

Modern Indian History Class 19

29th November, 2023 at 9:00 AM

SOCIAL REFORMERS (09:08 AM)

- Refer to the the uploaded handout for details.
- **Bala shashtri Jambhekar**
- Father of Marathi Journalism
- **M G Ranade**
- Worked for women's upliftment- Education, Widow Remarriage, Child marriage.
- Set up Maharashtra Girls Education Society
- **Jotibha Phule**
- Worked for the education of girl child.
- Reformer of the lower castes.

CHILD MARRIAGE (09:27 AM)

- The reason for child marriage was the **Gharbha Dhan ceremony** which had a religious basis. As per this, marriage took place before puberty & consummation of marriage occurred after puberty.
- Therefore, more than a social issue, Child Marriage reforms became a socio-religious issue & therefore, there was high use of scriptures by both reformers & orthodox Hindus.
- Earlier, the efforts of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar led to the **Age of Consent Act 1860** [by Canning (1856-62)] which set the minimum age of consummation to 10 years.
- **Akshay Kumar Dutt (1820-66)** cited medical opinion against child marriage.
- **Rukhmabai Case (1884-88)**
- She was married as an infant & after decades of separate living, she argued that the marriage was invalid.
- 22-year-old Rukhmabai was taken to court by her husband on grounds of denial of his conjugal rights.
- Rukhmabai Defense Committee of social reformers was led by Malabari.
- She lost the case.
- 2 years later in 1890, the death of 11-year-old Phulmoni due to sexual abuse by her husband led to controversy. **Lansdowne (1888-94)** brought the **Age of Consent Bill of 1891** which set the minimum age of consummation to 12 years.
- Now there was a huge controversy as orthodox Hindus opposed the bill strongly. Tilak argued that the British have no right to interfere in Indian custom & religion & reform should be the product of social movement & not British authority.

- **R.G. Bhandarkar** [of Poona Deccan College & of Prarthana Samaj (1867)] showed by research on Dharmashastras that Hinduism allows marriage after puberty.
- Overall, reforms against child marriage failed. In the 1900s, the Census revealed that Child Marriage continued to be practised by all castes.
- **Issue of Female Infanticide**
- Female Infanticide in north and west India continued unabated.
- **Reason:**
- Landowning high caste men followed Hypogamy (*multiple marriages to women from lower castes) & therefore found it hard to find grooms for daughters born from such marriages
- High Dowry.
- 1870 Female Infanticide Act by Mayo (1869-72) was passed.

ISHWARCHANDRA VIDYA SAGAR (09:56 AM)

- Prodigy and scholar in Sanskrit, Bangla, English and Hindu law.
- Converted Sanskrit literature to Bangla.
- Principal of Sanskrit College.
- 1846- Principal of Fort Williams College. Ensured lower caste admissions.
- He favoured Western sciences and culture.
- 1857-58: Inspector of schools- set up 20 model schools and 25 girls schools with free education.
- 1855- Book on widowhood and conducted the signature campaign.
- 1856- The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act was passed.
- 1870s- Wrote two books on polygamy and conducted the signature campaign.
- Tagore called him the **father of modern Bangla prose**.

WIDOW REMARRIAGE (WR) (10:16 AM)

- There existed a phenomenon of child widows due to child marriage & high age gap.
- Ishwarchandra Sagar's efforts led to the **Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 (Dalhousie 1848-56)**. However, upon remarriage, the woman lost the right to the property of her dead husband.
- In Maharashtra, **Vishnu Shastri Pandit** formed a society for Widow Remarriage in 1866 & his rivals also set up a society. Therefore, the debate continued even after the 1856 law.
- **Jotibha Phule** made efforts among lower castes in Maharashtra for Widow Remarriages but failed.
- Examples of women like **Pandita Ramabai (Maharashtra)** were rare:
- Opposed new role model of educated but obedient wives.
- She was a Brahmin who stayed unmarried for a long time & married a man from a lower caste.
- After the death of her husband went to England to study medicine.
- Converted to Christianity & hence got criticized even by reformers.
- Went to the USA and raised money for Widow Home in Bombay.
- In Madras, **Veerasalingam Pantulu** set up a society for Widow Remarriage.
- **Result-**
- Reforms for Widow Remarriage were fiercely debated & there was high use of scriptures in the debate.
- The reforms however failed due to a greater support base of orthodox Hindus post 1857 due to increased racism & British civilizational criticism.
- The issue became highly popular & orthodox Hindus were able to prove on the basis of scriptures that Hinduism does not favour Widow Remarriage & now even lower castes who earlier allowed Widow Remarriage stopped doing it.
- By 1900 only 38 Widow Remarriages happened in Maharashtra. It succeeded in Haryana as here WR was already practised.

