CHAPTER 3

GLIMPSES OF SOCIAL TRENDS
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Progress of human civilization usually depends upon the factors like social, political, economic etc. Apart from these factors, press in the modern age also contributes a lot in the progress of society. Our society, from time immemorial was divided on the basis of religion, caste, creed, colour and income. Hinduism and Islam are two dominating religions in India and most of the socio-religious reform movements were offshoot of these two. Customs, traditions and festivals of Hindus and Muslims differ from each other. The cow is sacred for the Hindus that is why they do not kill animals, while animal sacrifice is an important aspect of religion for Muslims. Hindus have no reservation about alcoholic drinks while Muslims reject it in total. Hindus burn their dead, Muslims bury them. Infact they differed in each and every aspect of life. Muslims had no hesitations in drinking and eating from the hands of Hindus, but the latter generally avoid food or water from the hands of Muslims. Thus Hindus and Muslims form two distinct societies.

Kirti Narayan says that these division did not however mean that Hindus and Muslims respectively were held together by any bond of solidarity within their communities. Each was divided into several castes – or divisions, which was observed more stringently than probably communal differences. The great religious communities were internally so divided and
their level of social hierarchy were so different, that to treat them as cohesive entities would be a mistake¹.

Family was the basic unit. The caste factor was the basis of social relationship. The Hindu society was divided into four varnas and there was a host of sub-castes within the varnas². According to Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the caste system was a great hindrance in the growth of unity among the Indians. It was founded upon the irrational and unpredictable phenomenon of birth. He favoured democratization of society and suggested it was possible only when caste was eliminated. He wrote, "The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feelings". He further says, "We have been subjected to such insults for about nine centuries and the cause of degradation has been – our division into castes which has been the source of want of unity among us"³.

On the eve of Turkish invasion, Hindu society was divided on caste lines. Al-Beruni describing the social condition of that time says, that Caste system was operated on a very rigid basis⁴. During the period Muslims

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³. The Father of Modern India, Commemoration, Volume I, Part III, p. 75.
were placed on lower strata than Shudras who were called Malechas. With the advent of Islam social structure in India underwent a complete change.

The majority of the people were Vaisnavas, within this there was sub-division. The 19th century witnessed the growth of various sects both in Hinduism as well as in Islam who were more modern and less rationalistic in their approach. Low born like Kabir, Ramanand and Raidas were venerated by a large section of the population. This was a clear indication of democratization. But this does not mean that higher caste accepted the existence of lower caste on equal footing. The government whenever tried to interfere in their social parties they unified temporarily.

One will notice a similar type of divisions among the Muslims but the caste factor was not as much rigid as among the Hindus. There was flexibility in social customs e.g. acceptance of widow remarriage. Like the Hindus, the Muslim society was also divided socially. It is interesting to note that later both Hindus and Muslims were divided on the basis of profession and wealth. Social position became more important than caste. The zamidars, landlords, princes and bureaucracy of the both communities

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid
11. Ibid.
united under an umbrella to form an elite class\textsuperscript{12}. They were in fact loyal to the British government for their existence\textsuperscript{13}. Hindus and Muslims of the same class found much more in common among themselves than with co-religionists belonging to lower strata of society. The society was further divided on the basis of rural and urban. The urban class showed contempt for rural people and looked them down as uncultured, ignorant etc. no matter that they belonged to same faith.

At the lowest web of the society were peasants, weavers, butchers and others who were deprived and impoverished class. The educated middle class enjoyed a privileged life, which consisted basically of professionals like lawyers, doctors, teachers and journalists etc.

The educated class wanted a share in the governance of the country. The educated unemployed constituted a formidable bloc. They resented the government attitude of negligence. Later on this disgruntled educated middle class provided the leadership to the nationalist movement. A society divided on the basis of religion and caste on the one hand and social position on the other responded by either supporting or opposing or criticizing the efforts made by social reformers. The press in India was equally divided on the various issues concerning society. A neutral and

\textsuperscript{12} Crooke, op. cit, pp. 253-56.
\textsuperscript{13} Bipin Chandra, Amalesh Tripathi and Brunde, \textit{Freedom Struggle}, p. 37.
unbiased press was yet to develop. We will notice that group affiliation was more important than independent perception or objective assessment.

