christian missionaries in India. In the eyes of the orthodox Hindus a member of the Brahma Somaj was worse than a Christian. That was well described by Lord Lawrence thus "In the eyes of the nearest and dearest to him he was considered a leper, an outcast from their community. Individuals were only resolute enough to break through such ties when allied to the strongest and most as-

sured conviction that what they were doing was right and just in the eyes of God Almighty." The threefold opposition which the progressive element in the Somaj had to meet was without any parallel in the history of religious development in modern India. Such a situation is almost unimaginable in the West which has developed a different type of family system as well as a social system in which the rights of the individual are of utmost concern. The family is the unit and duty is of supreme value in the Hindu social system.

Under those circumstances, Keshub's attitude to Jesus was a determining factor in the history of the Somaj. But after all, it was not so strikingly different from the Unitarian and other liberal points of view. In the Somaj which Keshub led, Jesus is considered as a great prophet. He is not a member of the Trinity but he is one of the supremely inspired sons of God. He is not an incarnation either in the Christian or the Hindu sense. He is not a mediator between God and man but he reveals God in so far as he demonstrates the loving and sacrificing elements of God life. He is the example of willing surrender to God. In him the abstract qualities of love, self-sacrifice and willingness to surrender have been made concrete. Jesus is an Asiatic. But

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1. Sen, K. C. - Lectures in England, Vol. I, p. 10.
2. Lectures in India, Vol. II, p. 123. (Lectures on "Inspiration")
3. Lectures in India, Vol. II, p. 352. (Lectures on "The Marvelous Mystery of the Trinity")
4. Ibid
5. Lectures in India, Vol. II, "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia". p. 22.

there is <sup>1</sup>also the universal aspect in his teachings and personality. Inasmuch as he exhibits the divine qualities, he is divine though he does not equal the deity or incarnate him in the flesh. There is an ideal aspect in the life of Jesus which has been evergrowing. The ideal Christ has been growing in the bosom of God. Wherever there is an expression of love, self-sacrifice or willing surrender to God there is the Christ ideal. The two fundamental doctrines of Gospel ethics are those of forgiveness and self-sacrifice. The Europeans needed badly a sincere following of the former doctrine just as the people of India needed the latter.<sup>2</sup> The hatred of European Christians against Oriental nationalities on account of their different mode of living and thinking, and the suspicion of the Oriental nationalities against European Christians who were mad for power and possessions could be outgrown in a love for Christ. The genius of the East and the West could be only transmuted into a harmony and unity in Christ.<sup>3</sup> Such an altogether new conception of the function<sup>of</sup> Jesus Christ had not been presented before the educated Indian public by any Christian missionary or an Indian reformer, until Keshub Chunder made the name and character of Jesus, familiar and acceptable. The reasons for the antipathy and apathy of the educated classes to Jesus Christ were fully outlined in the

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1. Lectures in India: Vol. II, "Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia". p.25.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p.22.



course of correspondence which passed between Dr. Henry Ware and Rev. Mr. Adam supported by Ram Mohan Roy in India.<sup>1</sup> Here are a few selections from Keshub Chunder Sen's utterances. The sentiments expressed in these have been shared by many in India.

"It cannot be said that we in India have nothing to do with Christ or Christianity."<sup>2</sup>

"In Christ we see not only the exaltedness of humanity but also the grandeur of which Asiatic nature is susceptible..... And thus in Christ, Europe and Asia, the East and the West, may learn to find harmony and unity."<sup>3</sup>

"I have not derived my conceptions of Christ or his ethics from the dogmatic theology or the actual life of any class of his followers. I do not identify him with any Christian sect. I have gone direct to the Bible to ascertain the genuine doctrines of morality inculcated by Christ; and it is my firm conviction that his teachings find response in the universal consciousness of humanity and are no more European than Asiatic....."<sup>4</sup>

These show how Keshub Chunder led the movement forward from the position in which it had been left by Ram Mohan. Lectures, sermons, prayers and writings of Keshub Chunder Sen

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1. Ware, Henry - Correspondence relating to the Prospects of Christianity and the Means of Promoting its reception in India.
2. Lecture, Jesus Christ: Europe and Asia (Lectures in India) by K. C. Sen, p. 12.
3. Ibid., p. 22.
4. Ibid., p. 24.

have shown us in what intimate friendly relation he stood with Jesus Christ and his true followers. He admits that he has not accepted any theory of Jesus Christ from anyone of the Christian sects. Again and again he pleads for Christian unity and told the Christian audiences that he could not see how a true Christian could be anything but a Unitarian. Such statements no doubt betray traces of direct influence of liberal Christianity of those days. To that Keshub adds an emotional element characteristic of the Hindu devotional cults. Since the days of Keshub, the Western world has been looking forward to the coming of an Indian Christianity. It has always utilized his words for missionary purposes. The following sentence often quoted by Christian missionaries in support of their evangelical programme deserves careful study by students of religion:-

