CHAPTER - 3
HISTORY OF SOCIAL REFORM
MOVEMENT - GENESIS AND OUTCOME

According to R. C. Majumdar, "History has been defined as, "the study of man's dealing with other men, and the adjustment of working relations between human groups."1

The various reform movement gave the much needed confidence to educated Indians who had been demoralized and uprooted from their morning by propaganda of western cultural superiority. These reform movements reassured Indians about the greatness of their ancient religion and their rich cultural heritage. The intelligentsia got a new identity which was badly needed. P.B. Gajendragadkar said,

"The study of the movement of social reform during the last 150 years in retrospect inevitably raises the problem of the prospect and future of the said movement."2

The reform atmosphere helped Indians to discard many obsolete rites and practices and adjust their religious belief to the new environment of rationalist and scientific thought. Above all, A new secular and nationalist outlook also developed. According to P. B. Gajendragadkar,

"This movement was both a religious and a national movement. It sought to bring a new life to India and to the Hindu race. It glorified the Vedas, and made an appeal for the study of ancient Hindu culture."3

The reform movement suffered from some retrograde features also. Many reformists desired and worked for social uplift within the framework of imperialism and openly preached loyalty to the British. Again these reformists held Western society as an ideal while combating inadequacies of their own.
About reformers MR. S. Natarajan gives his views that,

"In social reform, the reformer is working for himself as well as others to remove hindrances, and create conditions favourable to social progress."

Another limitation was that most of these reform movements confined their activities to upper and middle classes in towns, leaving out of purview the backward classes and countless millions living in India’s villages. Still another negative aspect was the growth of religious chauvinism. The overemphasis on superiority of one’s own religion and social set-up generated narrow communal outlook. The imperial rulers were quick to take advantage of this communal divide and used it to waken the Indian National movement.

HISTORY OF SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT

C. H. Heimsath in an excellent analysis of the Hindu social reform movements has indicated three distinct phases in the history of social reform in India, viz., first phase of individual revolt and reform together with strong religious links from Rammohan to the early 1880s; the second phase was marked by the elevation of social reform movement to a national plane as exemplified by the efforts of Behramji Malabari and the Indian National Social Conference; their stage began when social reform was identified with a regeneration of the traditional spirit of the nation and popularly associated with the activities of ‘extremist’ leaders of the early 20th century. To it may be added the fourth phase under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi when social reform became a main plank in the all round regeneration of Indian Society. By 1800, the conservative attitude was fast giving way to a new attitude which was critical of Indian society and culture. This critical approach was used by most of the officials and writers and statesman of British to justify political and economic enslavement of India and to proclaim that it was incapable of improvement and must, therefore, remain permanently under British tutelage. George Wheeler in 1876 that Indian people were very superstitious and were bound within the great barriers of caste-distinctions. In his words.

"---with such a people as this, when we have no power, either by love or law, to dash to pieces sad prejudices and abominable customs, is it to be expected
that any sudden transformation can take place in India? The people are not in them selve reforming. The country is like a great lion, but one which is sleeping in the sun ad not rampant and roaring. Most men are so delicately farmed that they cannot study and not only a single instance can be pointed out of them having produced an intellect powerful enough to fathom the mysteries of stars. They have little passion—little ambition. They are in bondage, not so much to Europeans, as to one another, and to themselves.”

However, a few Englishmen—the radicals applied the advanced spiritualism and rational thought of the West to the Indian situation as they saw it. They desire to make India a part of modern progressive world of science and spiritualism. The spiritualism of these men was aroused by the social injustice of such institutions as the caste system and untouchability, such customs as sati and infanticide and the low status of women in general and of widow in particular of Indian society. The radicals got an opportunity to influence Indian policies through James Mill, one of the leading radical philosophers of England, who came to occupy in 1871 the very important position of Chief Examiner in the office of the Court of Directors and William Bentick who was a radical and who became the Governor General of India in 1829. P.E. Roberts was the opinion that William Bentick

“was the first Governor General openly to act on the theory that the welfare of the subjects, people was a main, perhaps the primary duty of the British in India.”

However, such honest and philanthropic Englishmen were few. The ruling element in Indian administration continued to be imperialistic and exploitative. Thus modernization of India was accepted by many English officials, businessmen and statesmen to make Indians better customer of British goods and reconcile them to the alien rule. They tried to follow a delicately balanced policy of introducing modernization in some respects and blocking and preventing it in other respects.

The policy of modernizing Indian society was also encouraged by Christians Missionaries. The impact of modern education, rational, humanitarian and scientific approach to life—which ushered in—both in action and reaction—reform movements in religion are largely responsible for social reform movements in the 19th and 20th
centuries Ram Mohan Roy, a pioneer in modern religious reform movements in India, was also the morning star of modern social reform movement in the country.

"Ram Mohan Roy pointed out that the method of the missionaries were calculated to counteract their own desire."    

The radicals were given strong support by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other like minded Indians. About Raja Ram Mohan Roy Vivekananda said that,

"The great Hindu reformer, Raja Rammohan Roy, was a wonderful example of this unselfish work. He devoted his whole life to helping India. It was he who stopped the burning of widows. It is usually believed that this reform was due entirely to the English; but it was Raja Rammohan Roy who started the agitation against the custom and succeeded in obtaining the support of the Government in suppressing it. Until he began the movement, the English had done nothing. He also founded the important religious Society called the Brahmo -Samaj, and subscribed a hundred thousand dollars to found a university. He then stepped out and told them to go ahead without him. He cared nothing for fame or for results to himself."    

The officials British efforts at reforming Indian Society of its abuses were on the whole very meager and therefore bore little fruit. The biggest achievement was the outlaying of the practice of ‘Sati’ in 1829, when William Bentick made it a crime to associate in any way with the burning of a widow on her husband’s funeral pyre. Thus launching a frontal attack on the evil of ‘Sati’ by enlightened Indian reformers led by Ram Mohan Roy met success. About another evil prevalent in Indian society Grover and Grover mentioned.

Another horrible and cruel rite particularly common among the Bengalis and the Rajputs was killing their infant daughter at birth, taking female children to be a great economic liability."

The Social Reform Movement, was a movement that was stimulated by the impact of ideas which had their origin in, or are associated in some way with, the modern period of European history. The movement had its most natural growth in
areas where the British impact was through ideas. It had less to learn from the
exercise of British political power in India than from British political thought. It was
not from British officials or army officers that Bengal, Maharashtra and Madras
derived their impressions of Britain but from more idealistic elements. And it is
necessary to add here that social reform, as commonly understood in India, largely
related to changes affecting the structure of Indian society and family, and slightly
concerned changes affecting the relations between economic classes, which, in the
West, go by the name of social reform.

SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

The reform movements largely emerged from the growing contact that Hindu
thinkers had with Western thought, culture and religion. Below are the four most
important movements and the names associated with them.

THE BRAHMO SAMAJ

The Brahmo Sabha was founded in 1828 by Rama Mohan Roy (left) and in
1843 was restructured and renamed Brahmo Samaj by Devendranatha Tagore, father
of the well-known poet, Rabindranatha Tagore. Rama Mohan was extremely learned
and strongly influenced by Christianity. He disagreed with the doctrine of
reincarnation and fought to abolish certain traditional practices, some of which had
been grossly misused. These included caste, polygamy, image worship, sati, and child
marriage. His ideas of worship were drawn largely from Christianity. S.
Radhakrishnan’s sayings,

"Mankind stems from one origin, from which it has figured out in many
forms. It is now striving towards the reconciliation of that which has been split up.
These separation between East and West is over. The history of the New World, the
one world, has begun. It promises to be large in extent, varied in colour, rich in
quality."

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The fundamental principles of the Brahmo Samaj are

(1) There is only one God, who is the Creator and the Saviour 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 doings.

(3) Man's happiness in this and the next world consists in worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

(4) Loving God, holding communion with Him and carrying out His will in all the concerns of life, constitute true worship.

(5) No created object is to be worshipped as God, and God alone is to be considered as infallible.

Devendranatha Tagore was greatly influenced by the western philosophy of Locke and Hume. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was much influenced by the Western thought, especially Christianity. He was one of the first Hindus to visit Europe, where he was much admired by the intellectuals. After the death of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Brahmo Samaj got divided into many sects. Debendranath Tagore (Father of Rabindranath Tagore) took an active interest in the Brahmo Samaj and began to transform the Brahmo Samaj into a spiritual fraternity. He established the Adi Brahmo Samaj and formulated the "Brahmo-upasana" which was a set of readings from the Upanishads. Debendranath Tagore's successor was Keshab Chandra Sen. He sought to incorporate Christian ideals into the Brahmo Samaj movement. He began the compilation of a scripture including passages from the Holy Books of many religions - Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Muslim. He founded the Bharitiya Brahmo Samaj or the Naba Bidhan Samaj. Another split took place in the Brahmo Samaj in May 1878 when the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was founded by Pandit Shivanath Shastri, owing to differences with Keshab Chandra Sen. Eventually these three were united to form the "Brahmo Sammilian Samaj" and a "mandir" was built in Bhowanipur, Calcutta, which celebrated its centenary in 1997.
He tried to reform the Brahmo Samaj but lacking support eventually left. Keshab Chandra Sen joined the Samaj in 1857 and initially worked with Tagore. But later disagreeing with Tagore’s ideas, he left to establish his own movement. Brahmo samaj’s overall contribution may be summed up thus:

1. It discarded faith in divine Avatars.
2. It denied that any scripture could enjoy the status of ultimate authority transcending human reason and conscience;
3. It denounced polytheism and idol worship.
4. It criticized the caste system;

It took no definite stand on the doctrine of Karma and transmigration of soul and left it to individual. Brahmos to believe either way. In matters of social reform, Brahmo Samaj has influenced Hindu society. It attacked many dogmas and superstitions. It condemned the prevailing Hindu prejudice against going abroad. It worked for a respectable status for women in society——condemned ‘sati’, worked for abolition of purdah system, discouraged child marriages and polygamy, crusaded for widow remarriage, provision of educational facilities etc. It also attacked casteism and untouchability though in these matters it attained only limited success.