Indian society underwent a revolutionary change due to the introduction of modern education. Political, administrative and economic unification of the country, western thought, press, growing urbanization, communication and transportation system brought a social change. The intelligenta welcomed this change. Initially the British rulers encouraged the socio-religious reform movements due to its progressive character. They realized that it would weaken the orthodoxy, which will ultimately benefit the British. But they failed to realize the significance of the socio-religious reform movements, which brought a social and political awakening, and thus threatened the very existence of British rule. The Indian made an effort to resist the proselytizing influence of Christian Missionaries. A realization of need of modern times especially in terms of scientific knowledge and thus promoting a modern, secular and rational outlook was a major contribution of these reform movements.

At this juncture, broadly speaking, society came to be divided into three broad groups: (1)The conservative and orthodox elements, (2) Indians influenced by western culture and (3) the revivalist. The conservative section of the society was opposed to any change in their religious belief. Any reform means, an interference in their religion. Therefore, the orthodox

section of society could not accept the scientific ideological onslaught of the socio-religious rebels. As a result of this attitude the reformers were subjected to abuse and persecution. Though the orthodox Hinduism had its own reforming institution like Bharat Dharma Mahamandal. Madan Mohan Malviya started as Hindu religious revivalism, which laid the foundation of a Hindu University at Banaras. He laid stress on the total Hindu representation in the first governing body of the proposed university. This sectarian attitude was opposed, as this university will foster a feeling of exclusiveness and hostility to western civilization, to the British race, government and representative of that civilization. A large section of vernacular press represented the orthodox revivalist trends.

Orthodox Muslims too refused to accept Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's idea of modernization. Contrary to this section there was a group which readily accepted the western way of life and culture. They adopted the western manners and customs. They were fascinated towards the western culture. This section served as a link between the rulers and the orthodox section of the society.

The British criticized the Indian culture, they introduced more and more European style of culture and values in India. When the culture and tradition in India came under attack, they started glorifying the old culture.

16. VNR of UP, Leader, Allahabad 12 Nov. 1911.
17. VNR of NWP and O Nasim-e-Agra, 7 June, 1888.
and tradition\textsuperscript{20}. The British earlier extended their support to the social reformers, later on they withdrew their support when the latter began to criticize the European systems. The objective of all the organizations like \textit{Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj} was to bring reform in the society. But they worked on different lines to achieve their goal. Though they agreed upon the abolition of sati, thuggee, female infanticide and child marriage; they differed on the abolition of the caste system\textsuperscript{21}. During this period, we will notice that on the one hand Hindu consciousness was on rise and on the other hand there was strong opposition to the westernization. Their approach was to reform the society and they saw the path of progress in accepting what was best in east and west.

The issue of social reform in the congress programme remained debatable. The press also remained divided on this issue. One trend that came forward was purely reformist that was a new sprit of enquiry based on reason that sought to rationalize social customs and institutions by rejecting the superstitions. On the other hand there was an upsurge of national pride, which glorified the past. The English press tried to wash out the social evils and to make India stronger. Whereas the vernacular press, tried to defend

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Bipin Chandra, op. cit., p.p. 29.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Robinson, op. cit., \textit{Brahmo Samajists} eschewed caste altogether. The \textit{Prarthana Samajists} decided they could best reform \textit{Hinduism} from within. The \textit{Arya Samajists} however were bitterly divided over the caste. Dayanand had envisioned a castless society, but the failure of the \textit{Arya Samajist} to implement this was responsible for the lack of cohesion in their ranks, p. 67.
\end{itemize}
the social institutions. This is the reason why Indians opposed the Age of Consent Bill. The vernacular press was on the fore front.

The Anglo-Indian press strongly advocated social reform. Some time constant advocacy by the Anglo-Indian press, resulted into instant reaction among the Indians. The Purdah system was rarely objected by any section of the Indian press but the Anglo-Indian press had very strong reservations about it. Similar was difference of view regarding divorce which according to western thinking was desirable but objectionable to the Indians. The congress leaders realized the necessity of social reform but they would not include it in the programme of the Congress.

The work of social reform, however, was taken in earnest by the different caste themselves or by individuals. While advocating social reform the Indian press whether English or vernacular sought to justify it not because it existed in Europe but because it was sanctified in the scriptures.

The revivalist movement, especially the Arya Samaj appealed to a large section of the people. The Arya Samaj in due course of time gained importance and became the symbol of a democratic social reform movement. Vernacular press praised its contribution in revolutionizing the Indian society. Swami Dayanand Saraswati advocated for unity in religion.