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus, none but Jesus ever deserve this bright, this precious diadem, India and Jesus shall have it."<sup>1</sup>

It has become very hard for narrow Christian missionaries to understand the position of Keshub Chunder Sen and the Somaj which he led in India. They think that Keshub and his friends either lacked the courage or did not have the heart, owing to intellectual or spiritual pride, to own Jesus as their

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1. "India Asks Who is Christ?" in Lectures in India by Keshub Chunder Sen.

savior. Their proclivities prevent them from taking a broader view of things.<sup>1</sup> Some of them blame the Unitarians and other liberal Christians with whom Keshub Chunder was in close correspondence. But F. W. Max Muller who was not a Unitarian understood his position and wrote thus after his death -

".....of late Keshub Chunder Sen's devotion to Christ seemed excessive to many of his friends in India and Europe. If he had lived in the first century he would have been the most loving disciple of the Founder of our religion, living in the nineteenth though he was more truly a Christian than hundreds and thousands who call themselves Christians, yet he would not join our ranks, but set himself the higher and harder task which he called the task of "Christianizing Christianity."

In his young days like Rammohan, Keshub Chunder also came under the influence of Christian missionaries including Rev. C. H. A. Dall sent to India by the American Unitarian Association in 1855. Strongly Christian as some of his sermons and prayers might appear there was no lack of Hindu emphasis in most of his writings. Though he talked of sins he never accepted the evangelical view of atonement, resurrection, etc. Keshub's ideas about Christ and Christianity well offer an opportunity for a separate study in the realm of Christology. His untrammelled soul accepted Jesus Christ and his teachings in his characteristic

Hindu way. The introduction of Jesus into the Brahmo Somaj gave the movement a puritanical turn which was new during that period. The rigidity of the members of the Brahmo Somaj in matters of practical morality was well known.

Keshub Chunder's friend and co-worker Protap Chunder Mozoomdar's "Oriental Christ" was a new contribution to the study of Christ life.<sup>1</sup> But it was rooted in the religious experience he had in the company of "the beloved companion" of his "early boyhood", "the guide of" his "youth", "the friend and leader of his manhood" - Keshub Chunder Sen. The study was characterized by an introspective approach which was so different from the later study by another Oriental. I refer to Rev. A. M. Rhibany's "The Syrian Christ". The breadth of outlook which the Brahmo Somaj exhibited made its name familiar among all religious liberals. It will be of interest to note that one of the last works of Keshub entitled "Yoga: Subjective and Objective" was published in the New York Independent. On his death in 1884, the Free Religious Association convened a meeting at Boston to express sorrow at his death and record an appreciation of his work.

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1. Mozoomdar, P. C. - Oriental Christ, Boston 1883. Geo. H. Ellis

## III

The Moral Reformation in the Liberal Religious Movement in India  
in Contrast with that in New England.

The difficulties experienced by liberals in New England who made a stand against the prevailing doctrines of the evangelical churches with their Calvinistic theology were no doubt very severe, for the orthodoxy of those days was entrenched in the hearts of the majority of men and women. <sup>They were</sup> contented with their position <sup>and</sup> ~~who~~ felt a sense of security against attacks from outside authorities. Their triumph over the forces of political oppression and injustice as represented by the action of the agents of an absentee overlord, made them feel politically stronger after they succeeded in overthrowing the powers that had oppressed them. Their victories intensified the idea of a chosen people of God which undoubtedly had a great part in moulding their life in its various phases but more especially in its rigorous morality and theology.

From the very beginning of the establishment of New England Colony religion and politics influenced each other and their interaction resulted in the establishment of a government - a kind of theocracy - which was based on certain fundamental religious principles.<sup>1</sup> This religious tinge became more and more

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1. Religious History of New England. p. 13.

fused with the principles of Calvinism - the descendants of the Puritans and the Pilgrims contributing their respective shares. Puritanism became an attitude of mind - an atmosphere. The people were to strive for the attainment of the goal - the Puritan ideal. It was what Mathew Arnold called "Hebraism" in contrast with "Hellenism".<sup>2</sup> Extreme moral teachers are always liable to make rigorous demands and their emphasis on certain aspects of life which they describe as moral leave the other aspects starved and unfulfilled. As a result of this rigorism reaction sets in. New England was no exception to this rule. The extreme moralism of the people living under the influence of the churches gave rise to abnormal ideas of sin and its consequence. Instead of accelerating the flow of religious life the prevailing beliefs served more like barnacles attached to the bottom and sides of a sea going vessel and thereby impeded the progress which religious life was destined to make on the free soil of America.