THE PRARTHNA SAMAJ

The Brahmo ideas spread in Maharashtra where the Paramhansa Sabha was founded in 1849. Prarthna Samaj, founded by R.G. Bhandarkar and M.G.Ranade in Bombay in 1867, was an offshoot of the Brahmo Samaj. Like Brahmo Samaj, it also preached worship of one god and tried to free religion from various evils like caste system and dominance of priests. The other persons who worked for promoting the principles of the Prarthana Samaj include Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and Kandukuri Veerasalingam.

They believed that the true love of God lay in the service of God’s children. In the field of social reform the focus was on four objects.
1. Disapproval of caste system.

2. Raising the age of marriage for both males and females.

3. Widow remarriage.


THE ARYA SAMAJ

Arya samaj movement was an outcome of reaction to Western influences. The Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayananda Sarasvati (left) in 1875 as a radical reform movement. Dayananda wanted to halt the Christian missionary onslaught and to return to the ancient Vedic tradition. Mr. D.S. Sharma writes,

"The Arya Samaj is the church militant in the Hindu fold—It is much more vitally connected with Hinduism than the Brahma Samaj—There is no denying the fact that it has played and is playing a glorious part in the regeneration of Hinduism in modern times."

Swami Dayananda therefore sought to purge Hinduism of what he considered later additions, such as image worship, pilgrimage and ritual bathing. Although emphasising the ancient Vedic tradition, Dayananda also sought to modernise Hinduism and to re-absorb Hindus who had converted to Islam or Christianity. His movement, with its concerns over the influence of other religions sowed the seeds for the many political parties that desired to re-establish Hindu rule in India. The Arya Samaj is still an active organisation, both world-wide and in the UK. Its members agree to follow its "Ten Principles" and worship largely through havan (the sacred fire ceremony) and recitation of the Gayatri-mantra.

The creed and principles of the Arya Samaj first defined at Bombay in 1875 were revised at Lahore in 1877. The ten principles were approved by Dayanand and have remained unaltered to this day. The principles are

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1- God is the primary source of all true knowledge.

2- God who is All-truth, All-knowledge, Almighty, Immortal, creature of universe, alone is worthy of worship.

3- The Vedas are the books of true knowledge.

4- An Arya should always be ready to accept truth and abandon untruth.

5- All action must confirm to dharma, that means after due consideration of right and wrong.

6- The principle aim of this Samaj is to promote the world's well-being, material, spiritual and social.

7- All persons should be treated with love and justice.

8- Ignorance should be dispelled and knowledge increased.

9- Everybody should consider his own progress to depend on the uplift of all others. Social well-being of mankind should be placed above the individuals well-being.

"The Arya Samaj, the other great Hindu religious reform movement, adopted active measures to ameliorate the condition of the untouchables."

The Arya Samaj movement gave "proud" self-confidence and self-reliance to the Hindus and undermined the belief in the superiority of the White Race and Western culture. As a disciplined Hindu organization, it has succeeded in protecting Hindu society from the onslaught of Islam and Christianity. The Arya Samaj movement has taken deep roots in the Panjab, Haryana, the Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan.
THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT

Ramakrishna was born Gadadhar Chatterji in a poor but orthodox Bengali *brahmana* family. The Ramakrishna mission was conceived and founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897, eleven years after the death of Ramakrishna. “Sri Ramkrishna was ablazewith divinity”.

As a young man he became the priest at the Kali temple near Calcutta. He was later initiated as a *sannyasi* and experienced mystical visions, especially of Devi. He was profoundly influenced by Christianity and Islam and emphasised the universality of religion. He preached that "Jiva is Shiva" (the soul is God). He met many contemporary reformers and it was Keshab Chandra Sen who made him first known to the world.

Vivekananda emerged as the preacher of neo-Hinduism. In 1894 Swami Vivekananda attended the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago and made a great impression by his learned interpretations. The keynote of his opening address was the need for a healthy balance between spiritualism and materialism. He envisaged a new culture for the spiritualism of the East would be blended in to a new harmony to produce happiness for mankind. The Swami described untouchability and the caste system. One of the major aims for establishing the Ramkrishna Mission was the spread of the universal message of the Vedanta and the revival of Hinduism. In 1897 he established Mats or monasteries named after Ramakrishna for religious meditation. Vivekananda was very modern in his outlook and denounced untouchability, poverty and suppression of women. He condemned the caste system and undue emphasis on rituals and ceremonies. He welcomed the knowledge of science and said that it does not contradict religion. His teachings inspired courage, confidence and national pride among the Hindus. He strongly condemned the touch-me-not attitude of Hindus in religious matters. He regretted that Hinduism had been confined to the kitchen. He believed that it was an insult to God and Humanity to teach religion to a starving man. Vivekananda emphasized the fundamental postulate of his Master that the best worship of God is through service of humanity. He never gave any political message. All the same through his speeches and writings he infused in to the new generation a
sense of pride in India's past, a new faith in India's culture and a rare sense of self-confidence in India's future. He was a patriot and worked for the uplift of the people.

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

The Theosophical Society movement came to be allied with Hindu Renaissance. The Theosophical Society was first formed in the United States by Madame H.P.Blavatsky, a Russian lady, and Colonel H.S. Olcott, an American military officer. They came to India and were inspired by the Hindu philosophy and Hindu scriptures. They formed the headquarters of Theosophical Society in India in 1886 at Adyar in Madras. The Theosophical Society became very popular in India under Mrs. Annie Besant, an Irish lady, who came to India in 1893. She established the central Hindu College at Benaras, which later developed into the Hindu University. This society believe that a special relationship can be established between a person's soul and God by contemplation, prayer, revelation etc. The Society accepts the Hindu beliefs in re-incarnation, Karma and draws inspiration from the philosophy of the Upanishads and Samakhy, Yoga and Vedanta school of thought. It aims to work for universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour. In India the movement became somewhat popular with the election of Mrs. Anne Besant as its president after the death of Olcott in 1907. Mrs. Besant was well acquainted with Indian thought and culture and her approach was Vedantic as is very evident from her remarkable translation of the Bhagvad Gita. The Theosophical Society provided a common denominator for the various sects and fulfilled the urge of educated Hindus.
MUSLIM REFORM MOVEMENT

Muslim Movements

For a long time, the Muslims remained outside the influence of western education and the British rule. Reform movement among the Muslim community began in the later half of the 19th century. They aimed at the spread of modern education and removal of social abuses like the Purdah system and polygamy. In the beginning Mohammedan Literary Society of Kolkata was founded in 1863 by Nawab Abdul Latif. It played an important role in the spread of education among the Muslims and started a number of schools in Bengal.

Syed Ahmed Khan and Aligarh Movement

The most important for the spread of modern education and social reforms among the Muslims was started by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. He had been in the service of British Governments a judicial officer. He remained loyal to them during the revolt of 1857. He insisted upon the co-operation of the Muslim with the British Government so he opposed the Indian National Congress. He believed that the Muslim should be affected if they started taking part in political agitation. Though Sayed Ahmed Khan opposed the Indian National Congress, he insisted the unity between the Hindu and Muslims. He viewed that both the Hindus and the Muslims belong to the same country and the progress of the country depend on their unity. In 1864 Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan started a school at Gazipur. It was later called the Scientific Society. The society translated many scientific works into Urdu and published them. His greatest achievement as the establishment of the Mohammedan Anglo Indian College (MAO) at Aligarh in 1875. It later developed in Aligarh Muslim University. The reform movement started by Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan as called the Aligarh Movement. He was in the favour of the abolition of Purdah and education of women. He propagated his views through his magazine called Tahzil-ud-AkhlAQ (Reform of Morals). A large number of societies were started for the service of the Muslim community.
SIKH REFORM MOVEMENT

In 1873 the Singh Sabha movement was founded at Amritsar. The Akali movement was an offshoot of the Singh Sabha movement. It aimed to liberate the Sikh Gurudwaras from the control of corrupt mahants who enjoyed the support of the government. It was a secretarial or a regional movement but not a communal movement.

PARSI REFORM MOVEMENT

In 1851 a group of English educated Parsis set up the Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Sabha or Religious Reform Association for the object of "the regeneration of the social condition of the Parsis and the restoration of the Zoroastrian religion to its pristine purity." Naroaj Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji, K.R. Cama were in the forefront of the movement.

EFFECTS OF THE REFORM MOVEMENTS

The reform movements brought about remarkable changes in the society and religion. Initially the great changes affected a small group of people, but gradually these ideas spread many sections of the people,

1. The reform movement strengthened the Hindu and Muslim religion and made efforts to remove social evils among them,

2. The educated Indians started to think reasonably,

3. The reform movements helped in the revival of the past glory. They also helped in making up of a modern India,

4. It led to the progress of literature in different regional languages,

5. The caste system began to lose its hold on the society,

6. There was significant achievement in the field of emancipation of women. Some legal measures were introduced to raise their status.
7. To travel abroad, which was considered as a sin before, was accepted.

8. The reform movements created the rise of a middle class which consisted of the teachers, the doctors, the lawyers, the scientists, and the journalists who helped in the progress of India in different fields and

9. The reform movements also contributed for the growth of Indian Nationalism as the reform activities united the people all over India and created a feeling of oneness.

**NEED OF SOCIAL REFORM**

In the nineteenth century the condition of India was very bad. Particularly after the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Empire disintegrated rapidly. There was anarchy and chaos in the country. The Marathas spread their power in the north and carried fire and sword in the countryside. The prestige of the Mughal Empire was completely gone after the sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah in 1739. There was anarchy and Sikh Misls were fighting for supremacy with one another. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the English East India Company started establishing its authority in Bengal and the Deccan but still their position was shaky. There was no settled Government or a regular system of administration. This time the condition of common man was miserable. It was indeed a dark age in every way nothing the great importance was produced at that time. All indigenous arts and crafts declined. There was no place for reason in religion which was flooded by meaningless ceremonies and rites. There was no safety of life and property. There were mercenaries and soldiers of fortune who roamed about in the country and murdered and plundered at will. Agriculture, industry and trade were utterly ruined. There was no strong political power in the country to defend her against the foreign invaders.

Superstitions and dogmas were all powerful. The people were pessimistic and found no hope in the future. They became fatalists. Their vision became narrow. Their lives were miserable.
British imperialism helped the process of the unification of the country, it brought the entire country under the control of a single administration. The highly centralized character of British rule in India promoted the growth of Indian nationalism. The introduction of English language was an event of great importance in the history of India. It went a long way in transforming the ideas and mentality of the people of India.

