CHAPTER V

THE TWO OFFSHOOTS OF THE BRAHMO SAMAJ

The contribution of the original Brahmo Samaj movement, led by Raja Ram Mohun Roy, has been assessed in the preceding chapter. The movement did not, however, become extinct after his death in 1833. New leaders soon appeared on the scene, and they gave the movement fresh vigour and new life. Their efforts gave birth to new offshoots of the movement, which, in the course of time, played a significant role in the socio-religious life of the country. Of these, the Brahma Samaj of India, led by Keshub Chunder Sen, and the Prathana Samaj, led by Mahadev Govind Ranade, were the most prominent ones. Differences in details apart, both of them remained true to the basic principles of their parent body, that is, rational worship of one Supreme God by all human beings, and both of them continued to strive for social reform with unabated zeal. To give a complete account of the educational contributions of the Brahma Samaj movement as a whole, the work of these two offshoots, in the educational field, should also be considered.

(1) THE BRAHMO SAMAJ OF INDIA

Until Keshub Chunder Sen assumed the leadership of the movement, after the death of Raja Ram Mohun Roy in 1833, it appeared the Brahmo Samaj had gone into oblivion and that it would never regain its original push and vigour. The movement became devoid of effective leadership, and the Indian renaissance, unleashed by it, seemed to be
fast dying out. It was at this critical juncture that Keshub Chunder Sen appeared on the scene, and, by his energetic leadership, gave the movement a fresh lease of life. He proved to be the real heir to his great predecessor in almost all the fields - religion, social-reform, education and journalism. In fact, under his vigorous and dynamic leadership, the renaissance, started by Raja Ram Mohun Roy, reached its zenith.

ITS GENESIS: THE GREAT SCHISM OF 1864

When Keshub Chunder Sen joined the Brahma Samaj in 1857, its leadership was in the hand of Devendra Nath Tagore. He had, no doubt, a mighty personality, but it was only on the spiritual side that he excelled most. Under his leadership, the movement had become confined to the spiritual aspect of Hinduism, and had, therefore, lost all its interest in the field of practical social reform. The entry of Keshub Chunder Sen into the Samaj, however, opened a new chapter in the history of the organisation. By his extrovert and dynamic personality, he infused new life into it, with the result that the movement once again became an effective tool of full-blooded social reform.

In the beginning, Devendra Nath Tagore evinced great liking for Keshub Chunder Sen and cooperated whole-heartedly with the activities of the Sangat Sabha, started by him. But the zeal of the young Keshub in the field of social reform ultimately proved to be too much for the old man. He could not keep pace with the radical schemes of social reform, like inter-caste and widow-re-marriages, advocated by him. It filled his mind with grave apprehensions about the future of the Samaj. He wanted Keshub to
confine his activities only to the religious sphere and to continue to respect the traditional Hindu customs. But Keshub and his party knew no compromise. This caused a rift between the two leaders, which ultimately resulted in the Great Schism of 1864. Keshub seceded from the original Samaj, and founded a new society of his own, which he named as the 'Brahmo Samaj of India'.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Though Keshub Chunder Sen believed in the original Brahmo doctrine of one universal God, and like his predecessor, took a rational view of religion, yet the Brahmo Samaj of India, founded by him, had certain new features which distinguished it from the parent body. These may be summarised as under:

(i) It was not inclined to bind itself by the traditional Hindu customs, and advocated radical reforms in Hindu society, such as inter-caste marriage, discarding of the sacred thread and widow-remarriage.

(ii) It was deeply influenced by the spirit of Christianity. After seceding from the parent body, Keshub and his followers studied the Bible and other Christian literature without any hitch or hesitation. They hailed Jesus Christ as the 'Prince of Prophets' and held up the Cross as a holy symbol for stimulating his fellows to a life of self-denial.

(iii) It was more catholic and cosmopolitan in nature. The book, 'Shloka Sangraha', published by the new Samaj, contained messages from the scriptures of all religions – Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and Chinese; and the same was used in its services.
(iv) It adopted the 'Samkirtan' mode of prayer, which was so popular among the Vaishnava followers of Chaitanya who adhered to the 'Bhakti' cult of worship. In the services of the Samaj, the musical instruments were, therefore, used. Sometimes, Keshub and his followers even resorted to street-singing, giving vent to their religious emotionalism. All this was remarkably different from the quiet and restraintful services of the original Samaj.

(v) It was more propagandistic in its activities. Keshub and his followers toured the various parts of the country with a missionary zeal and tried to establish Samajas everywhere they went. The result was that, before 1865, as many as 54 Samajas were founded in Bengal, North Western Province, Punjab and Madras. In contrast to this, the original Brahmbo Samaj of Raja Ram Mohun Roy had confined its activities exclusively to Bengal.

THE LIFE AND PERSONALITY OF KESHUB CHUNDER SEN

Keshub Chunder Sen was born in 1838, at Calcutta. His uncle had brought him up in a strictly religious atmosphere, and his mother had given him all the loving care she could. He was very fond of reading and showed unusual intelligence right from his boyhood. He secured a first class at the Hindu College; his favourite subjects during his college-days were History, Logic, Psychology, Sociology and Moral Philosophy. His study of Western Philosophy and Religion led him to discard idolatory and orthodox rituals of the Hindu society.
This created in him a spiritual void which caused a great deal of anguish and mental conflict within him. It was at this critical juncture of his spiritual career that he came in contact with Brahma Samaj. He soon felt that a such a religious Church was exactly what he needed. It responded to his inner convictions, and hence he immediately made up his mind to join it. As already mentioned, for some years, he pulled on smoothly with the veteran leader of the Samaj, Devendra Nath Tagore, who, after the death of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, had become its leader, but ultimately a rift appeared between the two, resulting in the Great Schism of 1865, which led Keshub to start his own Samaj, known as the Brahma Samaj of India.