Without going into details of the background supplied by Calvinism the situation in New England can be summed up thus. The problem of salvation of the elect, their predestination and

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1. Religious History of New England. p. 7.
2. ----large number of ministers came to New England ---- These ministers were for the most part graduates of the University of Cambridge, the nursery of Puritanism." Religious History of New England, p. 13.

the punishment assigned to the great majority of the unsaved made the moral situation so hopeless that very few intelligent people with human sympathies could support those doctrines. The problem of sin and salvation was so inextricably bound up with the doctrine of Trinity and the atonement of Christ that from whichever side one approached the subject one had to conclude that the doctrines were incompatible with an idea of a moral God and a moral universe.

The Unitarian controversy on the other hand resulted in the acceptance of the idea of Godhead with a corresponding belief in the worth of human character. This process showed the culmination of the process from the intellectual to the moral.<sup>1</sup> A closer observation of the situation will reveal the fact that at the bottom the moral problems which agitated the minds of the liberals in religion were suggested by the moral environment created in those days through the influence of the churches.<sup>2</sup> And as without morality there cannot be any religion, the condemnation and criticism launched against orthodoxy in those days were helpful in restoring a genuine valuation of the spirit and principles of Jesus which had been lost sight of under the debris of theological and metaphysical speculations and a morbid moralism.<sup>3</sup> The outstanding problem, therefore, was a moral one and the liberals realised its importance.

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1. Channing, W. E. - Unitarian Christianity.  
Parker, Theodore - Transient and Permanent in Christianity.  
Bellows, H. W. - Orthodox and Liberal Christianity.
  2. Fisher, L. B. - Which Way?
  3. Adams, J. C. - Hosea Ballou; Ballou, H. - A Treatise on Atonement.

In a similar way throughout its progressive career, the Brahmo Somaj has laid great emphasis on morality. Nowhere except in a country like India could the ethical problems demand a stricter conformity of action to beliefs. In those days of idolatrous practices the belief of the men professing a new faith had to be tested by their action. Practical morality and not a theory of morals only attracted the attention of the younger generation. "Most of the ideas and institutions" of the Indian society were "against the dictates of a pure monotheistic religious reform and conformable to idolatrous faith". "Beginning from about 1860 for a series of years, the young men of the Brahmo Somaj in a mutual improvement society called the "Sungat", paid the utmost and minutest attention to the purification of their private conduct and character. They felt and professed the utmost abhorrence of sin,..... And they were so earnest and strict in this that they came to be considered in the light of Puritans who would do away even with the innocent pleasures of life. This band of earnest pure-minded men gave the impetus to social reforms in the Brahmo Somaj." <sup>1</sup> The sense of sin was intensified during the period of the Devotional Movement, (1875).

The practical character of the morality of the Brahmo Somaj can be realised from the following important items which

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1. Mozoomdar, P. C. - Faith and Progress in the Brahmo Somaj. p. 33.



supplied the majority of the men with the subjects for discussion:

1. Idol worship. Whether anyone can participate in the worship, any way <sup>in</sup> direct or indirect, without doing violence to his conscience.
  2. The observation of caste, caste marks, idolatrous sacrifice, rites, festival, etc.
  3. The question of women; their education, position in and outside home; their part in the family worship and the congregational worship conducted in accordance with the order of service of the Brahmo Somaj; love, marriage, widowhood, etc.
  4. Problems relating to one's daily conduct at home and outside.
  5. Relationship between the employer and the employed.
- At the outset the Brahmo Somaj no doubt developed a theological morality, but at the same time it tried to discover a philosophical basis for action e.g. in the matter of conscience, evil, sin, etc. Its morality differed from that of Hinduism in several important aspects, though it always preserved with great respect the best ethical teachings of the Hindu moralists and enjoined this practice in the case of its members. Hindu ethics is very closely related to three fundamental theories of the dominant Hindu (Vedanta) philosophy. They are Moksha (liberation), Maya, (Nescience or Illusion) and Janmantarvad (transmigration of the soul). The Brahmo Somaj as a religious body does not lend its support to anyone of these three conceptions, though it believes

in rewards and punishments here and hereafter for good and bad deeds done in this life. In the second place, it believes in the immortality of the soul but it does not believe in the cycle of births and deaths through aeons and worlds. And finally it repudiates in strong terms the Vedantic conception of Maya as developed by Sankaracharya. The late Prof. B. N. Sen in his "The Intellectual Ideals of the Upanishads" pointed that<sup>1</sup> out very clearly. Not liberation but the search and the realization of Brahman are the most important elements. "They who devote themselves to Avidya (Nescience - Maya - Nature) enter into darkness; and they enter into deeper darkness who devote themselves to Vidya alone (seek knowledge of God apart from his immanence in Nature)!"

"He who knows both Vidya and Aridya (divine transcendence and immanence), having crossed death by Aridya (divine immanence), attains immortality by Vidya (divine transcendence)."