English education broke the intellectual isolation of the Indian mind and brought it into close contact with literature, philosophy, economics, politics, history and sciences of the West. It broadened the outlook of the Indians who got new progressive, social and political ideas of the West in place of mythical geography, superstitions and rituals, legendary history, tyrannical monarchy and pseudo science. The English language made the Indians the inheritors of a great literature which was full of great ideas and ideals. But English education had an adverse effect on some sections of the Indians.

A very important effect of the contact of western culture in India was that it instilled into the minds of the Indians a spirit of rational enquiry into the basis of their religion and society.

Swami Vivekananda, the greatest disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhans, carried the message of his Master all over India, Europe and America. In 1893, he attended the "Parliament of Religions" held in Chicago. He created a sensation in the great assembly by his brilliance and nobility. On his return to India in 1897, he undertook a tour from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and delivered lectures wherever he went. In those lectures, he thundered against the evil practices in Hindu society and called upon the people to leave no stone unturned to make their future bright. He made them realize the greatness of India in the past and gave them fresh hopes for the future. He insisted upon carrier building, discipline and strength of mind. He brought about a new life among the people. He inspired them to work for the glory of their country.
The first and foremost social problem that attracted enlightened opinion was
the need for a better deal for women in society, in the abolition of the cruel rites of
'SATI' and 'Infanticide, in the condemnation of child marriage and polygamy and
popularization of widow remarriage, in the abolition of 'Pardah, in the provision of
reform facilities for women and economic openings to make them self—supporting
and finally an equal share for women in the political life of the country by
enfranchisement. Attacking the "purdah" system Gandhiji said.

"The sight of the screen made me sad. It pained and humiliated me
deply, Let us not live with one limb completely or partially paralyzed ---- Let us
tear down the pudah with one mighty effort". 16

Another social evil that was a major concern of the English educated and
Hindu intelligentsia was the caste restriction in Hindu society and the degrading
position of the lower castes especially the untouchables. Of these two great evils,
those connected with the position of women received greater attention in the 19th
century, while the problems of the untouchables came in sharp focus in the 20th
century because of its political overtones. In this century many bad evils were taking
place in the country.

SOCIAL REFORM –ITS NEED

Indian culture and society was different from Britishers. Most of the earlier
intruders who came to India had settled within her frontiers, were absorbed by her
superior culture and had become one of the land and its people. For some time it
seemed that India was completely bowled over by new Western ideas and Western
values in life. It seemed that India had lagged behind in the race for civilization. This
produced diverse reactions. More mature minds led by Rammohan Roy were
certainly stimulated by Western ideas and Western values but refused to break away
from Hinduism; their approach was to reform Hindu religion and society and they saw
the path of progress in an acceptance of the best of the East and the West. The Indian
leaders stimulated by the new knowledge, sought to reform Hinduism from within
and sought to purge it of superstitious beliefs and practices, such as 'Sati pratha,
infanticide, untouchability, child marriage, widow remarriage prohibition etc.
Sati means a 'pure and virtuous woman, it was applied in case of a devoted wife who contemplated perpetual and uninterrupted conjugal union with her husband life after life and as proof thereof burnt herself with the dead body of her husband. The custom of Sati mostly prevailed in Bengal, Central India and Rajputana. In the South it was uncommon. Another horrible and cruel rite particularly common among the Bengalis and the Rajputs was of killing their infant daughters at birth, taking female children to be a great economic liability. Further if the parents could not arrange marriage for their daughters, it was considered a social disgrace and a violation of religious injunction. Some socially backward tribes followed the practice of killing their infant daughters at their birth; this was done by the mother by deliberately neglecting the feeding of a female child to administering poisonous drugs to the child. The Untouchables were denied certain basic privileges of living, they could not use tanks, wells, inns or schools meant for upper class people, not to speak of places of worship or public institutions. Child marriage was more for social security than as a sign of backwardness. The instability in the eighteenth century created greatest anxiety among the present about the honour of their daughters and hence they were married at an early age. Women were excluded and the 'Purdah ' became an established custom both among the Hindus and Muslims. The general insecurity and lawlessness prevailing at that time made their exclusion more tight and that deprived the women of any opportunity to acquire education, their physical and mental health also suffered.

In eighteenth century Europe had experienced novel intellectual currents and created the Age of enlightenment. Anew spirit of rationalism and enquiry had given a new dynamism to European society. The development of science and scientific outlook had affected every aspect of activity. In contrast to Europe, which was in the vanguard of stagnant civilization and a static and decadent society. Thus for the first time, India encountered an invader who considered himself racially superior and culturally more advanced. The introduction of the English language was an event of great importance in the History of India. It went a long way on transforming the ideas and mentality of the people of India.
The reform movement fall in to two broad categories:- 1- Reformist movement (Brahmo samaj, Prarthna Samaj, and the Aligarh Movement). 2- Revivalist movement (Arya samaj, Ramakrishna Mission and the Deoband Movement)

The only difference between one reform movement and the other lay in the degree to which it relied on tradition or on reason and conscience. Another significant aspect of all the reform movement was their emphasis on both religious and social reform. This link was primarily due to two main reasons. One, almost every social customs and institution in India derived sustenance from religious injunction and sections. This means that no social reform could be undertaken unless the existing religious notions which sustained the social customs were also reformed. Two, Indian reformer well understood the close interrelation between different aspect of human activities.

**AREAS OF SOCIAL REFORM**

The Social reform movement is closely related to the Indian social structure and the influences. Apart from the movement itself, which have been working on it during the past one hundred years. The movement glorified the Vedas, and made an appeal for the study of ancient Hindu culture. The social reform insisted that the foreign domination itself was the result of the essential weakness of the Hindu social structure. The social reform movement in India have aimed at uprooting social evils, and inculcating in men and women the spirit of sacrifice for the general good of the society. The major effect of national awakening in 19th century was seen in the field of social reform. The social reform movement tried in the main to achieve two objectives

1- Removal of inequalities in general rigidities and untouchability in particular.

2- Emanicipation of women and extension of equal right to them.

Likewise for more much problems which were related to individual and society many Reformist tried his best for remedies of society
"The movement started by Dayananda is another landmark in the story of social reform"\(^{14}\)

The Brahma samaj, the Prarthna Samaj, the Arya Smaj, the Ramkrishna Mission, the Theosophical society, the social conferences and nearly all the great reformers of the 19\(^{th}\) century attacked on it. Many leaders devoted his entire life against the problems of the time, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidya Sagar, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurbindo, Sri Ram Krisna, Swami Vivekanada etc. About the problems.

"All that we do or create must be consistent with the abiding spirit of India, but framed to fit into a greater harmonized rhythm and plastic to the call of more luminous future. There can not be a healthy and victorious survival if we make of the past a fetish, instead of an inspiring impulse"\(^{13}\)

Area of social reform is too much wide. It may be related from the youth's women, downtrodden, caste system, religion world order etc. This thought of area of social reform is discussed in the coming pages.

**MEANS AND METHODS OF SOCIAL REFORM**

The major effect of national awakening in the 19\(^{th}\) century was seen in the field of social reform. Nearly all the religious reformers contributed to the social reform movement. This was because the backward features of Indian society, such as the caste system inequality of sexes, had religious sanctions in the past. In addition certain other organizations like the Social Conference, Servants of Indian society, and the Christian Missionaries worked actively for social reform. In the 20\(^{th}\) century, and especially after 1919, increasingly, the reformers took resource to propaganda in the Indian language to reach the masses. While social reform was linked with religious reform in some cases during the nineteenth century, in later years it was increasingly secular in approach.
The impact of British rule on Indian society and culture was widely different from what India had known before. The example of the Portuguese, who became unpopular on account of forcible conversion of the Indians to Christianity proved to be an eye-opener to the British. The English company, therefore, prevented the entry of Christian Missionaries in India. In the nineteenth century, conditions changed and once the English felt that their position in India was politically secured they made inroads, in the religious fields as well and encouraged the Christian Missionaries in their religious propaganda. These missionaries settled in India and began their work in an organized manner. The field of education provided these Missionaries with a golden opportunity to propagate their religion. The Charter Act of 1833 relaxed all the restrictions on the entry of any mission and its activities in India. This had opened the flood gates Christian Missionaries and Englishmen regarded India's religious condition to be very inferior to that of their own. According to George Wheeler

"In India there are nearly a hundred millions of people who still kneel down before trees and stones. There are thousands of ignorant, object men, who, under the pretext of being holy, parade the streets naked with their bodies painted, their hair unkept, and their whole appearance that of the wildest and dirtiest savages. There are filthy yards surrounding temples in every city, where sacred cows and men wallow in the same mire, and from whence exhalations polluting the whole town proceed."7

In order to raise Indians from the so called uncivilized condition they gradually injected principles of Christianity in the minds of the Indian people. The educational institutions were made safe and sure ground for preaching Christianity. The missionaries were able to successfully propagate Christianity exploring the abuse of casteism and untouchability that prevailed in the Hindu society. Ignorance among the Indian people was a blessing to the Christian missionaries and they selected the Tribal and very backward areas for their religious propaganda and earned the good number of followers. The doctrines of Christianity were taught in the prisons and infused in the hospitals. Orphanages became the centers of conversion. They went a step further in encouraging conversion by passing a law by which the Christians converts were given the right of inheritance of property of their Hindu parents.
The social and religious reform movements of the Nineteenth Century seriously checked the activities of the missionaries especially among Hindus and Muslims. Though their task went on unhampered in the tribal and backward areas. The disruption which swept American society in the 1960s was, above all, a rejection of utilitarian individualism. When Martin Luther talked about freedom, he did not mean the freedom of the individual to pursue his own selfish ends. Rather, he meant the freedom of all Americans to share the benefits of society.