The personality of Keshub Chunder Sen had a marked dynamic touch about it. He was brilliant, bold and ambitious. He belonged to the second generation of English educated Indians - the former generation having consisted of men like Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Radha Kant Deb who had received their education in the Hindu College, which, under the influence of the young Eurasian Professor H.V.Derozio - had become the veritable 'seething cauldron' of a new revolutionary spirit. The products of the College, intoxicated with the rational and liberal philosophy of the West, revolted against the traditional customs and ways of their own community; what they relished in most was a reckless pursuit of physical pleasures and sensuous habits. Overwhelmed by the Western culture, they became thoroughly 'Anglicised' and tried to imitate English ways and manners in all possible things. No wonder, Keshub, as a product of the same college, had something of the same revolutionary spirit in him. Though he could not go beyond limits due to the restraintful influences of his
orthodox family, yet he showed an unprecedented radicalism in this thought, was more non-sectarian in his view, and brooked a greater leaning towards Christianity.

EDUCATION AS A TOOL OF SOCIAL REFORM

Among the many social problems to which Keshub Chunder Sen turned his attention, education was an important one. He firmly believed that without a sound system of education the country could neither get rid of the many evils in suffered from, nor it could gain the vitality necessary for its progress as a nation. The fact that he had a real faith in education as a tool of social reform and national regeneration is borne out by the following extract from the letter which he wrote to the Right Hon'ble Northbrook on this subject:

"My Lord, India's first and chief requirement is an efficient and comprehensive system of education - a system which will bring the light of useful knowledge to all classes of the community. Possessed of this, she will throw off the yoke of prejudice and corrupt institutions, remedy the manifold social and moral evils which have hitherto afflicted her, and with completely renewed vitality and energy move onward in the path of true reformation. ------. Railways, telegraph, trade, commerce, canals and roads - these are surely essential to a country's civilisation and happiness. But they are only calculated to supply its material wants and give it outward refinement; they cannot convert or reform a nation's heart. For such work no better or mightier instrument exists than education."¹

¹ Keshub Chunder Sen's Nine Letters on Educational Measures to the Right Hon'ble Northbrook, Viceroy and Governor General of India -(compiled by G.C.Banerjee)–pp.7–E.
He further went on to attribute the social reformation of the first half of the nineteenth century - removal of Sati, infanticide and impediments to widow-remarriage - to education, and asserted that, "if a few schools and colleges which impart superficial, imperfect and exclusive education have achieved such wonderful success in changing the whole face of Indian society, still greater wonders will be wrought if a better and more comprehensive scheme of education be organised and adopted."¹

HIS EDUCATIONAL IDEOLOGY AND WORK

Fired with such ardent faith in the social potentialities of education, Keshub Chunder Sen encouraged the Sangat Sabha - formed by him for undertaking reform work - to take up the problem of education within one year of its foundation, that is, in 1861. The Sabha, through Prof. F.W.Newman, asked the British public to take greater interest in the education of the Indian people. The appeal did not arouse sufficient response from the British people, but in India the agitation resulted in the establishment of the Calcutta College on the 1st of March, 1862. Keshub Chunder Sen became its first Principal and Manager; members of the Sangat Sabha were enrolled as its teachers; and Devendra Nath Tagore bore the expenses of the College.

Keshub Chunder Sen's work in the field of education was many-sided. He advocated many educational reforms with great enthusiasm and vigour, with a view to adopting the educational system of the country to the real needs of the Indian people. His educational

¹ Ibid; p.9.
ideology and thought were actuated by an earnest desire to reconstruct the Indian society on such progressive and liberal lines as were in consonance with the modern ideology, based on rational and democratic principles.

The educational ideology and work of Keshub Chunder Sen may be discussed under the following broad heads:--

EDUCATION FOR THE MASSES

Keshub Chunder Sen was a great champion of the masses. He was deeply moved to see the appalling ignorance rampant among the Indian masses, and attributed their sad plight to the lack of education and enlightenment among them. With great feeling, he, therefore, wrote, "But alas, how sad and pitiable is the condition of the dumb millions of India. The light of knowledge has not descended to their humbler dwellings, and, like their forefathers centuries ago, they are subject to all the evils - political, social and moral - which ignorance brings in its train. ----. Who will compassionate the sufferings of the down-trodden masses in India, and help to elevate them from their degraded condition by extending to them the blessings of education."¹

Besides this broad policy of direct approach to the problem, Keshub Chunder Sen also suggested the following concrete measures for the rapid spread of education among the masses:--

(a) "The education of the masses through the vernacular is so vast, arduous and difficult an undertaking that I feel warranted in suggesting the appointment of competent native gentlemen of well

¹ Ibid; p.12.
tried ability and sufficient experience, as the Inspector General of Vernacular Schools, under each of the Director of Public Instructions in India.

(b) "It is generally complained and even educational inspectors have confirmed the statement that the best exertions of the State have failed to reach the really poor and that schools intended for them are generally taken advantage of by boys of the middle classes. We must some how get at the agricultural and the working classes. A large number of evening schools should be opened for their special benefit, where the pupils, after the day's work is done, may receive elementary instruction of a practically useful character.

(c) "The instruction to be imparted to the masses should be of a really useful character. Besides reading, writing and arithmetic, they ought to be imbued with such rudiments of sciences as are needed to rectify popular prejudices.

(d) "The grant-in-aid rules should be relaxed in favour of the lowest class of schools. "Here needed, the Government should not hesitate to sanction even so much as three-fourth of the amount required, if local contribution and fees amount to only one-fourth. But this should be done where the poorest of the industrial and agricultural masses show an honest anxiety to receive education.

(e) "Popular lectures on easy scientific truths should be delivered by itinerant teachers in connection with the village-schools in each circle, and the outside public should be invited to hear the lectures, besides the pupils of those schools.

(f) "Cheap newspapers should be subscribed by Government, of course, under wholesome restriction and control, and purely
freely distributed or sold in villages through the Deputy Inspectors and the indigenous schools.