The above mentioned texts from the Upanishads represented the attitude of the Brahmo Somaj as regards <sup>the</sup> non-dualistic Vedantic doctrine of Maya. On the whole the ethical theism of the Brahmo Somaj has a closer resemblance with the theism of the West especially when one takes into consideration the problem of evil. In a way it is an improvement on the ethical theism of its great

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1. Sen, B. N. Intellectual Ideal, Lectures II & III. p. 107.

Unitarian friend James Martineau, inasmuch as it takes into consideration the problem of beauty. Martineau's strong Puritanical background probably prevented him from turning toward the attribute of beauty.

The emphasis of the Somaj in the beginning i.e. during the period of its first period was on jnan or knowledge. The epithet Brahmajnani (i.e. one who has the knowledge of Brahma) is still applied to Brahmoe by their Hindu brethren. During the second period in which the movement was led by Debendranath Tagore the emphasis was shifted from jnan to dhyan (or meditation, communion). The third period witnessed the emphasis on the aspect of living. Its motive power was activism. The humanism of the Brahma Somaj of those days naturally culminated in the devotional movement which was characterized by a soul hunger. A significant step was taken towards making it a peoples' movement. Under the leadership of Keshub Chunder Sen, the religion of the Brahma Somaj developed the conception of a world broad church. In the opinion of J. Ramsay Macdonald, that internationalism or cosmopolitanism was beyond the comprehension of the Indian public inasmuch as it transgressed the boundary line of religious nationalism, the Somaj under the leadership of Keshub Chunder Sen ceased to be Indian. Macdonald's "The Government of India", (p. 247)

The ethics of the Brahma Somaj is not deterministic inasmuch as it has freed itself from the causal nexus as illustrated

by the Vedanta philosophy. As regards its doctrine of freedom, it derives its support from the Upanishads though it also recognizes the working of the natural law in the spiritual.

The conduct of a member of the Brahmo Somaj is determined by this texts taken from the Mahanirvantantra. It stands almost at the beginning of the ethical section of Debendranath Tagore's "Selections from the Scriptures illustrating the religion of the Brahmo Somaj".<sup>1</sup> It runs thus:

"The householder must be an adherent of Brahma and a seeker after truth, and he must offer all his deeds to Brahma." The Somaj lays great stress on purity of living and in the matter of practical social morality, it has made its contributions by leavening womanhood, the backward classes, and by fostering an active spirit of cooperation amongst all irrespective of class, creed, color, or sex.

As regards marriage, family life and one's place in the community, the Brahmo Somaj has tried to harmonize the principles underlying individualism and socialism (or communalism as Prof. Radhakamal Mookerjee, a young Hindu sociologist will call it). It started in its career of reform by recognizing the rights of the individual. Its rationalism went well along with its individualism. But just as it was conscious of the rights of individuals, it did not lose sight of another important fact in hu-

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1. Autobiography of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, p. 83.

man life, duty to the community. Hindu family and society have a communal background. The Brahma Somaj has tried to unite these two as representing the spirit of the East and the West. This is altogether new in the history of modern India.

Throughout its history covering about ninety-five years the Brahma Somaj has developed along pragmatic lines. It is interested primarily in religion and that interest helped concentrate the discussion of problems to ethical questions. Theology or brahmavidya was once its favorite subject and under theology came logic, psychology, metaphysics and ethics. The idealistic ethics of the Somaj had a theological or religious background just as in India most of the philosophical systems are closely knit with religion or dharma. There is no way of getting out of it. Here at least the Brahma Somaj has been true to the Indian tradition.

In the matter of sin and salvation, the Brahma Somaj believes above all in the formation of character through education, discipline, and participation in religious worship. Its salvation is not concerned with the saving of souls from metempsychosis but from actual sins committed in this life.. Repentance is necessary but that does not save one from the consequences of sin. The spiritual law is inexorable and the diety<sup>etc</sup> is bound by that law. The doctrine of Brahmakripa (grace of God)

is acknowledged as a function of the merciful or good God who is Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram i.e. True, Good, and Beautiful. But there is no rigidity in the working of the grace as are to be found in Calvinistic conceptions. The fluidity of the ethics of the Brahmo Somaj is regarded by many as its great defect. But the freedom under which the members of the Brahmo Somaj develop their moral life illustrates the modern note in its ethics. In the matter of beliefs not affecting the fundamentals (i.e. the worship of God and the love of man) the members may hold different views but they are united in one purpose i.e. the worship of God and the service of man. Here at least the Brahmo Somaj can claim the Unitarians and other religious liberals of the Western world as their allies. It must not be forgotten that since its inception the worship of God has been the most important factor in the programme of the Brahmo Somaj. (See the Trust Deed of the Brahmo Somaj, Appendix A).

The importance of ethics in the Brahmo Somaj can be measured from the following analysis of the Sloka Samgraha (A Compilation of Theistic Texts from the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, Christian, Mohammedan, Parsee, and Chinese Scriptures). It will also give lie to the statement very often made by irresponsible writers and speakers that the Somaj is more Christian than Hindu and is not rooted on the culture of the soil.