22. Kaisar-ul-Akhbar, September 26, 1891.
by keeping aside all the diversity of languages, education, manners and customs in the dissemination of vedic religion. But its programme of *Shudhi* movement was widely resented by the Muslims. Its supporters tried to convince that it was a purely socio-religious body, its critique accused it of having political aspirations and communal inclination.

Muslim society also underwent a rapid change. New ideas left a deep impact on the Muslim society. As a result educational movement became possible. Sir Syed Ahmad's contribution to social awareness and upliftment among the Muslims were phenomenal. The Aligarh Movement became a force to be reckoned with. He wanted modern education for the Muslims. He agreed that Muslims should first concentrate on education, which only could guarantee their progress and prosperity.

Sir Syed also tried to reform the social abuses in the Muslim community. He condemned the system of *piri-muridi*. He also condemned the institution of slavery and described it as unislamic. His progressive social ideas were propagated through his magazine *Tahzib-ul-AkhlAQ*. The Aligarh School was thought of as an upstarts, poor as leaders and reformers of the *Musalmans* community but the *Musalmans* do not consider them even *Musalman* and are far less prepared to recognize them as their leaders and

reformers. The Deoband School of Muslims was also opposed to Sir Syed and had more in common with the congress initially. Apart from this, there were other organizations like *Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Bewagan-e-Islam*, with Sheikh Wajid Hussain Khan as its president which opposed Sir Syed.

Most of the social reformers came from upper strata of the society. They glorified the past and felt inspired by it. These men under western influence talked of reform but had no emotional commitment to the cause and somehow were quite happy with their privileged position in the society. However the influence they left on the society can't be minimized. Simultaneously there was a section who resented government interference in social matters. They were bitter critique of the social reform for instance when Wiliam Bentick banned *Sati*, this was opposed by a section of Hindu who treated it as an interference in their religion.

Muslims, too, were protective about their customs. Whenever any attempt was made to bring social reform, Muslims generally rose up in the arms against any infringement on privacy. Government interference in promoting consciousness for social reform among the people was however welcomed by another section.

The humanistic ideas of social equality and the equal worth of all individuals, which inspired the newly educated middle class, had a major impact on the field of social reform. This enlightened section of the society was disgusted with the prevailing social ills and inhuman social practices. The social reform movements formed an integral part of the religious reforms primarily because nearly all the efforts towards social ills like untouchability and gender based inequality-derived legitimacy from religion in one way or the other. In later years though, the social reform movements gradually disassociated itself from religion and adopted a secular approach. Earlier the reform movements had a narrow social base confined to upper strata of the society. Later the social reform movements penetrated the lower strata of the society to revolutionize and reconstruct the social sphere. Vernacular press played key role and provided base to reach the masses.

The social problem, during the 19th century was countrywide problems and forces, which were working for their solution, were wide spread. Alcoholism was a major problem. The government was supposed to ban alcoholism29. The people became addicted to drugs like Chandu and Charas. Newspapers raised their voice against these evils and targetted the government inefficiency to check the menace30. Newspapers published

29. VNR of NWP and O, Hindustani, Lucknow, 16 January 1885.
30. VNR of UP, Awag, Gorakhpur, 24 may 1893.
articles to create consciousness among the populace to discard drinking, by emotional appeal that all religions in the world has prohibited it\textsuperscript{31}. The newspaper lamented the government sincerity not to check the drinking\textsuperscript{32}. Regarding increased drunkenness, the government plea was that of public character: people would resort to illicit distilling if government reduced legal distilling\textsuperscript{33}. The vernacular language press welcomed the decision of British Parliament to stop license for cultivation of poppy and sale of opium in 1891. But the government authorities apprehended a loss in revenue.

The government justified its excise policy by stating that cultivation of opium is useful for medicinal purpose. If its use were stopped, it would cause a great panic. The newspapers became suspicious when the government started highlighting the good effect of opium. The vernacular press put a question mark on the sincerity of the government in dealing with the problem.