The British considered themselves racially superior and culturally more advanced. More than half a century after the establishment of British rule in Bengal, an eminent Governor-General the Marquess of Hastings (1813-23) observed

"The Hindu appears a being nearly limited to a mere animal functions with no higher intellect than a dog and an elephant or a monkey."18

Mill observed that the "Hindu excels in the qualities of a slave ---in the still more important qualities which constitute what we call the moral character, the Hindu ranks very low."19

Such a view was, by no means confined to statesmen and politicians of Britain. Even James Mill, a famous writer of history, wrote

"The object conditions in which the English found them in the eighteenth century represents their normal condition throughout their history."20

Such views produced diverse reactions. Some English Educated Bengali Youth (known as Derozios) developed a revulsion against Hindu religion and culture, gave up old religious ideas and traditions and deliberately adopted practices most offensive to Hindu sentiments, such as drinking wine and eating beef. More mature minds denied the superiority of Western culture and prevented India from becoming a colourless copy of Europe. They drew inspiration from India's past heritage and reinterpreted it in the light of modern rationalism.
The British government wanted to economise the cost of administration by getting the cheap supply of educated Indian's to the large number of subordinate posts in administration and British business enterprises. So government made efforts to impose Western learning through English medium. Attempts in this direction were made by Christian missionaries. The main factor which tipped the scale in favour of English language and Western literature was economic factor. Indian's wanted a system of education which could help them to earn their livelihood. Progressive Indian elements also favoured the spread of English education and Western learning. Raja Rammohan Roy protested against the government proposal to strengthen the Calcutta, Madras and Banaras Sanskrit colleges and establishment of more oriental colleges in Bengal.

Soon within the General Committee of public instruction two groups were formed—the Orientalists led by H. T. Prisep, who advocated the policy of giving encouragement to Oriental Literature and the Anglicist, or the English party which favoured the adoption of English as a medium of instruction. Macaulay, a member of the executive council, favoured the viewpoint of the Anglicist party. He showed great contempt for Indian customs and literature when he said that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.

According to D.C. Bougler

"In a minute of remarkable lucidity and power, Macaulay turned the arguments of his opponents against themselves, and proved to the dullest mind that no other language was practically possible or desirable except English."

Resolution based on Macaulay’s minute and accepted by William Bentick’s government, on 7th March 1835, proclaimed English as India’s official language. Macaulay argued that through the end products of the new system would emerge a class who though Indian in blood and in the colour of their skin would be English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in the intellect. Thus they would strengthen the foundation of the British rule. In the words of Dr. T. N. P. Mahadevan
“To create a class of Anglicized Indians was the obvious aim –12ndians, who would look to England as their ‘home,’ who would be ashamed of their country’s past, and who would do everything in their power to enable Britain to tighten her hold on India. In the early decades English education did precisely what was expected of it; it turned out from the universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, so many manas putras (mind born sons) of the English. A race of clerks was produced.”

Mrs. Annie Besant had also admitted it

“It has seemed as though it were the British aim to turn the whole Indian nation into a race of clerks.”

The Western educated youth blindly imitated the dress, manners, food styles, social behavior of English men. They looked down upon Indian culture. They thought it against the dignity to use Indian languages and became crazy for English language. They thought themselves superior to the illiterate Indian masses and went treading on them. Fortunately, a group of this new elite instead of abandoning its traditional ways in favor of the foreigners tried to rediscover the truth of India’s past.

The result was broad movement of regeneration – an Indian Renaissance. Many socio-religious reform movements touching almost every segment of Indian society.

MEANS AND METHODS

The social reform movements tried in the main to achieve two objectives:

1. Removal of inequalities in general rigidities and untouchability in particular,

2. Emanicipation of women and extension of equal right to them.

There are four methods advocated by social reformers viz., the traditional method; the conscience method; the legislative method; the rebellion method.
The Traditional Method

The traditional method aimed at convincing the people that the desired change was sanctioned by the old scriptures like Vedas and the Smritis. Swami Dayananda and R. G. Bhandarkar also stood for the method Ranade applied his method on the advocacy of widow remarriage.

The Conscience Method

The method of conscience make a direct appeal to the sense of right and wrong which everyone possesses. Ranade says

"The conscience is a voice of God within us. Till the conscience is stirred, nothing great or good can be achieved by the agencies from outside. It is not easy to stir up the conscience of a nation such as our's but there are obvious indications that the dead bones are pulsating with a new life and that the cold limbs are reviving with a warmth hitherto despaired of." 24

The legislative method

This method should be adopted after mobilizing public opinion in favour of the proposed reform. The first two methods of legislation i.e., enforcing social reform through the agency of the state by legislation or by means of Caste Panchayats should be adopted. Ranade pleaded for raising the age of consent from 10 to 12 through a legislation.

The Rebellion Method

This method deprived the society of the services of awakened people. It resulted in the break of the historic continuity of the community and eventually did more harm than good.

Mahadeva Govind Ranade words

"In a living organization as society is, no revival is possible. The dead and the buried or burnt are dead, buried and burnt once for all and the dead past cannot, therefore, be revived except by a reformation of the old materials into new
organized beings. If revival is impossible, reformation is the only alternative open to sensible people."^{25}

The Social Reform Movement, was a movement that was stimulated by the impact of ideas which had their origin in, or are associated in some way with, the modern period of European history.

"The History of India is not the story of how she underwent foreign invasions, but how she resisted them and eventually triumphed over them."^{26}

The movement had its most natural growth in areas where the British impact was through ideas. It had less to learn from the exercise of British political power in India than from British political thought. According to Majumdar,

"The Impact of Western culture, however, came in the wake of the British connection."^{27}

It was not from British officials or army officers that Bengal, Maharashtra and Madras derived their impressions of Britain but from more idealistic elements. And it is necessary to add here that social reform, as commonly understood in India, largely related to changes affecting the structure of Indian society and family, and slightly concerned changes affecting the relations between economic classes, which, in the West, go by the name of social reform.

The idea of religious toleration, which was the slow growth in Europe, was accepted in India generally from the earliest times. All religious communities were alike under the protection of the sovereign, and inscriptions plainly show that, when the government changed hands, the privileges granted to religious communities were ratified by the new sovereigns as a matter of course.

"The principle of unity in diversity is the root principle of which Indian religion, philosophies, society and history are manifestations."^{28}

Vivekananda was well versed in Eastern and Western philosophy, history and literature. So he could well analyse the glory of Indian social reform and its superiority to that of the West. And he declared it with roaring success, not only to
India but also to the whole world. Thus the movement of social reform was from time
to time many reforms took place in different periods like in Buddhism, Janism, Bhakti
Movement. The modern renaissance sprang up out by these reforms. Swami
Vivekananda played a very important role in changing the scenario of India and world
also. These factors are discussed under the topics given below.

**BUDDHISM**

"Buddhism was and continued to be the doctrine of general
intellectuals."²⁹

Buddhism was founded by Gautam Buddha in the 5th century B.C.

"The history of the world is the history of persons like Buddha and
Jesus. The passionless and unattached do most for the world."³⁰

Gautam Buddha born in 563 B.C. in a Sakyasatriya family in Kapilvastu
(Nepal). "He was deeply effected by the misery of life."³¹

According to early Buddhism,

"at least in respect of the misery of existence whose removal is the chief
problem of life. It was the knowledge of these factors, with the law of contingent
causation implicit in it, that flashed across Siddharatha’s mind at last and made
him the Buddha."³²

At the age of 29 Prince Siddhartha decided to renounce his kingdom in search
of an abode where there was no birth, no death, no sickness and no sorrow. He
wandered for many years seeking answers to his questions. He kept on wandering for
about seven years and then attained knowledge at the age of 35 at Bodh Gaya under a
Peepal tree, he attained enlightenment and became the Buddha or the Enlightened
One. He gave his first sermon to five of his disciples and thus was formed the sangha
or the order of the Buddhist fraternity. Buddha travelled widely and preached his
thoughts and ideology to the people. Soon, many Monasteries or viharas came up and
became centres of learning and for the spread of Buddhist culture. Some of these, like
Doctrines of Buddhism

Buddhism taught five doctrines for his followers

1. do not covet the property of others
2. do not commit violence
3. do not use intoxicants
4. do not speak a lie and
5. do not indulge in corrupt practices.

Buddhism does not recognize the existence of God and soul (atman). This can be taken as a kind of revolution in the history of Indian religion. About this Vivekananda also says

"The Buddhists or the Jains do not depend upon God, but the whole force of their religion is directed to the great central truth in every religion, to evolve a God out of man. They have not seen the Father, but they have seen the son. And he that hath seen the son hath seen the father also."

At another place Vivekananda says about Buddhism that,

"The various religion that exist in the world, although they differ in the form of worship they take, are really one. In some places the people build temples and worship in them, in some they worship fire, in other they prostrate themselves before idols, while there are many who do not believe at all in God. All are true, for, if you look to the real spirit, the real religion, and the truths in each of them, they are all alike. In some religion God is not worshipped, nay, His existence is not believed in, but good and worthy men are worshipped as if they were Gods. The example worthy of citation in this case is Buddhism."
Buddhism made a special appeal to the people of the non—vedic areas where it found a virgin soil for conversion. The Buddhist showed a keen awareness of the problems that faced the people of north-east India in the sixth century B.C. Buddhism made an important impact on society by keeping its doors open to women and Sudras. The first human statue worshipped in India were probably those of the Buddha. Two hundred years after the death of Buddha the famous Maurya King Asoka embraced Buddhism. Vivekananda say's,

"Asoka's council was the council of the Buddhist faith. Akbar's, though more to the purpose was only a parlour-meeting. It was reserved for America to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the Lord is in every religion"\(^{35}\)

Buddhism created and developed a new awareness in the field of intellect and culture, it taught the people not to take the things for granted but to argue and judge them on merits. To a certain extent the place of superstition was taken by logic. A closer examination shows that the Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism are not entirely different religions, all the three start from the theory of transmigration of soul and naturally stress on the theory of Karma and moral uplift, still Buddhism ignores God and Jainism denies it altogether. Both Buddhism and Jainism jointly oppose the superstitious ritualism of the Vedas. Buddhism stood for a casteless society and regular missionary work by its monks, while Jainism had carried the idea of Ahimsa and penance to extremes which may well appear impracticable. About the reformation Vivekananda says

"The Buddhist reformation and its chief field of activity were also in the same eastern region; and when the Maurya kings, forced possibly by the bar sinister on their escutcheon, patronized and led the new movement, the new priest power joined hands with the political power of the empire of Patilputra. The popularity of Buddhism and its fresh vigour made the Maurya kings the greatest emperors that India ever had. The power of the Maurya sovereigns made Buddhism that world-wide religion that we seen even today."\(^{36}\)
Buddhism is the religion without God. It believes in transmigration and future life, though it does not believe in permanent self. It aims at the purity of heart and the purity of external conduct. Buddhism is the religion of self-help. Libration does not depend on the grace of God, it has to be wrought by one's own moral efforts.