An Analysis of the Sloka Samgraha:-

Selections from Hindu Scriptures.....	130	pages
" " Buddhist "	15	"
" " Sikh "	15	"
" " Jewish "	15	"
" " Christian "	23	"
" " Mohammedan "	9	"
" " Zoroastrian "	5	"
" " Chinese "	5	"

It is interesting to note that out of one hundred and thirty pages devoted to Hindu scriptures almost three fourths of the selections dealt with distinctly ethical teachings. Selections from Christian scriptures (i.e. the New Testament) occupied the second place as regards the number of pages devoted to them. This showed the trend in the Brahma Somaj in the seventies. It also substantiated the following statement made by P. C. Mozoomdar: "The great problem before the Brahma Somaj, therefore, has always been how to accept the wholesome influences of Hinduism and Christianity and at the same time to steer clear of the dangers which identification with either the one or the other, might give rise to." The ethical developments in the Brahma Somaj have been determined to a large extent by the inspiration derived from these two sources. Though for a period of about twenty years

attempts were made to keep the Christian influences out, yet the more or less intellectual attitude of Ram Mohan towards the ethical teachings of Jesus was reinforced later by Keshub Chunder's deeper study of Christian sources and speculations, (including the scriptures, the writings of the Church Fathers, and later theologians and philosophers of the Christian world). Keshub Chunder's loyal devotion to Jesus and his teachings did not fail to reap adequate results. In the long run it succeeded in converting many opponents of Jesus Christ and Christianity. When Rev. P. L. Sen, the first Brahma Somaj scholar, at Manchester College, went to see the Maharshi (Debendranath Tagore) after his return to India, the Maharshi blessed him and asked him "to preach the new gospel as the great sage Isha (Jesus) once did". Surely this change of attitude on the part of one who vehemently opposed Keshub's attempt at introducing Jesus Christ into the Brahma Somaj might be regarded as a vindication of Keshub Chunder Sen's foresight. A few years after Debendranath Tagore's death Christmas and Good Friday were observed by his son (the great poet Tagore) at Shantiniketan, formerly the retreat for Debendranath's spiritual culture. That was a land mark in the history of the Brahma Somaj. Viswabharati or the International University started by Rabindravath Tagore is now located there.



The ethics of the Brahma Somaj may be characterized as both autonomic and heteronomic. The philosophical tradition of the Hindus as well as the point of view of European philosophers which influenced the thinking of the leaders of the Brahma Somaj have made Brahma ethics autonomic. But at the same time on account of its name which has a theological significance and its association with Christianity, the ethics has also assumed a heteronomic character. The attempt to unite these two characters, which distinguish Greek and Hebrew ethics, has also been made in later Christian ethics. The ethics of the Brahma Somaj, therefore, resembles Christian ethics so far as it has tried to synthesize the different elements which have contributed to its growth.

### Conclusion.

The struggle and stress through which the members of the Brahmo Somaj have passed since the days of Ram Mohan Roy were extremely severe. Without any other ally in India, they fought the battle against orthodoxy, both Hindu and Christian. Not that they were blind to some of the good points in the lives of the members of those communities but their intellectual honesty and moral earnestness could not make them forsake one kind of orthodoxy and accept another. They rejected the popular Hindu belief in transmigration, they gave up bloody sacrifices before deities of mixed origin, they bade good bye to <sup>a</sup> thousand and one kind<sup>s</sup> of theological and socio-religious subtleties. How could they accept the same from another source? The Christian missionaries of those days did not go deep enough to study the situation from the comparative and historical point of view. They rejected anything which did not agree with their pre-formulated and predigested dogma. Though the Brahmo Somaj gave up the idea of transmigration, it boldly declared its faith in future life, and a moral view of the world in which the purpose of God is being unfolded and fulfilled. The religious ideas of the Somaj did not countenance any localised heaven or hell like that of the popular Hindu and Christian theologies. They did not make any attempt to chart heaven

and hell but believed that they were creations, states of mind to which human souls subject themselves. Both pantheism and mysticism as they had been understood in the East by the popular mind were discarded. But that did not mean that no room was left for mystical experience. The members of the Brahmo Somaj have, therefore, found new confirmations to their faith in the writings of modern philosophers like Bergson, Eucken, James.

The members of the Brahmo Somaj believed in communion with God and in communion of saints, prophets - nay even of sinners. For they believed that the sinners could save themselves through prayer, repentance, change of heart leading to atonement with God and the prophets and saints. Living God-life, Christ-life, Buddha-life and the lives of other saints and prophets. Thus truths, characters which are subjective and abstract become objective and concrete. Salvation which is God-life rests in a perfect harmony of being and doing, of thinking, feeling, and acting. The influence of liberal Christianity may be traced here but it must be remembered that without the Upanishadic ideal of communion with God, of a future life without any crude form of transmigration, the Brahmo Somaj could not have arrived at a position which was unique in the religious history of India.