(g) "land-holders who may distinguish themselves by establishing a large number of schools for the education of the masses, either in their own zamindaries or elsewhere, and evince true regard for their welfare and advancement, ought to receive special marks of honour from the Government in recognition of their liberality and patriotism."¹

REFORM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The concern of Keshub Chunder Sen for the education of the masses apart, he paid considerable heed to the then-prevailing system of higher education, which was meant for the higher classes. He felt that the system suffered from grave defects and stood in need of immediate reform. "That the present system of education in India is defective, incomplete, and in some respects, inefficient and even hurtful few will deny who have paid any attention to its actual results. ------. A tree is best known by its fruits. It is generally admitted that, with his immense and varied stock of knowledge and his brilliant academic acquirements, the educated native is not what he ought to be."² Higher education, he, therefore, believed stood in need of urgent reform, so as "to produce men of real intellectual calibre - really enlightened and cultivated men, possessed of sound knowledge and solid thoughts, men in whom intellectual tastes and habits of a high order have been formed."³

¹ - Ibid; pp. 30-33.
² - Ibid; p. 34.
³ - Ibid; p. 36.
To achieve these objectives, he suggested the following reform-measures in the contemporary system of higher education:

(a) "There ought to be fewer subjects in each year's course, and more time and attention should be given to a limited number of subjects, so that they may be mastered in all their bearing and details by the students.

(b) "The physical sciences should be introduced on a larger scale, and, as far as possible, with illustrative experiments in all our schools and colleges.

(c) "No attempt should be made to exalt Physical Sciences at the expense of speculative philosophy. In my appreciation of the importance of the former, I yield to none -------. But I think logic and mental and moral sciences are indispensable for intellectual discipline, and the formation of the habits of reflection. The students should begin to study these subjects immediately after their Matriculation.

(d) "More attention should be paid to the art of composition than is at present the case. It is a notorious fact that our best students generally neglect it and many manifest sad deficiency in this very useful branch of knowledge. To encourage correct writing, the Education Department should annually offer prizes for the best essays on the prescribed subjects, and the University should declare it to be essential to the students of Honours and Distinction."\(^1\)

FEMALE EDUCATION

Keshab Chunder Sen had great regard for the fair sex, and attached high priority to their education. Without their education,

---

he believed, the Indian society could not progress satisfactorily, for women constitute an inseparable part of the social organism. If they were neglected, the growth and progress of the whole society would be impaired. He was distressed to find the Indian women of his day in a miserable plight, suffer[they] did from many social handicaps and evils - 'purdah' system being one of them and also perhaps the worst. Like a true humanist, he thought it was not only improper but also unjust to let them rot in the stifling gloom of ignorance by keeping them shut out from the light of knowledge and enlightenment.

To put the importance of female education in his own words, "Unless the women are educated, the education of India will be partial, and at least superficial, for the women of the country conserve all the traditions, all the errors and prejudices, and all the injurious institutions that exist in the country. ———. If you educate the females, you give my country good mothers who will train up their children in the fear of God, and in the appreciation of and enjoyment of truth, and in that way our people will not only become intelligent men but will also have intelligent and happy homes." ¹

As to the content of female education, Keshub Chunder Sen was inspired by a national fervour, for he advocated a system of female education which would make them faithful wives and good mothers, sisters and daughters - an ornament of home. He was categorically against the Western ideal of womanhood. In no uncertain words he opined, "I, for one, protest against these foolish ideas and projects of denationalising Indian women. At least spare us the Crinoline.

¹ Extract from the Speech delivered at Newington Butts, May 24, 1870; Ibid (quoted); pp. 49-50.
There is not room enough in the small houses of India for that huge thing with a large circumference. I hope and trust that if you desire at all to enlighten and alleviate the condition of Indian women, you will give them a solid education, but external refinements, not merely outward improvements in dress and diet but solid education which ennobles and purifies the heart.¹

The Social Reform Association, started by Keshub Chunder Sen after his return from England in 1870, gave special attention to the problem of female education and took upon itself the task of educating the 'purdah' women and held classes and examinations for them. In 1871, it opened two institutions, namely, (1) The Normal School for Girls, and (2) the Victoria Institute for Women. Both of them freely imparted education to women in all the important secular branches of knowledge, and thus endeavoured to emancipate them from intellectual and spiritual bondage.

The special feature of the above female institutions, started by the Keshub's Reform Association, was that after adequate instruction in Bengali, English and Domestic Crafts, their students were required to hold classes for 'purdah' women. This device proved considerably effective in coping with the problem of educating such women, and the Government was so much impressed by its success that it sanctioned a grant of Rs.2,000/- per year for this purpose.

Another note-worthy venture of Keshub in the field of women's education was the founding of an institute called the Bama Hitaishini Sabha (Society for the Welfare of Women) in which women of talent read papers and held discussions under his presidency.

¹ Extract from his speech - op.cit.-pp.50-51.
The aim of this institution was to arouse social and intellectual consciousness among Indian women, so that they could respond readily to the schemes of social and educational reforms designed for their upliftment.

Through journalism also Keshub Chunder Sen strived to ameliorate the condition of Indian women. For this, he started a paper, 'Bama Bodhini Patrika'; the aim of the paper was to disseminate such knowledge and information among women which was necessary for their enlightenment. The deliberations of the Bama Hitaishini Sabha were regularly published in this paper. The paper proved very useful, so far as the organisation of public opinion on various problems confronting women was concerned.

VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

In the field of vocational and technical education, Keshub Chunder Sen was a pioneer, for before him this type of education was almost non-existent. He was perhaps the first Indian who realised the necessity of imparting such education to the Indian youth — particularly those coming from the middle classes. His Sangat Sabha, therefore, started a Night School, originally named as 'Calcutta School', to provide training in those industrial crafts which had vocational potentialities. The school also took upon itself the task of imparting general education to the working-class, so that they could become enlightened and more efficient in their work. The atmosphere and work of the school, which was essentially activity-centred, has been graphically described by P.C. Mazoomdar in these words, "The sawing, chopping, hammering went on with undiminished vigour month after month; boxes, chairs and cabinets sprang into being."
Clerks from Government offices, graduates from the neighbouring colleges, Brahma missionaries headed by Keshub himself, took to these occupations with workman-like avidity; while professional book-binders, tinkers and carpenters plodded at literary industry, reading primers and working sums in arithmetic under the feeble light of oil-lamps after night-fall."¹

This was an unusual venture in the domain of contemporary Indian education. It sought to foster dignity of labour among the Indian youth and made them work-minded. For their livelihood, they could take up those crafts at a professional level in which they had received vocational training. Government service and clerical jobs alone were no longer the only means to earn their livelihood. Further, such activity-centred vocational training provided a healthy corrective to the then-prevailing system of education which was pre-dominantly bookish, and hence provided little scope for the development of the physical aspect of the student's personality.

MORAL EDUCATION

Moral training, Keshub Chunder Sen believed, must be an integral part of any system of general education. "No amount of intellectual cramming," he said, "can reform native society, or make our nation truly good and great. The literatures and the sciences of the West will, no doubt, greatly enlighten the mind, but they cannot elevate our character and life without sound moral instruction. Knowledge without morality is a danger and a curse, and unquestionably it is more so in India than elsewhere."²

¹ Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen; p.244.
Having such an ardent faith in the wholesome influence of moral training, he did not naturally like the unwillingness of the Government to impart such training to Indian students on the ground of 'religious neutrality', to which it professed to be committed.

Keshub Chunder Sen was not convinced of the propriety of this stand of the Government on the issue of religious and moral instruction, and he, therefore, said, "It is not, I humbly submit, an insurmountable difficulty. It is not theological teaching for which I contend, but moral education -------. There is nothing, however, in the educational Charter of India to prevent moral training, in which all classes are equally interested, and which all would hail with alacrity." ¹

He realised that theological training was rightly prevented in all schools and colleges, supported and run by the Government, for such training, instead of doing any good to the students, was fraught with serious danger in the form of sectarian and dogmatic teaching. Hence, with a view to reconciling moral training with the principle of religious neutrality and to make it immune from the dangers of sectarian and dogmatic theological bias, he carefully devised a scheme of moral training, which may be summarised, in his own words, as under:

(a) "In the first place, I should recommend the study of Natural Theology, not as a separate subject but in connection with the various branches of the Physical Sciences which are at present taught. In explaining and illustrating scientific facts, teachers and professors should, in a devout spirit, point out the marks of Divine Wisdom and Mercy which they manifest. No opportunity should be missed to lead the mind of the students from 'Nature upto Nature's

¹ Ibid p.41.
God. Paley's Natural Theology and similar works may be advantageously introduced in the University curriculum.

(b) "Special attention should be devoted to Ethics. The candidates for Matriculate examination should learn the elements of Science (Ethics), its higher branches being reserved for advanced classes. The students must not only be grounded in a comprehension of the true theory of morals, but should also study practical ethics and the whole round of man's duties.

(c) "Such books and extracts should be introduced into the University course as may appear to competent judges to be well calculated to instil high moral principles such as honesty, veracity, charity, courage, sobriety and patriotism in the youthful mind.

(d) "As no scheme of moral teaching can be successful unless the teachers possess unexceptionable character and can set good example; the Education Department ought to be immediately weeded of all men who are known to be addicted to immoral habits, and no such person should be appointed in future as teachers.

(e) "One of the superior tutors of each school should be invested with the title and duties of Discipline Master, and to him both teachers and pupils should be amenable in the matter of moral discipline.

(f) "Prizes for good conduct will have the effect of encouraging the early formation of good habits and promoting healthy competition among the students of the class.

(g) "Lastly, young men, should be kept as far as possible from the influence of temptations. Hence it is desirable that schools should not be located in the vicinity of houses of
ill-fame or liquor shops.¹

AN APPRAISAL OF KESHUB CHUNDER SEN'S EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTION

The above account of the educational ideology and work of Keshub Chunder Sen is unmistakably indicative of the serious attention he paid to the various educational problems of his day. A little consideration of his educational views, already elucidated, would certainly give one the impression that his understanding of these problems was neither casual nor superficial. Rather, it was based on mature thought and sound judgement. This is evident from the detailed and clear-headed treatment of the various problems of education given by him.

There are two things about the educational ideology of Keshub Chunder Sen which deserve special notice. Firstly, he did not only point out the defects and deficiencies of the then-prevalent system of education, but, like a constructive thinker, also suggested adequate measures for their reform. In all the fields of education which he considered - be it education for the masses or for women, moral education or higher education - he gave his concrete suggestions for their improvement, and, where necessary, also gave his own schemes, for example, his schemes of moral instruction and mass education which, considered in all details, provide a thoughtful and effective solution to these vital educational problems.

Secondly, his viewpoint, as an educational reformer, was essentially Indian. There is a distinct nationalistic touch in his educational ideology. He abhorred the idea of his countrymen playing

¹ Ibid; pp. 42-43.
the role of a 'sedulous ape' to the culture of the West. He wanted Indians to remain Indians first and last, without losing their attachment to the characteristic cultural values of the land. His views on female education bear a clear testimony to this fact. He championed the cause of women's education with all his strength, but, at the same time felt very strongly that they should remain within the framework of the ideals of Indian womanhood. He did not refuse them Western education — rather, he considered it necessary for their upliftment, but, along with that, he emphatically said that they should not imitate the outward glamour and superficial manners of the Western women. His insistence on moral instruction and use of vernaculars also affirm his nationalistic viewpoint.