The whole of the teachings of the Buddha is summed in the four noble truths (1.) there is suffering (2.) it has a cause (3.) it can be stopped (4.) there is way to stop it.

The four noble truths are suffering, the origin of suffering, the destruction of suffering, and the eightfold way of destruction of suffering.

The eightfold path is the

1. Right belief
2. Right resolve;
3. Right speech;
4. Right conduct;
5. Right livelihood;
6. Right effort;
7. Right mindfulness; and
8. Right concentration.

The eightfold path consists of moral conduct, concentration, and insight.

Buddhism lays great stress on the freedom of the will, moral effort, energy, and activity. We are the master of our own destiny. We make ourselves impured by our own free bad volition and actions. Buddhism admits the reality of four permanent elements earth, water, fire and air which undergo changes. It sometime includes ether in the elements, and sometime treats it as a derivative. The external stimuli interact upon the sense-organs and produce consciousness. Early Buddhism believes in naïve
realism and casual theory of knowledge. Buddhism is a missionary religion. The gift of the Dhamma is the greatest of all gifts.

"Go ye, O Bhikṣus, for the benefit of the many, for the welfare of mankind, out of compassion for the world. Preach the doctrine which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle, and glorious in the end, in the spirit as well as in the letter. Proclaim to them a life of holiness. They will understand the doctrine and accept it."

The Buddha's teachings aim at the total extinction of suffering and attainment of Nirvāṇa here on earth. Nirvāṇa is the cooling of passion, perfect peace and perfect enlightenment. The way of Nirvāṇa is the eightfold path of right conduct, concentration, and insight.

"The Buddha teaches neither Being nor Non-Being, but Becoming."

In the traditional Hindu view, the allotment of pain or pleasure according to one's past actions was in the hand of a divine or some other transcendental power; and in Jainism Karma, as we shall see, was taken to be subtle matter adhering to and pulling down the soul from its natural spiritual height. Buddha discarded both these views, and conceived of Karma as an impersonal law in the sphere of morality working according to its nature and by itself. Vivekananda says about this Buddhism that,

"Buddhism itself is the most interesting subjects, for it is the first historical outburst of a world religion. There have been great religions before Buddhism arose, in India and elsewhere, but, more or less, they are confined within their own races. The ancient Hindus or ancient Jews or ancient Persians, every one of them had a great religion, but these religions were more or less racial. With Buddhism first begins that peculiar phenomenon of religion boldly starting out to conquer the world."

The various views falling under the latter Buddhism are broadly classifiable under two heads, which go by the name of Hinayana and Mahayana. These terms are variously explained, the most common explanation being that they signify
respectively the ‘smallway’ and the ‘great way’ of salvation. In their philosophic and ethical outlook they differ widely. For instance the adherents of Hinyana believe in the reality of outward objects—however they may conceive of reality itself—and are for that reason often described in Hindu works as sarvastitva-avadins, while the adherents of Mahayana adopt the opposite view. Buddhism was the first sect in India. They were the first to say,

"Ours is the only path, until you join our church, you cannot be saved. That was what they said; It is the correct path. But, being of Hindu blood, they could not be such stony—hearted sectarians as in other countries. There will be salvation for you; nobody will go wrong for ever. No, no. (there was) too much of Hindu blood in them for that. The heart was not so stony as that. But you have to join them."

Buddha eliminates the conception of self altogether. There are also other points of resemblance between the two, but the belief in the karma doctrine found in Buddhism serves as the clearest proof of its connection with Upanishadic thought. However much transformed in its new applications, this belief finds a place in Buddha’s teaching; and it appears, we know, already as an important element in the doctrine of the Upanishads. The ethics of non-injury is the keynote of Buddhism. Non-injury, in thought, word, and deed, love, good-will, patience, endurance, and self-purification constitute the Buddhist morality. Buddhism admits the reality of Brahma, Indra and other Gods. But it regards them as subject to ignorance and passions birth and death. The Buddha is greater than gods. Buddhism believes in Heaven and Hell. Righteous action lead to heaven. Vicious action lead to hell. But Nirvana can be attained by complete extinction of desire for earthly and heavenly happiness. It is above heaven.

JAINISM

In post Vedic times society was clearly divided in to four varnas i.e. brahmans, kshatriyas, vaisyas and sudras. It was emphasized that varna was based on birth and the two higher varnas assumed privileges. The reaction against domination of the priestly class was one of the causes of the origin of new religions. Vardhmana Mahavira was born in 540 B.C. in a village near Vaisali in North Bihar. He belonged to a famous kshatriya clan. He attained perfect knowledge or kaivalya at 42. He is
known as Mahavira or the great hero or jina i.e., the conqueror, and his followers are known as Jains. Jainism is one of the oldest religions of the world. The Rig Veda mentions the names of two Jain tirthankaras, Rishaba and Aristanemi. The Vishnu Purana and the Bhagwat Purana describe Rishaba as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. According to the Kalpasutra of Bhadrabahu, Rishabhadeva or Adinatha was the first Tirthankara. Parsvanatha is considered as the 23rd Tirthankara who imparted great strength to Jainism. The modern founder of Jainism is accepted as Vardamana Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara, who existed over 2500 years ago in Kundapura near Vaishali in the present-day Bihar. All the 24 Jain Tirthankaras were Kshatriyas and belonged to royal families. The teachings of the 24 Tirthankaras form the basis of Jainism. A Tirthankara is a person who reestablishes the religion and the fourfold society of Sadhus, Sadhvis, Shravaks, and Sharavikas. Like Buddhism, Jainism also originated as a reaction to the excessive ritualism and rigid social systems prevalent in Hinduism at that time. There are an estimated 4 million Jains in India today, living mostly in Gujarat and Karnataka.

**Doctrines of Jainism**

Jainism taught five doctrines

1. Do not commit violence.
2. Do not speak a lie.
3. Do not steal.
4. Do not acquire property and
5. Observe continence (Brahmacharya).

Full knowledge, action and liberation are considered the triratna of Jainism. Jainism has the firm faith in the philosophy of karma, it emphasis on moral life. It denies the existence of God altogether, it repudiates the sanctity and authority of the Vedic literature. Jainism does not believe in caste system or any priestly class. Jainism made the first serious attempt to mitigate the evils of the varna order and the ritualistic Vedic religion.
Two Sects – in Jainism

Jainism was divided into two sects -- the Svetambaras and the Digambaras. Both believe in the same basic tenets and worship images of the tirthankaras. The Digambaras are the older and more conservative of the two sects. A Digambara saint does not wear any clothes and leads an extremely austere life. The Svetambaras represent the newer school of Jainism. They believe in the same goal of moksha but their way of attaining that goal is not as rigid as that of the Digambaras. The Svetambaras wear white clothes and always cover their nose and mouth with a white cloth. Jainism recognized the existence of gods but place them lower than jina.

The Jainas do not believe in the existence of God, They believe in the innate divinity of each soul. Every soul can realize its infinite knowledge, infinite perception, infinite bliss, and the infinite power. In this sense Jainism is not atheism. The special feature of Jainism, as signified by its very name, is to be found in its practical teaching; and the chief feature of the discipline it prescribe as its extreme severity. Right knowledge is knowledge of the principal of Jain religion and philosophy. The five vows (vrata) to indicate its general character, which are in the case of ascetic: -- 1 not to injury any living being (ahimsa), 2- not to utter falsehood (satya), 3- not to steal (asteya), 4- to lead a celibate life (brahmacharya), and 5 to renounce the world (aparigraha). In the case of the layman they are the same except that the last two are replaced by the vows respectively of chastity and the contentment or strict limitation of one’s want. Of the various virtues to be cultivate by the Jainas, ahimsa occupied the foremost place. The doctrine of ahimsa is no doubt very old in India, but the way in which it is made to pervade the whole code of conduct is peculiarly Jain. Even Buddha seems to have permitted meat-eating, but it is wholly abjured here. Literally the word ahimsa means ‘non-injury’ where injury should be understood as comprehending injuring in thought, by word or act. It signifies that one should live without harming others even in the least. It is clear from this that the social or objective side of ethics is not ignored in Jainism; only in so far as its final aim is the development of one’s personality, it emphasizes the individualistic aspect. As in so much of Hindu thought, here also the ideal lies beyond good and evil, so that virtue as well as vice is believed to lead to bondage, though the way in which each binds is different. The Jainas recognize matter as well as spirit; and each, according
to them, implies the other, for they maintain that nothing is wholly independent and can be fully understood by itself.

According to Jainism, the world is eternal and self-existent. Particular things in the world are created out of their material causes and destroyed in to them. There is no creation out of nothing. There is no destruction of something into nothing. The phenomena in the world are governed by the law of causality subservient to the moral Law of Karma. The Jainas are full of religious fervour in their worship of the idols of the great souls. They believe in worship, prayer, faith and devotion, and recite mantras. They lay stress on meditation, penances, and right conduct for the realization of innate divinity. But their practical religion consists in tenderness for animal life. They have developed instinctive horror of killing animals and insects. They are scrupulous vegetarians. Jainism forbids killing life, causing life to be killed, and approving of killing life. It is religion of morality without God. It believes in the inexorable Law of Karma.

The Law of Karma can account for variety in the world. The variety of the moving beings is due to fruition of the beneficial and harmful karmas produced by them. The variety of inanimate things externally exists in order to be objects of enjoyment of the conscious, moving, and non moving souls. The Jana's explain variety in the world by the Law of Karma.

The primary aim of Jainism is the perfection of the soul, Prof. Jacobi says

"A characteristic dogma of the Jains which pervades the whole philosophical system and code of morals is the hylozoistic theory that not only animals and plants, but also the smallest particles of the elements, earth, fire, water and wind, are endowed with souls (jiva). It is necessary to remember that when Jainism states that there are souls in water, for instance, it does not refer to the germs that may be contained therein, but to souls having for their bodies the water particles themselves."