Another social evil which cropped up was prostitution and institution of the dancing girls, the institution of \textit{devedasi} was prevalent. The vernacular newspapers through their column reported constant appeals to the government for their removal\textsuperscript{34}. Some people even wanted prostitution

\textsuperscript{31} VNR of UP, \textit{Dahdab-i-Qaisari}, Bareilly, 9 December 1893.
\textsuperscript{32} VNR of UP, \textit{Azad}, Lucknow, 9 January 1891.
\textsuperscript{33} VNR of UP, \textit{Naiyar-e-Azam}, Moradabad, 5 February 1898.
to be declared a penal offence as it was opposed by every religion. The area where they resided became the centre of anti-social elements. At that point of time the vernacular language press was fully convinced that government officials were involved in such traffic. Therefore they avoid to take stern action.

Another social evil, which was targetted by the vernacular language press, was the dowry system which was equally prevalent among Hindus as well as Muslims. In case parents failed to manage dowries this meant that girls would remain unmarried for a long period which ultimately gave birth to the evil of female infanticide. The government made hollow claims that infanticide is on decreasing trend but fact remained different. The Urdu and Hindi newspapers constantly reported about more and more cases of infanticide.

No other matter received so much attention of the vernacular press on the prevalence of child marriage and prejudice against widow remarriage. Child marriage was widely prevalent among Hindus. It was due to Parsi reformer B.M. Malabari, that the Age of Consent Act was passed in 1891, which forbade the marriage of girls below the age of 12. The Sharda Act 1930 further raised the marriage age to 18 and 14 for boys and girls.

35. VNR of UP, Waqiat-e-Alam, Ghazipur, 5 January 1885.
36. VNR of UP. Amir-ul-Akhbar, Meerut, 16 December 1890.
respectively. The child Marriage Restraint Act 1978 pushed the age 18 and 21 respectively for boys and girls.

Widow remarriage was also considered a bane on the society which was to be discouraged. It was due to earnest effort of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, that the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act 1865 was passed which legalized marriage of widow. The widow remarriage issue was also opposed by a large section of the Hindus society. That too was considered as direct infringement upon religious practices. The newspapers launched an attack on the custom of *Sati*. *Sati* was common among Hindus. The sultan of Delhi tried to remove all social evils but they could not achieve much success. Ibn-i-Batuta states that a license from sultan was essential before burning a widow. Humayun tried to ban it completely. Akbar, too tried to stop widow burning. He issued an order that a woman should not be forced to commit *Sati*. Jahangir also prohibited, Aurangzeb also disallowed a woman to be burnt. Manuci informed us that the Mughal emperors banned *Sati*. The man who engineered an agitation against the *Sati* was Rajaram Mohan Roy. It was due to the influence of his frontal attack, that the government declared *Sati* as illegal and punishable by criminal court.

38. *Hindustan*, July 1887.
It is now clear that women enjoyed a dubious social position. There were complaints about deprivation of basic amenities to women. The incidence of atrocities on women was increasing day by day. Even the government machineries were indulged in heinous crimes against women. The socio-religious reform movements were anxious to promote the cause of women and improve their position in society and newspapers were their main spokesmen.

The Christian missionaries did pioneering work for the development of education in women. Bethune launched the first successful movement for women's education. The contributions of Vidyasagar in this field is of course noteworthy. Charles Wood's Dispatch on education laid great emphasis on the need for female education.

The British ruthlessly followed the policy of racialism. Racial discrimination was prevalent in every walk of life. Discrimination was inherent in the nature of British rule, which was basically alien – socially, politically, and economically. The British developed a sense of racial superiority. The educated Indians were hard bent to accept this racial superiority. Their sense of pride further got stimulus when there was a rising wave of racist doctrine preaching the inherent superiority of whites over the others. Indians were discriminated in the employment. They were

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41. Bipin Chandra, op.cit., p 39
neglected, humiliation was heaped upon them, contempt was shown to their life, property and honour even by highly placed persons in administration \(^42\) and rules regarding services and education \(^43\) definitely favoured the Europeans.

Once Curzon himself declared that he was by instinct and by conviction an imperialist and regarded the British Empire "not only as a source of honour and pride to Englishman but as a blessing to the world" \(^44\).

Intoxicated with the idea of racial superiority they practiced racial discrimination not only in India but in other parts of the world as well. When Curzon tried to establish absolute justice between man and man, equality before law, freedom from tyranny injustice and oppression, \(^45\) his own government actually adopted the policy of racial discrimination in Australia and Africa \(^46\). The European's pride in their culture and colour was educated as a result of docile temperament of the Indians \(^47\).