From a Unitarian Hindu beginning, the Brahmo Somaj in the latest phase of its development has arrived at a univer-

sal position. It will be difficult to designate the spirit which pervades it by any one of the names of old established religions alone. It claims relationship with all. From the very beginning its leaders worked towards this end (See Appendix A). Wider in its sweep than the Brahmo Somaj of the early days the developed present day movement will have to deal with more complex problems. With ever widening field of knowledge, it will have to keep pace with new learning and revise many old ideas e.g. an old primitive mon<sup>o</sup>theism, the philosophy of common sense, the faculty psychology, etc. The Somaj realises that the world is in the grip of God. It therefore rejoices at the prospect of international goodwill - a world-brotherhood, a world-sisterhood - the kingdom of God here on earth - a Republic of Free Spirits. It is ever ready to cooperate with the forces that work for <sup>the</sup> good of mankind. It is universal in its outlook. It is unitarian as regards its center.

Appendix A.

SELECTION FROM THE TRUST DEED OF THE BRAHMO SOMAJ.

"The said messuage or building, land tenements, hereditaments and premises with their appurtenances should be used, occupied, enjoyed, applied and appropriated as, and for, a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly sober religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the eternal, unsearchable and immutable Being Who is the Author and Preserver of the universe not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiary used for, and applied to, any particular being or beings by any man or set of men whatsoever and that no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the said messuage, building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises and that no sacrifice offering or oblation of any kind or thing shall ever be permitted therein and that no animal or living creature shall within or on the said messuage, building, land, tenements, hereditaments, and premises be deprived of life either for religious purposes or for food and that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary

by any accident for the preservation of life), feasting or rioting be permitted therein or thereon and in conducting the said worship and adoration no object, animate or inanimate that has been or is, or shall hereafter become, or be recognized as an object of worship by any man or set of men, shall be reviled or slightingly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to either in preaching, praying or in the hymns or other mode of worship that may be delivered, made or used in the said message or building and that no sermon or preaching, discourse, prayer or hymn be delivered made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe, to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and the strengthening the bonds of union between men of all relations persuasions and creeds."

## Appendix B

Important Events in the History of the Liberal Religious  
Movement in India and the West.

BRAHMO SOMAJ

UNITARIAN

Period of Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1833)

- 1803 or 1804 Publication of  
"Tahafatul Mahawadin"  
or a gift to Deists.
- 1815 Publication of the  
works on Vedanta in  
Bengali.
- 1816 Establishment of Atma  
Sabha, Publication of  
the works on Vedanta  
in English.
- 1817 Opening of the Hindu  
College at Calcutta  
(for the imparting of  
English education).
- 1818-19 Publication of the "Pre-  
cepts of Jesus, A Guide  
to Peace and Happiness."  
W. E. Channing's Baltimore  
Sermon.
- 1819 Debate with Subrahamana  
Sastri (Hindu Idolatry  
VS. Monotheism).
- 1821 Second Appeal to the Chris-  
tian Public.

- 1825 Formation of the Calcutta Unitarian Committee. The conversion of Mr. Adam to Unitarianism. Formation of the A. U. A. and B. F. U. A.
- 1828 Opening of a Public Place of Worship at Calcutta. Publication of "the Precepts of Jesus" in Boston.
- 1830 Opening of the Brahmo Somaj. Abolition of the Suttee custom. R. M. Roy's departure for England. Irish Unitarian Association formed.
- 1833 Death of R. M. Roy at Bristol, England.

Period of Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905)

- 1838 Birth of Keshub Chunder Sen. The Divinity School Address by R. W. Emerson.
- 1839 Establishment of Tattwabodhin Sabha which took over the charge of the Brahmo Somaj.
- 1841 Theodore Parker's Sermon on "The Transcient and Permanent in Christianity."
- 1842 Debendranath Tagore joins the Brahmo Somaj.
- 1844 Establishment of a Covenant (Vedantic). Founding of the Meadville Theological School.
- 1845 Controversy with Dr. Alexander Duff.
- 1850 The abandonment of Vedantism, the proclamation of Theism.



- 1852 Publication of the Brahma Dharma (Scriptural Selection in support of Theism). The Formation of the Western Unitarian Conference.
- 1855 Rev. C. H. A. Dall starts the Unitarian Mission, Calcutta.
- 1856 Debendranath Tagore's period of Contemplation in the Himalays..
- 1857 Keshub Chunder Sen joins the Brahma Somaj.
- 1858 Jagat Chunder Gangooly's visit to Boston.
- 1859 Brahma School opened. Free Religious Society in Germany.
- 1860 Publication of Gangooly's book "Life and Religion of the Hindoos".
- 1864 Debendranath Tagore discards the sacred thread. Keshub Ch. Sen devotes his full time to the work of the Brahma Somaj. The First Inter-Caste Marriage..