Jainism is the complete view of the reality. It embodies the absolute truth all judgments are relative and probable. No judgment is absolute. The Jaina ethics is
ethics of ahimsa and asceticism. It is the religion of self-help. Divinity is innate in the human soul.

**Contribution of Jainism in social reform**

Jainism made the first serious attempt to mitigate the evils of the vernal order and the ritualistic Vedic religion. It had carried the idea of Ahimsa and penance to extremes which may well appear impracticable.

Jainism, by its valuable thoughts changed the thinking of people, it explained that how should people have to work! It explained that anger, pride, deceit, and greed agitate the mind, and produce impurity in it. Thus Jainism is a religion of morality without God.

**BHAKTI MOVEMENT**

The society in Muslim India was split up into two main divisions—the ruling class i.e., the Muslims and the subject race i.e., the Hindus. The Hindus was very pitiable. The Hindu society was divided into a number of castes and sub-castes. The Brahmans enjoyed a dominating position and exploited the ignorance of lower castes. The "Sudra Castes" were hated and their touch considered to defile the upper cast. These caste distinctions and caste rivalries had greatly degenerated the Hindu society. The other great evils of the Hindu society were Sati and Jauhar. The Hindus were also getting very superstitious.

**Cause of Bhakti Movement**

These evils in the Hindu Society had proved very helpful to Islam. The lower casts which were hated by the upper castes joined the faith of the ruling race. The result was that millions of Hindus were converted. The Muslim also ridiculed the idolatry and polytheism (worship of diverse gods and goddesses) in Hindu religion and emphasized the superiority of their religion which enjoined upon the worship of one Omnipotent and Omnipresent God. Prior to the coming of Islam to India, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism were the dominant religions. Hinduism lost its simplicity. Many philosophical schools appeared. Two different sects, i.e., Vashnavism and Saivism also appeared within Hinduism. In course of time Sakti
worship also came in to existence. Common people were confused on the way of worshiping God. When Islam came to India, the Hindus observed many ceremonies and worshipped many Gods and Goddesses.

There were all sorts of superstitious beliefs among them. Their religion had become complex in nature. Added to these, the caste system, untouchability, blind worshipping and inequality in society caused dissensions among different sections of the people. On the other hand Islam preached unity of God and brotherhood of man. It emphasized monotheism. It attacked idol worship. It preached equality of man before God.

"The personal God is the Absolute for the devotee (Bhakta)."

The oppressed common people and the people branded as low castes were naturally attracted towards Islam. It only increased the rivalry among religions. Fanaticism, bigotry, and religious intolerance began to raise their heads. It was to remove such evils; religious leaders appeared in different parts of India. They preached pure devotion called Bhakti to attain God.

Rise of the Bhakti Movement

Bhakti means personal devotion to God. It stresses the Union of the individual with God. Bhakti movement originated in South India between the 7th and the 12th.

Centuries A.D. the Nayanmars, who worshipped Siva, and the Alwars, who worshipped Vishnu, preached the idea of Bhakti. They carried their message of love and devotion to various parts of South India through the medium of the local language. They preached among common people. It made some of the followers of the Vedic faith to revive the old Vedic religion. Saints like Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa gave their concepts of God and the individual soul. Bhakti Movement in the North: The Bhakti movement in North India gained momentum due to the Muslim conquest. The saints of the Bhakti Movement were men and women of humble origin. They came from all castes and classes. They had visited from place to place singing devotional songs. They had also preached the Unity of God and brotherhood of man. They had stressed tolerance among various religious groups. Their preaching was
simple. Principles of Bhakti Movement, the main principles of Bhakti movement were:

1. God is one,
2. To worship God man should serve humanity,
3. All men are equal,
4. Worshipping God with devotion is better than performing religious ceremonies and going on pilgrimages, and
5. Caste distinctions and superstitious practices are to be given up. The Hindu saints of the Bhakti Movement and the Muslim saints of the Sufi movement became more liberal in their outlook. They wanted to get rid of the evils which had crept into their religions. There were a number of such saints from the 8th to 16th century A.D. We shall deal with some of them here.

The Bhakti Reformers

RAMANUJA - Ramanuja was one of the earliest reformers. Born in the South, he made a pilgrimage to some of the holy places in Northern India. He considered God as an Ocean of Love and beauty. His teachings were based on the Upanishads and Bhagwad Gita. Whatever he taught, he had taught in the language of the common man. Soon a large number of people became his followers. Ramananda was his disciple. He took his message to Northern parts of India. In the early middle ages, this message of Bhakti was given by Shankaracharya and Ramanuja in Southern India. Ramananda was the first to employ the vernacular language i.e., Hindi.

RAMANANDA - For the propagation of his religious views. Ramananda is generally called the founder of the Bhakti movement in Northern India, because the previous Bhakti Reformers lived in the Deccan. He denounced the caste. He was educated at Banaras. He preached that there is nothing high or low. All men are equal in the eyes of God. He was an ardent worshipper of Rama. He welcomed people of all castes and status to follow his teachings. He had twelve chief disciples. One of them was a barber, another was a weaver, the third one was a cobbler and the other was the famous saint Kabir and the fifth one was a woman named Padmavathi. He considered God as a loving father. He lived in the 14th century A.D.

KABIR - But it was Ramananda's disciple, who exercised the greatest influence on the people of the middle age. He was a Hindu by birth, but was brought up by a Muslim weaver, Niru. He condemned all rituals and ceremonies and advocated that purification of mind alone would lead to salvation. He also denounced
the caste and openly challenged the supremacy of the Brahmans; he was attracted by 
the teachings of Swami Ramananda. He wanted unity between the Hindus and the 
Muslims. He preached that both the Hindus and the Muslims are the children of a 
single God. He had no faith in idol worship, religious rituals and ceremonies. He 
taught that Allah and Eswar, Ram and Rahim are one and the same. They are present 
everywhere. The devotees of Kabir were known as Kabir Panthis.

NAMDEVA - Namdeva was a waterman by birth. He hailed from 
Maharashtra. He composed beautiful hymns in Marathi. They are full of intense 
devotion to God. He worshipped Vishnu in the form of Lord Vithoba. Some of his 
verses are included in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs. A large 
number of people from different castes became his followers.

GURU NANAK - Guru Nanak was the founder of the Sikh religion. From 
his childhood, he did not show any interest in worldly affairs. At the age of 29, he left 
his home and became a sadhu. He went to Mecca and Medina. He had travelled far 
and wide to spread his teachings. Guru Nanak had finally settled at Kartipur. He laid 
emphasis on pure and simple living. He preached the Unity of God and condemned 
 idolatry. He was against the caste system. Guru Nanak’s followers are called the 
Sikhs. He started the Langer or the common kitchen, where people belonging to all 
castes or religions could have their meals together. Nanak’s teachings were in the form 
of verses. They were collected in a book called the Adi Granth. Later Adi Grantham 
was written in a script called Gurmukhi. The holy book of the Sikhs is popularly 
known as ‘Grantha Sahib’. It contains verses from Kabir, Namdeva and other Bhakti 
and Sufi saints.

CHAITANYA - Chaitanya, a great devotee of Lord Krishna, was a saint 
from Bengal. From his very childhood, he had showed great interest in education and 
studied Sanskrit. He married the daughter of a Saintly person. Later at the age of 24, 
he renounced the worldly life and became a sanyasin. He travelled all over the 
Deccan, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. His followers regarded him as an incarnation of 
Lord Vishnu. He helped the old and the needy. He was opposed to the inequalities of 
the caste system. He emphasized the need for tolerance, humanity and love. He spread 
the message of Bhakti in Bengal. He popularized ‘Sankritan’or public singing of
God's name His songs are still very popular in Bengal. He was addressed 'Mahaprabhu' by his followers.

**TULSI DAS** - Goswamy Tulsidas was a devotee of Rama. His work gives the story of Rama in Hindi. He was the foremost in popularizing Rama cult. His other works in Hindi are Janaki Mangal and Parvathi Mangal. In his writings he insists the duty of a son to his parent, duty of a student to his teacher and duty of a king to his people. Rama was a dear son to his parents, devoted student to his teacher and a desirable king to his subjects.

**MEERABAI** - Meerabai was a Rajput princess. She married the Rana of Mewar. She was a pious devotee of Lord Krishna. She has written many songs in praise of Krishna, her favorite God, in Rajasthan. Her songs or hymns are even today sung all over India. Her palace was kept open to people of all castes to join her Bhajans of Lord Krishna. She had visited all places connected with the life of Lord Krishna. She had lived for the most part of her life in Mathura, the birth place of Krishna and Vrindaban. There is a temple dedicated to Meerabai in Chittor, the capital of Mewar.

**GURU RAMDAS** - Ramdas was a famous teacher. He was born in A.D. 1608. Chatrapati Shivaji, the great Maratha ruler, was a follower of Ramdas. He stressed upon the equality of all men before God. He said that anyone could attain God's favour by means of Bhakti. Guru Ramdas was not merely a religious preacher but also a Nation Builder.

**TUKARAM** - Tukaram was a saint who lived in Maharashtra. He composed a large number of verses called Abhangas or devotional songs in praise of Panduranga or Krishna. He believed in one God who was kind, merciful and protective. He wrote all his abhangas in Marathi.

**JNANESHWAR** - He is one of the greatest saints of Maharashtra. He worshipped Vishnu in the form of Vithoba or Krishna. At the age of fourteen, he translated the Bhagawad Gita into the Marathi language. This book is called Jnaneshwari.
**Bhakti Movement in south India**

**NAYANMARS** - In South India, the Nayanmars and Alwars were the noted saints of the Bhakti movement. The Nayanmars, the devotees of Siva, were sixty three in number. The most famous among them were Appar, Sundarar, Thirugnana Sambandar and Manickavachakar. These saints composed many verses in pries of Lord Siva. A saint named Nambiandar Nambi collected the devotional songs of Nayanmars. Appar, Sundarar and thirugnana Sambandar composed the Thevaram hymns. Manickvachakar’s songs are known as Tiruvachakam. Periyapuranam, written by Sekhizhar, tells us the life stories of the Nayanmars.