The vernacular press appreciated the attempt of Curzon to do away with the racial arrogance but Anglo-Indian newspapers termed the viceroy's

\(^{42}\) Sir A. Lyall Lt. Governor of UP ordered natives to come barefooted to him and Sir Rivers Thompson Lt. Governor of Bengal ordered the natives to keep standing in his presence, see also: *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, 17 March 1876, Vol. II, No. 19.

\(^{43}\) The Roorki Engineering College rules were so amended as to bar the entry of Indians into it. *Riyaz-ul-Akhbar* Feb. 2, 1898.

\(^{44}\) Speech on March 26, 1902 – Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India*, p. 117.

\(^{45}\) Speech delivered by Curzon on July 20, 1904-Releigh, *Lord Curzon in India*, p. 49.

\(^{46}\) Indian people February 27, 1903.

attempts as wastage of energy. Curzon failed to check the outrages of Europeans inspite of their best attempts to do so.

With the expansion of British Empire, administrative machinery increased tremendously. This brought Europeans into increasing contact with Indians and cases of racial arrogance multiplied. The Indian press raised an alarm against such cases. This created a consciousness among the Indians, which culminated into the popular demand of Indianization of services.

Ilbert Bill controversy to a great extent exposed the claims of British justice, which according to the Indians was an instrument to deceive them. Ripon's government sought to abolish judicial qualification based on race distinction and Ilbert Bill sought to give the Indian judges the same power and rights as their European colleagues enjoyed. The Bill raised a storm of agitation among the members of the European Community and they all stood united against the Bill. Ripon was bound to modify the bill, which almost killed the purpose.

The Ilbert Bill controversy proved an eye opener to the Indians. The Ilbert Bill taught the people a great lesson, the potency of public agitation and mass demonstration Urdu Press came heavily upon the British regime for her discriminatory attitude. When Raja Sheo Prasad supported the

Europeans on Ilbert Bill issue, his effigy was burnt and Akhbar-e-Aam denounced him in strong words⁴⁹. Maulana Mohammed Ali once said, "if the darker races must for ever be looked upon in this way, the fatalism of the west was worse than the fatalism of the East... you may be contended with this state of things but we are not... we have learned the dignity of our race. We are self-respecting people".

In the words of Premghan 'just a child get no milk without crying, a beggar no alms without begging and the thirsty no water without asking for it, the ruled do not obtained justice from ruler without petitioning and wailing⁵⁰. The newspapers protested that there was white law and black law and never would the twain meet⁵¹.

In the administrative sphere and judicial departments, there was great discrimination between the appointments of Europeans and Indians. The language press highlighted this and said that while the number of posts had increased, the number of Indians in high post was still inadequate. The Indians were always placed at the lowest salaries. The highest post the Indian could hold was that of munsif. The vernacular press always raised its voice against these discriminations meted out to the Indians⁵².

The employment of labourer in tea plantation industry and indigo etc was basically an economic issue. Women and children were employed as

⁴⁹. Ibid., 4 April, 1883, Vol. 13, No. 28.
⁵⁰. Sudhir Chandra, op. cit., p. 86.
⁵¹. VNR of UP, Kawnpur Gazette, 1 July 1865.
⁵². Advocate, Lucknow, 13 Sept. 1903.
forced labourer their position was just like slaves. Sometime women were outraged, later their relatives were satisfied by a compensation. The social condition of the labour class was precarious and miserable.

The existence of beggary was an stigma on the Indian society. Though this related to the economic crisis. Economic deprivation led to beggary. The press advocated the government to remove poverty and asked the people to form association to help deprived children. Orphanages were established to meet the problem of destitute children. Christian missionaries did a laudable work but they came under fire on the issue proselytization.

During the 19th century the crime like theft, dacoity, high way robbery etc. were more rampant everywhere. The vernacular language press always lamented the anti-social elements the press also dealt in length about inability of the police to take the problem. The newspapers also reported about the prosecution of innocent people by the police so they by perforce between the thieves and criminals.

Poverty was the main reason for growing crimes. Thus newspapers suggested to ameliorate the economic condition of the people. The press also advocated in favour of the repeal of the Arms Act, which had left the common people defenseless against marauders and thieves. Providing this
sort of security to the people would ensure the loyalty of the public towards the government.

To bring social reform is not an easy task particularly when the society, like ours which is custom and tradition-ridden. The presence of social ills was something which was an established fact and their removal could be effected only gradually because people were die hard to their old habits and traditions. The role of the press in society is the role of a watch-dog.