It is, however, remarkable that, despite such marked nationalistic leanings, Keshub Chunder Sen did not condemn or discard English education. Like his illustrious predecessor — Raja Ram Mohun Roy — he fully realised its value and desired his countrymen to profit by it as much as possible. In fact, he had great regard for English education as a tool of social reform. "The effects of English were so marvellous", and encouraging", he said, "not only in its direct results but — what was of greater importance — its indirect effects. Its indirect effects were moral and social reformation, and I do most heartily believe that English education is the most powerful missionary in India; and is alone capable of subverting all that was superstructure of moral and social evil, which has existed in India for centuries immemorial."¹

¹ Extract from the Speech delivered at Birmingham (England) on June 20, 1870; (quoted), Ibid; p.46.
All that Keshub Chunder Sen was particular about was that Indians—men and women—should not get denationalised due to English education, that they should remain firmly grounded in the culture of their own country. He did not like the idea of implanting Western education on the Indian soil blindly. Instead, he took a balanced and synthetic view of the issue, and hence advocated such a system of education whereby the benefits of English education would be realised without abandoning the basic elements of our national culture.

It must also be said to the credit of Keshub Chunder Sen that he made certain bold and interesting experiments in the field of education, the type of which had not been tried before. Of these, the two are most significant. He was perhaps the first Indian to start educational institutions for women. The efforts that he made to bring the 'purdah' women out of their seclusion and to spread enlightenment among them are really praise-worthy. Its effect were far-reaching, for the Indian women were thus aroused into that social and intellectual consciousness which paved the way for their upliftment in future. The other significant educational experiment of Keshub Chunder Sen was the Technical School started by him in 1871, through which he sought to impart training in a variety of crafts and technical occupations—book-binding, carpentry, tailoring, engraving, printing and lithography, watch and clock repairing, and the like. Keshub had himself a knack for such handworks, and he actually worked in the school along with others. Such a school was virtually an innovation in the field Indian education, for never before attempts had been made to impart the type of vocational
and technical training that it did. It not only developed a sense of self-reliance among the educated youth, so far as the problem of earning a livelihood was concerned, but also went a long way in inculcating in them a manly sense of dignity of labour, thus dispelling from their mind the conceited notion that physical labour is low and dishonourable. The institution was a bold answer to the prevalent system of education which, being totally bookish, did not ensure a harmonious development of students' personality.

Keeping the general state of education during the period in view, the above contributions of Keshub Chunder Sen in the field of education were, no doubt, significant. His educational efforts may not have yielded immediate results, but the fact remains that he did much pioneering work in this field, and thus prepared the necessary background for future educational developments.

(2) THE PRATHNA SAMAJ

The original Brahma Samaj and the Keshub's Brahma Samaj of India had done considerable work in the field of socio-religious reforms, but their influence had been confined to Bengal alone. Other parts of the country had remained, more or less, unaffected by the renaissance unleashed by them. To Prathna Samaj goes the credit of taking the spirit of the movement outside Bengal. It did for the Western India what the parent body had done for Bengal. Emerging in the second half of the nineteenth century, as a great redeeming force, it sought to reconstruct the contemporary Hindu religion and society on rational and liberal lines, by exposing its dogmatic perversions and cumbersome forms. Hence, like the Brahma Samaj, it protested against lifeless rites and ceremonies,
signalling the nation to purer forms of worship. Also, it undertook such social reforms as were in consonance with the liberal ideology of the modern times.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE SAMAJ

Notwithstanding this basic similarity, the Prathna Samaj movement kept itself remarkably free from some of the errors of the original Brahma Samaj. Neither did it cut itself off from the parent Hindu community, nor did it form a separate sect or a new Dispensation. Rather, it worked scrupulously within the frame-work of Hinduism, trying to affiliate its theism to the older theisms of the Bhagwats. Further, it was neither extremely rigid nor fanatically dogmatic in the rules of its membership or code of behaviour. Its members continued to belong to their respective sects, without being subjected to any hard and fast rules of admission. Lastly, it was free from the idea of man-worship; its leaders, unlike Keshub Chunder Sen, did not claim divine authority and unreserved obedience from their followers. This gave a democratic tinge to the Samaj and kept it free from unseemly internal dissensions, with the result that it could go ahead with its programme of work quite smoothly and steadily.

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

The credit for arousing the people of Western India to form a nucleus of the Prathana Samaj movement goes to Keshub Chunder Sen. He visited Bombay in 1864 and, through his inspiring lectures, exhorted some earnest men to form an association, which was declared to have the following objects:—
(i) the disapproval of caste;
(ii) the introduction of widow-remarriage;
(iii) the encouragement of women's education;
(iv) the abolition of child marriage.

Later, however, it was decided by the members of the Association to devote their thought also to religious reforms and to propagate the pure worship of one true God. For this purpose, a prayer society was organised on 31st of March, 1867, in the house of Dr. Atmaram Pandurang. The members of the society met weekly, and later its articles were drawn, and a managing committee was also appointed. The formation of this prayer society constitutes the real genesis of the Prathana Samaj movement, which within a few years, became a force to be reckoned with, especially in the Western part of the country.

AIMS OF THE MOVEMENT

Like Brahmo Samaj, the aims of the Prathana Samaj were broadly two-fold, that is, religious and social. On the religious front, its aims were:

1) to purge Hinduism of its dogmatic perversions;
2) to abolish polytheism;
3) to foster rational and liberal religious thought;
4) to promote the pure worship of one true God.

The above religious aims of the movement apart, greater attention was paid by it to the problems connected with social reform. On the social side, its chief aims were:
i) Abolition of caste, and encouragement of inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriages;
ii) remarriages of widows;
iii) improvement of the lot of women;
iv) abolition of child-marriage;
v) uplift of the depressed classes.