**ALWARS** - The Alwars were the worshippers of Lord Vishnu who were twelve in number. Among them Nammalwar, Tirumangai Alwar, Andal and Perialwar were famous. The songs of the Alwars were compiled in a book called Nalayira Divya Prabandham by Nadamuni. The devotional songs of Andal is called Thiruppavai. Thiruppavai songs are famous in Tamilnadu. These songs are even now sung during the Tamil month of margazhi (December - January).

**BASAVA** - Basava lived in Karnataka. He founded the Virasaiva or Lingayat sect. According to Basava, Siva was the supreme God. Basava opposed child marriage and idol worship.

**Sufi movement**

The Sufis were Muslim saints who came originally from Persian and Arabian countries. They stayed in India in the 11th century A.D. They were progressive thinkers who led a simple life. They strictly followed the principles of the Holy Koran. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism influenced the Sufi saints. The Bhakti movement motivated the Sufi saints to work for Hindu - Muslim Unity. The Sufi movement promoted friendship between the Hindus and the Muslims. They believed that God is present everywhere. Man could realize God through meditation and fasting. The two separate groups among the Sufis were the Chishti and the Suharwardi. Khwaja Muinuddin.
Chishti started the Chishti group in India. Baba Farid and Nizamuddin Auliya were other great Sufi saints. Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrwardi and Hamiduddin Nagori were Sufi saints of Suhrwardi groups.

EFFECTS OF BHAKTI MOVEMENT

The Bhakti movement had brought the Hindus and the Muslims closer to each other. The equality concept preached by the leaders reduced the rigidity of the caste system to a certain extent. The suppressed people gained a feeling of self-respect. The reformers preached in local languages. It led to the development of Vernacular literature. They composed hymns and songs in the languages spoken by the people. Therefore there was a remarkable growth of literature in all the languages. A new language Urdu, a mixture of Persian and Hindi, was developed. The Bhakti movement freed the common people from the tyranny of the priests. It checked the excesses of polytheism. It encouraged the spirit of toleration. The gap between the Hindus and the Muslims was reduced. They began to live amicably together. It emphasized the value of a pure life of charity and devotion. Finally, it improved the moral and spiritual ways of life of the medieval society. It provided an example for the future generation to live with the spirit of toleration.

CONCLUSION

These reformers greatly succeeded in checking the conversion of the Hindus into Islam. They also brought the Hindu and the Muslim nearer because their doctrines were based on love of mankind and not on the hatred of different sections of mankind. But, in spite of their great emphasis on equality of men, caste continued to be the dominating feature of Hindu society in the middle ages.
MODERN RENAISSANCE AND REFORM MOVEMENTS

A renaissance is a revitalizing or a resurgence of past forces, views and traditions. It involves a digging down to the old and bringing it to the surface again. Webster Dictionary defines Renaissance as a revival or rebirth. It refers to the

"revival of art, literature and learning in Europe in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries." 

In India the renaissance was not the return of the past, it was essentially a matter of spirit which produced striking changes in the realm of religion, society and culture along with a demand for national regeneration. The renaissance in India was a movement which confronted the threefold challenge of the past, the modern and the alien. The soul of India began to unfold itself and break the shackles of the past. The Modern Hindu Renaissance (1800 AD - Present) witnessed the emergence of many social and religious vices in the Hindu society in India. Many leaders, saints, scholars, social and religious reformers came up on to the scene and tried to bring the society back into the tradition of Hindu Dharma. The view of Sir Jadunath Sakar is that

"the Indian Renaissance was at an intellectual awakening which profoundly affected our literature, education, thought and art. In the next succeeding generation, it became a moral force and reformed the Indian society and religion. In the third generation, it brought about the economic modernization of India and ultimately the political emancipation."

Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) eloquently interpreted the basic concepts of the Hindu Dharma and expounded the yoga philosophy for the transformation of human consciousness. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), one of the greatest mystical poets of the world, expounded the Upanishadic philosophy through his songs in Gitanjali and in many of his other works. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) extended non-violence, a Hindu cardinal virtue, to social, national and international affairs. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), a philosopher, statesman, and the second President of India, interpreted the classical Hindu philosophy in the context of the modern world through his numerous scholarly works, such as Hindu View of Life.
India before renaissance

In the nineteenth century, the condition of India was very bad; there was anarchy and chaos in the country. Particularly after the death of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Empire disintegrated rapidly. According to H. G. Rawlinson,

"General condition of India in the eighteenth century was perhaps the unhappiest in chequered history of the country."

At that time the lawlessness and anarchy, the material prosperity of the people was destroyed, trade and communication were interrupted, the fine arts declined, the condition of common man was miserable. It was indeed a dark age in every way and nothing of great importance was produced at that time. All indigenous arts and crafts declined. There was no place for reason in religion which was flooded by meaningless ceremonies and rites. Superstitions and dogmas were all powerful. The people were pessimistic and found no hope in the future, their lives were miserable, they became fatalist and their vision became narrow.

British Impact

The British brought the entire country under the control of a single administration. The introduction of the modern methods of communication and transport produced the unifying effect. The introduction of the English language was an event of great importance in the history of India. It went a long way in transforming the ideas and mentality of the people of India. English education broke the intellectual isolation of the Indian mind and brought it into close contact with literature, philosophy, economics, politics, history and science of the West. It broadened the outlook of the Indians who got new progressive social and political ideas of the West in place of mythical geography, superstitions and rituals, legendary history, tyrannical monarchy and pseudo science. Another factor which helped the renaissance was the coming of the Christian missionaries in India from the beginning of the nineteenth century. They spread education in the country and set up printing presses in the country and also opened hospitals, started other works of public charity. As a result of their activities, there spread a lot of skepticism among the Indian some of whom were converted to Christianity. But the activities of the missionaries and
their condemnation of Hindu religion resulted in a strong reaction among the Hindus and that led to the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission etc. The British in India constructed a large number of railways and roads which opened the interior and linked up various parts of the country. The changes brought about by the British in the field of law also helped the cause of the Renaissance. K. M. Panikkar writes,

"The establishment of the great principle of equality of all before law, in a country where under the Hindu doctrines a Brahman could not be punished on the evidence of Sudras and even punishment varied according to caste and where according to Muslim law an unbeliever’s testimony could not be accepted against a Muslim, was itself a legal revolution of the first importance."

The result was that there developed among the people a critical outlook on the past and new aspirations for the future. Superstitions yielded to science. The old apathy and inertia on the part of the people was replaced by optimism and a determination to go ahead. They were ready to remove the abuses from society and open a new chapter in the history of the country. Although the Orient lists of India’s classical heritage helped eventually to foster in English-educated Indians a pride in their own past which was of cardinal importance in the nineteenth century Renaissance of Hinduism and the rise of Hindu nationalism. Sir R.G. Bhandarkar obtained recognition throughout India as a great Ideologist and a Sanskrit scholar. He attained world-wide fame. He was keenly interested in social reform.

RAM MOHAN ROY AND BRAHMO SAMAJ

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was rightly called by Nicol Macnicol, 'the herald of a new age' Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of those who felt that India had everything to gain from contact with the west and he tried to imbibe the best that West could offer. He took a leading part in starting the English-medium schools in Bengal through which the youth could acquire the most modern Indian education. He started the Atmiya Sabha’ in 1815. It held weekly meetings for propagating the monotheistic doctrines of the Hindu scriptures. He was the founder of the Brahma sabha which developed in Brahmo samaj. The main emphasis of Raja was on social reform in order to purge Hindu society of the evils prevailing in it. He opposed the worship of images.
of gods and goddesses, denounced Sati, polygamy and abuses of the caste system. He favored the remarriage of Hindu widows. By these successive shocks, he tried to reform Hindu society. Another leaders of Brahma samaj was Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen etc. The new society was based on reason as well as the Vedas and Upanishads. It also incorporated the teachings of other religions. About the significance of Brahma Samaj. H. C. E. Zacharias wrote

"Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahma Samaj form the starting point for all the various reform movements—whether in Hindu religion, society or politics, which have agitated modern India."

PRARTHNA SAMAJ

A society called Paramhansa Samaj was started in Maharashtra in 1849. Its influence was restricted and it broke up very soon. Another organization was started by Dr. Atmaram Pandurang in 1867 with the object of rational worship and social reform. The name of the society was the Prarthna Samaj. In 1870, R. G. Bhandarker and M. G. Ranade joined the Prarthna samaj and strengthened it. The two main planks of the Samaj were theistic worship and social reform. Its greatest service was the organization of social reform movement. It laid emphasis on the abandonment of caste, introduction of widow remarriage, encouragement of female education and the abolition of Purdah and child marriage.

ARYA SAMAJ

Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati in 1875. The slogan of Dayananda was: "Back to the Vedas." He stood for the pristine purity of Vedic Hinduism. He denounced all post Vedic Hindu scriptures such as the Puranas, the Brahmans and even the Upanishads. He attacked Vedantism, Trancrism and popular Pauranic Hinduism. He condemned caste distinctions and advocated full equality for women with men. He started a violent campaign against untouchability. He preached social equality between man and woman. All modern social legislation had been inspired by his teachings. His teachings was based on reason He advised the people against the blind faith and asked them to examine everything and formulate their own opinions about the merits and demerits of
religious belief and social customs. He preaches the gospel of Swedish and India for the Indians. The Arya Samaj showed that Hinduism, long hibernating in a self-enclosed world of its own, was beginning rapidly to awake and face the realities of the nineteenth century.