CHARACTER OF REFORMS (10:55 AM)

- 1. Led by upper castes western educated Brahmins but were anti-priests.
- 2. The major focus was on women-related reforms however there was no leadership of the women. This hurt the progress & success of reforms. The focus was on women since the British used a benchmark of the status of women to decide the status of the civilization.
- 3. They were a response to British criticism of Indian civilization. The reliance was on British legislative & executive authority. Therefore, reforms were top-down reforms & not bottom-up i.e. not based on mass movement. The use of British authority led to distrust among the masses towards the reforms.
- 4. Primary importance was of scriptures as reformers, orthodox sections as well as British gave primary importance to scriptures.
- 5. Therefore, reformers searched for modernity within Indian scriptures & did not suggest the adoption of British culture on the grounds that it is superior. Therefore, cultural nationalism was present.
- **6. Reforms failed because:**
 - **A) They were not a product of mass movement**
 - a) Leadership was from only high caste therefore lower caste did not associate.
 - b) Western-educated reformers did not even try to make it a mass movement. eg. Roy used complex Sanskritized Bengali pros not understood by the common man; also size of reformist organisations was small. For e.g. Prathna Sabha had only 72 members.
 - c) No leadership of women.
 - d) Reformers stayed largely silent on the issue of casteism either because they were themselves from upper castes or the issue of caste was considered too sensitive
 - **B) Method of gradualism by reformist**
 - There were rival organizations of orthodox sections who had greater support of the masses, especially after 1857. For example, Orthodox Hindus set up rival organizations against society for WR (1866) of Vishnu Shastri Pandit in Maharashtra.

REVIVALISM 1875 ONWARDS (11:11 AM)

- Hindu revivalism asserted that the Past was glorious but degeneration happened under Muslim & Christian rule and Hinduism is supreme while other religions are inferior hence against Universalism (that all religions lead to a god & all gods are one.).
- 1. Gradually post 1857, there was a shift towards revivalism from reformism.
- 2. Revivalism meant stronger assertion of Indian Traditions in response to increased British criticism post-1857.
- 3. Therefore, reformism seemed to mean – accepting that we are uncivilized therefore stronger assertions based on cultural nationalism began.
- 4. There was **now greater assertion by reformers like Ram Krishna Param Hansa, Swami Vivekananda & swami Dayanand Saraswathi.**
- 5. However, cultural nationalism transformed into Hindu revivalism as per which the Hindu past was glorious but degeneration took place under Islamic & Christian rule & that Hinduism is not just superior but other religions are also inferior.

ARYA SAMAJ (1875) (11:22 AM)

- On 7 April, 1875 **Swami Dayanand Saraswati (*SDS) setup Arya Samaj** at Bombay.
- It was a Hindu reform movement, meaning "**society of the nobles**". The purpose of the Samaj was to move the Hindu religion away from the fictitious beliefs. '**Krinvan to Vishvam Aryam**' **was the motto of the Samaj**, which means, "Make this world noble".
- **Goal-** The focus was to Go Back to the Glorious Past of Vedas i.e. achieve purity of traditions as during Vedic times by getting rid of all impurities of the post-Vedic era from Hinduism.
- **Methods:**
- Tried to project Hinduism as a “religion of the book” like Islam & Christianity
- It was an aggressive response to British civilizational criticism and SDS also used tools of reason/rationality. He advocated the concept of Swarajya, meaning a country free of foreign influence.
- SDS claimed that Vedas alone contained scientific truths and therefore Hinduism is superior to Christianity and Islam.
- **Vedas are infallible i.e. supremacy of Vedas.**
- Attacked social ills on the basis of Vedas and Reason/Rationality:- denounced Idolatry, Polytheism, Priest Craft and rituals, Caste distinctions, Child Marriage; supported Widow Remarriage, Inter-caste Marriage, and Female Education.
- Idol Worship was a contamination introduced by the priests for their own benefit. They condemned pilgrimage and bathing in holy rivers, animal sacrifice, offering in temples, sponsoring priesthood etc.
- SDS proclaimed that an educated man needs an educated wife for the overall benefit of society.