MAHADEV GOVIND RANADE – THE LEADER OF THE MOVEMENT

In Mahadev Govind Ranade, the Prathana Samaj movement found a very able leader. It was under his careful guidance that the Samaj became a powerful reforming force, sincerely wedded to the cause of India's regeneration. He was to the Prathana Samaj what Raja Ram Mohun Roy had been to the parent organisation, the Brahmo Samaj.

Mahadev Govind Ranade was born at Niphad, in the Nasik district, on January 18, 1842. He belonged to the famous Chitpavan Brahmin caste, the members of which were well-known for their high intellect and superior administrative calibre. His father, Govind Rao, had served in various high offices of the Kolhapur state. After receiving his preliminary education in Marathi, he attended the English School at Kolhapur. Although shy and silent by nature, he was very sincere and industrious in his studies and always passed his examinations with credit. To complete his education, he was sent to Bombay in his fourteenth year. There he joined the Elphinstone College and, after a brilliant educational career, finally passed the Honours Examination in 1864-65. Being the first graduate of the Bombay University, he was nominated a Fellow of the University. Afterwards, he also passed the first LL.B. Examination, as well as the Advocate's examination. He passed all the examinations in
Arts and Law with eminent success. He was not only one of the first B.A.s, first M.A.s and first LL.B.s of the Bombay University, but also one of the few graduates who had during those days secured first class Honours at these examinations. He was, therefore, rightly called the 'Prince of Bombay Graduates'.

Instead of taking to legal practice, for which he was fully qualified, Ranade entered public service and, by sheer dint of his merit and labour, rose to the position of a judge of the Bombay High Court. Ranade was, however, not only an eminent judge, but also a historian and an economist, an educationist and an ardent social reformer, besides being one of the founders of the Indian National Congress.

One of the most outstanding traits of Ranade's character was his patriotism. He was fired with an extraordinary love for his country, and longed most passionately for its progress and prosperity. Rightly did A.O. Hume write, "If there was one man in India who, for the whole twenty-four hours in the day, thought of his country, that man was Mr. Ranade."\(^1\) Ranade was, however, not only a pious well-wisher of his country, but also a round-the-clock worker in the field of national welfare. 'Work, work, work and no play' - was his motto; and he remained true to it till the very end of his life, die as he did in harness. "He was the inspirer, the guide, philosopher and friend of all active workers for the good of the country. \(\ldots\) His tongue and his pen, his time and his purse he was ready to devote to all the causes that made for the good of the country."\(^2\)

\(^1\) Mankar, G.A. (quoted by) - *A Sketch of the Life and Works of the late Mr. Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade*; p. 153.

As a social reformer, Ranade had the following principles:

(i) Reform in religion and society must go together; the two are inseparable, as 'love to man' is inseparable from 'love to God'. This made him a very broad-minded reformer whose programme of reform was not confined to the field of religion alone, but included within its fold the entire social life of man in all its variegated aspects.

(ii) Social organism is a growth, and hence no complete breaking away from the past is possible. The true reformer, he thought, has not to write on a clean slate. His work is more often to complete the half-written sentence, to strike a happy balance between the past and present. In other words, unlike those ultra-modern reformers who turned their back completely upon the past customs and traditions of the country, he wanted to steer a middle course. He was neither a conservative die-hard nor a revolutionary modernist, but a liberal and moderate reformer, who desired to blend the old and the new into a harmonious whole, by adapting the old order to the new one in a truly eclectic spirit.

(iii) Reform should be undertaken in a national spirit. It should not be localised or confined to a particular province. As a true nationalist, he wanted to make the reform-movement a national movement, and for this he conceived of an all-India organisation, meant to unify social reform activities all over the country. Actuated by this nationalistic sentiment, he, with the assistance of other social workers, founded the National Social Conference in the year 1887. The Conference held its first meeting at Madras in the same Pandal in which the All India National Congress had met, and
so most of the Congress delegates also attended the Social Conference; and this practice was followed for many subsequent years. He called the Indian Social Conference as the younger sister of the Congress and was always willing to work in collaboration with it.

The formation of the Indian National Social Conference by Ranade opened a new chapter in the history of the nineteenth century reform movement in the country, by making it national both in tone and dimensions. It occupied the same place in the field of social reform as the Indian National Congress did in the field of politics; and, both combined, made the movement of Indian nationalism a really powerful and vigorous force of national regeneration. "If the Indian National Congress brought the various political forces under one banner, the Indian National Social Reform Conference tried to unite the efforts of the various social reformers and associations. \ldots\textsuperscript{1} For a time in the history of the national struggle for freedom, the social and political forces converged and in their unity found new strength."

RANADE'S INTEREST IN EDUCATION

As a social reformer, who took an organic view of society, and was, therefore, committed to the policy of a broad-based and all-round programme of social upliftment, Ranade could not, of necessity, remain oblivious of the problem of education. He attributed the backwardness and ills of the contemporary Indian society to "isolation, submission to outward force or power more than to the voice of the inward conscience, perception of factitious differences between men and men, due to heredity and birth, a passive acquiescence

\textsuperscript{1} Desai, A.R.---Social Background of Indian Nationalism; p.155.
in evil or wrong-doing, and a general indifference to secular well-being almost bordering fatalism.\(^1\)

To get rid of these social maladies, a general awakening among the people was considered to be the most urgent need of the hour. A well-planned and judiciously conceived system of education, he believed, was the first pre-requisite to bring about the desired general awakening in the country, for without it the people could not be freed from the shackles of stereotyped and unhealthy social dogmas and customs which sapped the creative and vital elements of their life. This inseparable connection between social reform and education actuated him to take a deep interest in the problem of education.