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The Theosophical Society was founded in the United States of America in 1875 by Madame H. P. Blavatsky and Colonel H.S. Alcott along with others. It became prominent in the time of Mrs. Annie Besant who joined the society in 1889 and came to India in 1893. Theosophy defended the current practices of Hinduism; it reconciled the ideal of universal brotherhood with the caste system and the fundamental unity of the Supreme. By these means Theosophy helped very materially to remove the "inferiority complex" from the minds of educated Indians. Mrs. Annie Besant explained her mission in these words:

"The Indian work is, first of all, the revival, strengthening and uplifting of ancient religions—Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and in Ceylon and Burma, Buddhism. This brought with it anew self respect, a pride in the past, a belief in the future and, as an inevitable result, a great weave of patriotic life, the beginning of the rebuilding of a nation." 49

RAMAKRISHNA PARAMHANSA

According to S. Natrajan,

"Sri Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekananda played a very important part in awakening Hindu society to the wealth of rich inheritance and appealing to it to follow the true religious injections in their social corporate life." 59

The Ramakrishna Mission was inaugurated by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) in 1897 to spread the message and teachings of his spiritual guru, the famous Bhakti saint Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Swami Ramakrishna says,
“Many are the names of God, and infinite the forms that help us to know Him. By whatsoever name or form you desire to know Him, in that very form and under that very name will you see Him? Different creeds are but different paths to reach the one God; various and different are the ways that lead to the temple of Mother Kali at Kolkata (in Calcutta). Similarly various are the paths that take men to the house of the Lord. Every religion is nothing but one of these paths.”

One of the major aims for establishing the Ramakrishna Mission was the spread of the universal message of the Vedanta and the revival of Hinduism. Ramakrishna said,

“Every man should follow his own religion. Christian should follow Christianity, a Mohammedan should follow Mohammedanism. For the indu—the ancient path, the path of the Aryan rsis, is the best. A truly religious man should think that other religions are also so many paths leading to the Truth. We should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religion.”

In 1894 Swami Vivekananda attended the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago and became famous by his eloquent defense of Hinduism. In 1897 he established Mats or monasteries named after Ramakrishna for religious meditation. Vivekanda was very modern in his outlook and denounced untouchability, poverty and suppression of women. He condemned the caste system and undue emphasis on rituals and ceremonies. He welcomed the knowledge of science and said that it does not contradict religion. His teachings inspired courage, confidence and national pride among the Hindus. M.N. Srinivas says that

“Caste is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including those who are most vocal in condemning it, that it is everywhere the unit of social action.”

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Swami Vivekananda carried the message of his master all over India, Europe and America; Vivekananda emerged as the preacher of neo-Hinduism. In 1893, he attended the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago; he created a sensation in the great assembly by his brilliance and nobility. He came back to India in 1897 and was given a hero's welcome. He brought about a new life among the people, he inspired them to work for the glory of their country. Once he said,

“Him I call a Mahatma whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a duratma. So long as millions live in hunger and ignorance I hold every man a traitor who while educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to man.”

By these sayings he gave a new social purpose to spiritual.

CONCLUSION

Thus the nineteenth century witnessed a profound Renaissance in India which was brought about mainly as a result of the British impact. The great social reform leaders and movements all combined to bring about an intellectual, social, cultural and spiritual ferment which shook Hindu society to its depths and gave birth to the national movement in the country. As a result of the efforts of the Brahma samaj and Raja Rammohan Roy the Arya samaj and Dayananda, the Prarthna samaj and Ranade, the Ramkrishna Mission and Vivekananda, Sri Aurbindo, Maharishi Raman and Mahatma Gandhi, many social reformers carried out in Hindu society.
The Sati system was abolished, infanticide disappeared, women were given education and freedom, child marriage has been declared illegal, widow remarriage has been made legal, monogamy has become the order of the day, polygamy has become rare, purdah system has disappeared, inter-caste marriages are being performed. The ban on inter-dining has been lifted; every effort is being made to remove untouchability from Hindu society. The Renaissance has enabled the Indians to pay more attention to life on earth and promote the general material and moral prosperity of the people.

The Renaissance in India revitalized all spheres of life and reawakened the people of India from their lethargy. The new spirit found its manifestation in the realm of religion, politics, literature, philosophy and industry. The reawakening in the field of politics caused widespread nationalism and the freedom struggle. Under the leadership of Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Benerjea, Gokhle, Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose, India won her freedom after a long struggle.

The reawakening in the social field entirely changed the social life of the country. The various social evils were removed. A new feeling of unity has dawned in the country. There is an atmosphere of progress all around.

CONTRIBUTION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Swami Vivekananda's contribution to a faithful and sympathetic representation of India’s aspirations and ideals in foreign lands cannot be gainsaid. Swami Vivekananda created not only a lofty Advaita Vedantic ideal under a new religious known as Ramkrishna Mission but founded a new epoch in the life of the Indian people also on social, economic and political fronts in consistency with India’s past heritage and in harmony with the Western Ideals. Swami Vivekananda is that man who has understood the “Ashwath tree” having its root (one) above and branches (manifold) below and (which is) avyaya (which will never perish) Shrimad Bhagwat Geeta xv-l.
Today we have not only one kind of religious doctrine, ritual and experience, but almost every group has its own faith and rituals. That is why most of us, as religious beings in the contemporary world, claim to be a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, or a Buddhist, much before accepting ourselves as a religious person.

This diversity of religions is accepted as fundamental by Sri Ramakrishna as the will of God. He explains that it is by God's will that different religions and opinions have come into existence. God gives to different people what they can relish and digest.

"The mother does not give fish pilau to all her children. All cannot digest it; so she prepares simple fish soup for some. Everyone cherishes his own way and follows his own nature."

Swami Vivekananda also, by following his teacher's advice, believes that the diversity of religions is created by God himself. He puts this idea into the following words.

"This is a fact in the history of human race that all these great religions exist, and are spreading and multiplying (except Zoroastrianism). Now, there is a meaning, certainly, to this and had it been the will of all-wise and all-merciful creator that only one of these religions should exist and the rest should die, it would have become a fact long, long ago. If it were a fact that one of these religions is true and all the rest are false, by this time it would have covered the whole ground."

There are a vast proportion of unutilized materials with respect to his social views. He was a protagonist of Hindu social ideas and a precursor of Socialism. He championed in his own time the cause of the down trodden masses and the exploited poor class. Swami Vivekananda was much in advance of his age and proletarist. Furthermore, the plurality of religions, says Vivekananda,
"This not only a fact but is necessary for the spiritual and material development of society. Again, it is the clash of thought, the differentiation of thoughts, that awakens thought and makes societies dynamic." 

More important than this, he proclaims,

"If there were not different religions, different world-views, no one religion would survive."

Swami Vivekananda pointed out that how all the evils of the present day can be traced back to the kind of education that is imparted from the primary to the university levels in Schools of Colleges. There is no doubt that it is Swami Vivekananda who, more than any other thinker of contemporary India, has pointed out that how Advaita Vedanta entails social and political ideals which he preached and propagated.

Swami Vivekananda was well aware of the people who in the name of politics rob others and fatten themselves by sucking the very life blood of the masses. As he puts it

'That shocking sight behind the scene of acting of these politicians - that rivalry of bribery, that robbery in broad day light, that dance of the devil in man, which are practiced on such occasions—you would be hopeless about man.' 

Swami Vivekananda emphasized on the principles of self government because a man cannot work wholeheartedly unless he has not share in the work and a voice in the management. His fiery speeches and writings shook the hearts of the Indians and guided them to the national movement.

Swami Vivekananda was much moved by the economic plight of the country. He wanted his countrymen to open the eyes and see what a piteous cry for food is rising in the land of Bharat proverbial for its wealth.
In this fertile country with abundance water-supply, where nature produces wealth and harvest a thousand times more than the others, you have no food for your body! In this country of abundance, the produce of which has been the cause of the spread of civilization in other countries, you are reduced to such straits! Your condition is even worse than that of a dog. And you glory in your Vedas and Vedanta.  

Vivekananda warned that more increase in per capita income of GNP will not help the people at large if a handful of them enjoy the wealth. So the economic plan should be aimed at the development of the lower strata of the people. He exhorted his countrymen to help themselves

Remember that the nation lives in the cottage—the fate of a nation depends upon the condition of the masses. Can you raise them?—This is to be done and we will do it.

Vivekananda was pained to observe the problems and evils of Indian society. He admitted that India was in need of social reform but he was sorry to see that the prevalent reform movements were imitating Western means and methods of work. They were mainly concerned with the problems of only upper two castes. Vivekananda wanted to go to the root of evil and bring out a new order of things that is salvation of the people by the people. For it the people were to be educated, able to understand their needs and solve their problems. According to P. Nagaraja Rao,

“Swamiji gave practical shape to the spiritual ideals of Hinduism.”

The contemporary religious conditions had profound influence on Vivekananda’s mind. Instead of indulging in the conflict of worshipping one God or the other, he said that the object of worship should be the wicked, the miserable, and the poor. He felt that the need of the time was to carry out the Advaita Vedanta system into practice. According to him, the whole of religion is to be pure and unselfish. Nagaraja Rao says about Swami Vivekananda that,
"The religion which Vivekananda wants us to follow is not what is popularly taken for religion. He reinterprets the doctrines of Hindu religion, in terms of modern idiom, an answer to our crying needs."63

Swahili’s contribution to Indian national development has been deep as well as comprehensive. He was the first to lay bare our problems, social and educational, cultural and religious. The continuous exhortation of Swamiji is the memorable words of the Katha Upanishad,

"Arise, Awake, stop not till the goal is reached."64

He roused the thinking section to a sense of the urgency of these national problems and thus helped to stir the nation’s conscience; he focused our attention on our national defects and stimulated our energies in the direction of the forgoing of our national character. In all that he did he was fully conscious of the vital role that he was playing the role of being an architect of a nation’s fate. The last fifty years have but seen the steady unfolding of that vision and that fate. And the Renascent India of today with its radiant hopes and bubbling energies bears unmistakable impress of Swami Vivekanandadas personality and ministration. In the words of P. Nagaraja Rao,

“It is not an exaggeration to state that Swamiji’s systematization gave a creative reinterpretation of the four yogas. Vivekananda, by his power, talent for organization and dynamic spiritual strength, established Vedanta as the religion for our times. Today his movement has captivated great intellectuals of the West to his centre, have been its followers Huxley, Gerald heard and Christopher.”65

At the time of Swami Vivekananda religious and spiritual values were losing their relevance from the society. If there was the Vedanta, the spiritualism, but the people were unable to understand the proper meaning of it, they were using it only for mind peace. Many great thinkers like Buddha, Mahavira, Kabir, Ramanuja, etc. gave their valuable ideas to revitalize India. All though They tell about the Vedanta and its importance also but Vivekananda was the man who gave the thought of Vedanta in a very special way and that was practical Vedanta, by which he wish to change the whole society.
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