Period of Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-1884).

- 1865 Organization of the National Conference of the Unitarian Churches
- 1866 The Secession of the Progressive elements in the Brahma Somaj from the Adi Brahma Somaj. Formation of the Free Religious Association.
- 1867 Establishment of the Brahma Somaj of India.

- 1869 Opening of the Place of  
Worship of the Brahmo  
Somaj of India.
- 1870 Keshub Chunder Sen in  
England.
- 1872 (Brahmo) Marriage Act  
(III of 1872) passed.
- 1874 P. C. Mozoomdar's visit  
to England.
- 1878 Organization of the  
Sadharan Brahmo Somaj.
- 1876 Opening of the Prayer  
Hall of Brahmo Somaj.
- 1879 The Devotional (Bhakti)  
Movement in the Brahmo  
Somaj.
- 1880 Declaration of the New  
Dispensation.
- 1883 P. C. Mozoomdar's visit  
to the West. Publication  
of "The Oriental Christ."
- 1884 Death of Keshub Chunder Sen.
- 1886 Death of Rev. C. H. A. Dall;  
closing of the Unitarian  
Mission in India. Memorial  
Meeting at the Calcutta Town  
Hall - Unveiling of Mr. Dall's  
portrait.
- 1889 W. C. Gannet's Sermon "The  
Faith of Ethics and the  
Thought of Today."
- 1893 Mozoomdar's visit to the West. The Chicago Parliament of  
Religions. Mozoomdar led  
the Assembly to Prayer.

- 1896 Formation of the Brahmo Somaj committee. First Brahmo Somaj scholar sent to Manchester College, Oxford - Mr. P. L. Sen. Rev. J. T. Sunderland's first visit to India.
- 1897 Rev. James Harwood's visit to India. Relief of Poor Brahmo Families given by the Unitarians.
- 1898 Earthquake Relief Fund started by the Unitarians (18 churches of the Brahmo Somaj helped).
- 1899-1901 The Ministry of Rev. S. Fletcher Williams in India.
- 1900 (International Council of Unitarian and other Liberal Religious Thinkers & Workers formed). F. G. Peabody's sermon on "The Church of the Spirit."
- 1900-1903 Famine Relief operations through the help rendered by the Indian Committee of the B.F.U.A.
- 1905 Death of Debendranath Tagore. Death of P. C. Mozoomdar. Benoyendranath Sen visits the West. The International Congress of Religious Liberals at Geneva.
- 1906 The first Brahmo Somaj scholar to Meadville Theological School, Prof. G. Subba Rao. The Khasi Hills Unitarian churches in India receive active support from the Unitarians of the West.
- 1909 Opening of the Dyal Singh College at Lahore.
- 1910 Principal H. C. Maitra, Rev. P. L. Sen and Prof. T. L. Vaswani at the World Congress of Free Christianity and Religious Progress at Berlin.

- 1911 Rev. Mr. Richards joins the Faculty of Dyal Singh College. Mr. Roberts, a Unitarian, starts work at Maymo, Burma, in cooperation with the Brahma Somaj. Dr. Sunderland's second visit to India as the President of the All-India Theistic Conference, Billings Lecturer of the A. U. A., and Representative of the International Congress of Religious Liberals.
- 1914 (The Proposed Parliament of Religions in the Orient abandoned on account of the World War.)<sup>1</sup>
- 1923 Death of Mr. H. K. Singh, the founder of Unitarian Churches in the Khasi Hills.
- 1924 Rev. W. H. Drummond's visit to India and the Far East on behalf of the International Congress of Progressive Religious Thinkers and Workers.

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1. See Articles in the Unity, March 7, 1914 and April 14, 1918 or a Reprint of the same "Will there be another Parliament of Religions?" by Rev. J. T. Sunderland, D.D. The different dates have been gathered by the writer in the course of his historical studies. "Events and Anniversaries" (Published by the A.U.A.), "the Brahma Pocket Diary" (Published by the Brahma Tract Society, Calcutta), and "Theistic Annuals (Edited by P. C. Mozoomdar)" have been consulted freely besides the histories and numerous reports and pamphlets.

## Appendix C

### THE PROGRAMME OF THE BRAHMO SOMAJ.

1. The reconciliation of races and religions of India on the basis of a simple practical faith with a working philosophy of life.
2. A concrete study of the past and present of India with a view to enrich the future.
3. The education of the masses and the hitherto neglected classes, with a view to make them conscious of their own strength and function in the formation of the new Indian nation.
4. Recognition of the rights of women and the carrying into effect of the principle enunciated in the Brahmo Somaj hymn: "Men and women have equal rights."
5. A proper and more just distribution of wealth with a view to adjust the distinction between the two extremes of riches and poverty, and to extend opportunities for all.
6. Education (not merely instruction) for all with a view to the unfolding of personality.
7. Emphasis not only (1) on Social Service, but also on Social justice. (2) not only on remedial relief, but also on prevention.
8. To push forward the whole Indian Society from an inflexible state to a flexible one.
9. Organization and expansion of Indian life with a view to relate it to a larger internationalism.
10. Recognition of God in Man and Woman.