**HIS ADVOCACY FOR VERNACULARS**

In Ranade's time one of the most baneful features of the educational system was the utter neglect of vernaculars. Predominence was given to English and classical languages, and they were supposed to be an essential part of the curriculum. Without them, education was considered to be incomplete and defective, especially at the higher stages. It was the conviction of the Oxonian Professors in the Council of the Bombay University, such as Sir Alexander Grant, that "no education could be complete without a scholarly knowledge of one of the classical languages, whether European or Asian, and that the vernacular of the country could not compete with any of these ------."\(^2\) Such a belief naturally led to the neglect of vernaculars of the country by the students, who, as a mark of superiority and distinction, tried to achieve

---

1 - Mankar, G.A. - op.cit.; p.141
2 - Ibid; p.119.
a better mastery over English than over their own mother-tongue.

In Ranade's opinion, such an outright neglect of vernaculars was not right, looked at from the point of view of national welfare. He felt that it was the duty of an Indian university to encourage the study of vernaculars. He, therefore, started an agitation in their favour, and the first step that he took in this direction was to get a requisition signed by about 54 Fellows of the University which he sent to the Syndicate along with the proposal to include the vernaculars in the B.A. and M.A. voluntary language groups as alternative languages in lieu of Sanskrit and Persian. He, as a Fellow, personally introduced the proposal in a meeting of the Faculty of Arts. The proposal was hotly discussed, and when votes were taken, they fell into a tie. The Chair, however, gave its casting vote against the proposal, and hence it was lost. Ranade was disappointed, but he did not lose hope, and said, "Though the question was shelved for the time, yet, like the Home Rule question, it would come up again for discussion."¹

On the issue of vernaculars, Ranade continued to agitate with his usual faith. He prepared an elaborate essay on the growth of Marathi literature, affirming therein that it was by no means an uncultured and unrefined language, that it contained, on the contrary, great potentialities of further growth and development, if pursued with sufficient zest and devotion. At his instance, the Syndicate of the University appointed a Committee, consisting of himself, Dr. Machian and Hon. Mr. F. M. Mehta, to investigate the question whether a place for Marathi and Gujarati could be found in the list of second languages at the M.A. Examination. The

¹ Ibid; p. 122.
Report of the Committee, mainly written by Ranade himself, opined that vernaculars are living languages and that the study of their growth and variation is of more practical value than the study of the dead classical languages. It showed the practicability of the introduction of Marathi and Gujarati as alternative second languages, to be taken up with English in the M.A. language-group. For this, he also formulated therein a definite scheme. The especially of the scheme was that it was free from those objections which were usually raised against the teaching of vernaculars, for (i) it did not increase the burden of studies; (ii) it did not make the study of vernaculars compulsory; and (iii) it did not displace any of the classical languages, as they continued to be compulsory in all the higher examinations, except M.A. Thus students were not debarred from the mental training and culture which classical languages were supposed to impart.

The above report was the last effort of Mahadev Govind Ranade to secure a place for vernaculars in the University curriculum. Unfortunately, however, he died before it was submitted to the Senate for consideration. The report, when considered, was unanimously accepted by the Senate. Besides Marathi and Gujarati, Canaree was also added to the course, and "thus the efforts of Mr. Ranade on behalf of the vernaculars was a posthumous triumph." ¹

passing various University examinations and (2) the system of examination which enjoined upon the failures to appear in the full examination again.

The syllabus and courses being very heavy, the students were over-strained, resulting in their ill health and high mortality. The problem had assumed a more aggravated form because of the requirement of passing in all the subjects in the same attempt. If a student failed in one or few subjects, he had to study all the subjects for the full term over again, including those papers in which he had already passed, and had to appear and pass in all of them in the subsequent examination. All this meant enormous strain as well as waste of time for the students concerned.

Plea for Compartmental Examinations: To save students from this unnecessary waste of time and energy, Ranade advocated the principle of holding compartmental examinations in those subjects again in which they had failed. His argument in favour of such a scheme was based on simple logic, that is, it was meaningless to make it obligatory for the students to study and appear in the examination in those subjects again in which they had already passed in the first attempt. Instead, they need be re-examined only in those subjects in which they had failed.

In his advocacy for the introduction of compartmental examinations, Ranade had to face considerable opposition. The cardinal argument of his opponents was that such a system of re-examination would lower the value of University Degrees which, they thought, should be conferred upon the students only after prolonged labour and study. Ranade did not agree with this argument; he
argued the case with great vehemence, and ultimately persuaded the Senate to pass a resolution in favour of it. But the Governor of Bombay, advised by some unsympathetic and conservative persons, vetoed the Bill, when it was sent to him for his assent.

Thus the efforts of Ranade and his supporters on this issue, actuated by sympathetic consideration of the sad plight of the student, proved unfruitful in the face of his conservative adversaries. In all fairness, it must, however, be said that "though their efforts may not have been successful, but they have had the proud satisfaction of having done the duty, in spite of the stubborn opposition of unsympathetic men and of obloquy and ridicule that have been hurled against them by those who ought to have been hurled against them by those who ought to have known better."\(^1\)

The fact that after a few decades the compartmental system was adopted by almost all the progressive universities is a clear testimony to the fact that Ranade was right in his views on this subject.

**HIS ASSISTANCE TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BOMBAY**

Ranade had been closely associated with the University of Bombay, and he always took active interest in its work, in different capacities - as a Fellow, a Syndicate and a Dean. The University had been founded in 1857 under the directions contained in the Wood's Despatch of 1854. Its progress was, however, slow, as no provision for its financial assistance had been made. The result was that the University found it difficult to expand its activities and work. Ranade, who always stood for high university standards, came to its rescue. As a concrete proof of his earnest desire to

---

\(^1\) Ibid; p.129.
render financial assistance to the University, he tried to secure a great portion of the legacy of a large sum of money, bequeathed by the late Sir Mugaldas Nathubhai, to the University of Bombay without any litigation. There was some dispute amongst the heirs to the rich bequest. He, through his persuasive influence, induced them to hand over to the University about three and a half lacs of rupees in pursuance of their father's bequest. The money was utilised for the higher studies of the meritorious students of the University.