## Appendix D

### Order of Service in the Brahma Somaj for the Congregation and Family.

- 1 Hymn
- 2 Invocation (by the Minister)
- 3 Hymn
- 4 Adoration (chanted together) Sanskrit Text. (Translation as follows:

"As the True, the Intelligent, the Infinite, and the Blissful He manifests Himself. He is the Peaceful and Merciful God. He is One without a second. He is Holy and Sinless."

By the Minister:

Thou art the Ever-Awake Spirit of Truth. When one enters into communion with Thee one feels secure against all darkness, untruth and partial vision. Therefore did our forefathers worship Thee as the eye of eye, the ear of ear, the mind of mind. Glory, glory be unto Thee, Spirit of Truth..

When Thou appearest as the mind of our mind Thou openest our eyes in such a way that we see things in a new light and more intelligently. Thou becomest not the known or the unknown and unknowable but the Ever-to-be-known. Spirit of wisdom! Thou alone canst lead us from

the bondage of ignorance to the freedom of larger knowledge. As the Ever-to-be-known dost Thou guide us and encourage us to be more valiant workers in the field of knowledge. Knowledge becomes its own reward. We there become wise with the wisdom that comes from Thee. Glory, glory be unto Thee, Spirit of wisdom.

The sea of knowledge is vast. We find ourselves lost in that vastness. But that vastness holds us and surrounds us. When we become used to that vastness we seek shelter in Thee oh! Infinite and Abiding Spirit! We surrender ourselves to Thee when we realise that our trust will keep us in Thy Abiding Presence and make us realise the importance of our safe destiny in Thee and Thee alone. Thou art held in Infinite space. Thou dost incarnate Thyself through the changing times. Glory, glory be unto Thee oh Great and Abiding Spirit.

When we lose ourselves we find ourselves. Our moments of inspiration are those when we are least conscious of our own selves. In such moments we feel the forces of goodness. That goodness is a reflection of the spirit which worketh for righteousness in this world. We may not always behold the workings of that Spirit of Supreme goodwill. The Spirit of goodwill works in our midst. And in a measure in which we work in cooperation with that

Spirit in that same measure the Spirit of goodwill stands regnant in this world. Glory, glory be unto Thee, Spirit of goodness.

Thou art the one whom sages worship and philosophers try to describe. How often have poets tried to sing Thy praise and prophets have borne fiery witness to Thy unique Presence. All these noble attempts on the part of men who seek Thee have not yet been brought to a conclusion. Thy Unity therefore is not static but Ever-expanding and Ever-flowing. When we concentrate all our thoughts on Thy Unity, in the midst of variety and plurality we find a unifying force - a principle which demands homage from us. Glory, glory be unto Thee, Spirit of Unity.

Spirit of Holiness, when Thy presence is felt in all our works and aspirations we become like Thee. The humblest of occupations become divine. All divisions of sacredness and profanity merge into Thy Holiness when we realise Thy holy presence. We can feel that presence not only in temples raised by hands of men and amongst people who are lip worshippers of Thee but in noisy markets and busy streets, in furrowed fields and filthy factories - nay we can feel it even among the lowliest and the lost of our city slums and brothels. Then



we realise Thou canst not forsake any one of Thy children however degraded or fallen they may be. Glory, glory be unto Thee, Spirit of Holiness.

Spirit of Joy divine! What great joy Thou dost experience in lending a helping hand to the lowliest and the lost. Thou wantest to breathe new life into the drooping and dying souls. Joy - inestimable joy become their lot. That joy lends a warmth to the cool atmosphere which surrounds many a struggling soul. That joy has a fire within it - a fire which instills courage and hope and makes the dumb speak, the deaf hear, the blind see and the lame scale high mountains. This is the climax of spiritual life to which Thou leadest those who put their trust in Thee and Thee alone. Glory, glory be unto Thee, Spirit of Joy Divine.

- 5 Introduction to Meditation by the Minister.
- 6 Silent communion.
- 7 United Prayer (chanted together standing).

Lead us O God! from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. O thou Father

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1. The above Adoration formed part of a Sunday service conducted by the writer of the present study in connection with the London Brahma Somaj in November 1919.

of truth, reveal thyself before us. Thou art merciful,  
do thou protect us always in thy unbounded goodness.

Peace! Peace! Peace!

8 Prayer (universal in character) by the Minister.

9 Hymn.

10 Reading from Scriptures of different religions.

11 Sermon.

12 Prayer.

13 Hymn.

14 Benediction.

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