Another instance where Ranade tried to render such financial assistance to the cause of higher education was the founding of a post-graduate university of research in different branches of knowledge. For this, he not only persuaded Mr. Jamsetji Tata to donate a pretty large sum, but also tried to raise funds for the University, by appealing to others who were interested in and who took kindly to such a project. As a proof of the leading role he played in giving the project a concrete form, his biographer says, "From some correspondence in this subject, that was shown to me by Mr. Ranade in May, 1900, at Lonavala, I thought that if any person, besides the donor, and his indefatigable secretary, Mr. Padsha, was enormously and enthusiastically interested in setting the scheme afloat, it was Mr. Ranade."

CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL EDUCATION: THE DECCAN EDUCATION SOCIETY

The most important educational contribution of those associated with the reform movement of Prathana Samaj was the Deccan Education Society, founded in Poona on October 24, 1884. It was the first expression of the national aspirations of the Indian people.

in Western India, in the field of education. It was, in fact, their first attempt to implement the principles and ideals of National Education; which marked a departure from the contemporary system of education, fostered by the official bureaucracy.

The founder of the Society was Vishnu Krishna Chiplunker (1850–82), the preacher of the gospel of nationalism in Western India and one of the prominent leaders of the Samaj. On January 1, 1880, he started a school at Poona, with the avowed aim of imparting education on national lines. The school attracted the attention of all those who were working in the field. They came forward to give their whole-hearted support to the venture in a true spirit of dedication and self-sacrifice. Patriots like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Agarkar and Gokhale, volunteered themselves to serve honorarily on the staff of the school and, through their distinguished services, increased its popularity by leaps and bounds. Ranade, the leader of the Prathana Samaj movement, evinced great interest in the work of the school; it was, in fact, under his promptings and guidance that such an institution was started by Chiplunker.

This new school, organised and run in a true national spirit made a tremendous appeal to the patriotic sentiments of the people, with the result that within a very short period of time it gained widespread reputation and came to be looked upon as the centre for more extensive efforts in the field of national education. Four years later, that is, in 1884, it was transformed into the Deccan Education Society, which took upon itself the responsibility of spreading a network of educational institutions on national lines.
THE IDEALS AND PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

The Society has been throughout inspired by the ideal of imparting popular education in a truly national spirit. Its objective has been "affiliating or incorporating, at different places, schools and colleges under private management, or by other ways best adapted to the wants of the people.

The Society has tried to achieve the above ideals by adhering to the following principles of national education:

(a) Self-reliance; it did not seek any Government aid.
(b) Patriotic spirit: its teachers received only bare subsistence pay.
(c) Cheap education: it charged nominal fees from the students.
(d) Encouragement to vernaculars: too much of English learning was considered to be denationalising.
(e) A realistic curriculum: it was based on the conditions and needs of the society.

ORGANISATION AND WORK OF THE SOCIETY

The Society has its headquarters at Fergusson College, Poona, and its affairs are managed by the following bodies:

The Council which consists of all the life-members of the Society and an equal number elected by the Patrons, Fellows, and retired life-members of the Society from among themselves.

1 Directory of Educational, Scientific, Literary and Cultural Organisations in India - Govt. of India Publication (1948); p. 25
"2. The Governing Body consists of 3 Life-members elected by life-members, and 5 non-life members who are permanent residents of Poona and include the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, elected by non-life members.

"3. Trustees (not more than two at any time), who are in-charge of the funds and property of the Society."¹

The Society has been doing appreciable work in the field of education since its inception. It was born in a fit of national out-burst towards the closing decades of the nineteenth century, but, unlike many other national societies and institutions which were also so born, it did not disappear after the first flush of national enthusiasm was over; on the contrary, it has continued to work in the educational field steadily till this day. It still runs "three colleges and eight schools"² and has its own publication section through which it publishes valuable literature for use in educational institutions.

A SUMMARY OF EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Now that the educational contributions of the original Brahmo Samaj and its two subsequent offshoots have been dealt with separately, we may summarise the contribution of the movement as a whole, as follows:—

(1) It was the first indigenous movement which, inspired by the consideration of national welfare and progress, advocated the adoption of the modern system of education, emphasising thereby the study of English language and Western philosophy, literature and science. Raja Ram Mohum Roy was undoubtedly a great pioneer in this direction.

(2) It made laudable efforts for the spread of mass education. The ball was set rolling by Raja Ram Mohun Roy, who harnessed the agency of journalism to educate the Indian masses; and Keshub Chunder Sen gave further momentum to it by not only exposing the futility of the official 'filtration' theory, but also by putting forward a detailed scheme for coping with the problem directly and effectively.

(3) It strived to give vernaculars their due place in the educational field. Raja Ram Mohun Roy's works in Bengali Prose were a significant step in this direction. Further, a heroic battle was fought for vernaculars by Mahadev Govind Ranade, as a result of which they came to occupy a place in the university curricula.

(4) It took up the case of women's education with a true humanistic zeal. Keshub Chunder Sen made pioneer-efforts to bring women out of their 'purdah' and to educate them in useful branches of knowledge and arts. The Normal School for Girls and the Victoria Institute for Women, both started by his Social Reform Association, were virtual innovations in the field.

(5) It tried to introduce significant reforms in the contemporary system of higher education. For this, Keshub Chunder Sen suggested valuable measures, and Mahadev Govind Ranade made vigorous efforts to purge the then-prevalent examination-system and syllabus of their defects.

(6) Lastly, it provided a happy corrective to the pre-dominantly bookish system of contemporary education, by making pioneer-efforts in the field of vocational education. Keshub Chunder Sen's Calcutta School, which was started chiefly with the aim of
providing training in various crafts having vocational potentialities. was, of course, a novel venture in the field.

The above educational contributions of the Brahmo Samaj movement are unmistakably indicative of the fact that it represented the first Indian reaction to the official system of education. In fact, it was the first organised indigenous effort to reform the educational system of the country from an essentially Indian point of view.