- Samaj launched programs to support widow remarriage in the 1880s.
- Discarded Caste System and also denounced Untouchability;
- Upheld the Indian system of Varnashrama for organizing the Indian society which was a 4 fold system having groups of professions.
- He believed in the reverence of human life irrespective of anything and supported the practice of Ahimsa or non-violence.
- The **Shuddhi Movement** was introduced by SDS to bring back the individuals to Hinduism who were either voluntarily or involuntarily converted to other religions like Islam or Christianity. Shuddhi or purification was imparted to those who sought their way back to Hinduism ("Who sought" hence not a forced conversion).
- SDS set up a number of Gurukuls to teach his followers knowledge of the Vedas and for them to spread the knowledge further.
- Inspired by his beliefs, teachings and ideas, his disciples established the **Dayanand Anglo Vedic College Trust and Management Society**, after his death in 1883.
- The **first DAV High School was established in Lahore** on June 1, 1886, with Lala Hans Raj as its headmaster.
- Therefore, Arya Samaj was not orthodox & wanted radical reforms but failed due to this reason as did not get the support of orthodox Hindus & reformist organizations.
- It failed in East and West India but succeeded in Punjab and North-West Provinces. Especially after his death in 1883, it was here that Arya Samaj became more popular & more aggressive.
- **Post 1883- Revivalism**
- Began militant campaign to preach religion of Vedas i.e. preached Vedas with missionary zeal.
- An aggressive Shuddhi movement to re-convert from Islam, Sikhism & Christianity. In response, Sikhs started the **Singh Sabha movement** & Muslims began the **Tanzim & Tabligh movement**
- An intense cow protection movement led to the **Cow Killing Riots of 1893**.

RAMKRISHNA PARAMHANSA (11:47 AM)

- 1. Was a priest in a temple & an ecstatic who believed in meditation, renunciation & monotheism (*hence not a revivalist). He was untouched by Western ideas and Western education.
- 2. He also did not directly criticize the colonial rule however, due to his pure focus on Hinduism, he rejected Western values & culture indirectly.
- 3. Became popular among educated Bengalis who hated the drudgery of new clerical jobs. Also became popular as reformism now came to mean that Indians at present are uncivilized.
- 4. **He rejected Chakri** i.e. routine of clerical jobs taken up by Hindus therefore became famous among educated middle-class Hindus. As per him, Chakri did not leave any time for the pursuit of spiritualism. Therefore, leading to dissonance & dissatisfaction.
- 5. Wanted his followers to renunciate Chakri and follow the path of meditation.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (12:02 PM)

- Was a disciple of **Ramakrishna Paramahansa**.
- Believed in the superiority of Hinduism but also in universalism. Hence not a revivalist.
- He argued that a Christian could be a better Christian if they follow the philosophy of Vedanta (Vedas). Therefore, no focus on conversion but on the spread of values in Vedanta.
- Had faith in the glory of Hindu civilization but agreed to degeneration in “recent times” (*not Mughal or British times)
- He argued, that the **Service of Jiva is the Worship of Shiva** therefore believed in social work as a path to spiritualism & popularized the idea of Daridra Narayan i.e. God residing in the poor.
- He argued that reform movements are elitist thus one should focus on the masses via social service. Hence not just the path of meditation but Doctrine of Service.
- Thus set up the Ramkrishna Mission (1897) in the name of his Guru to spread the message of Vedanta & for social work. Hence brought missionary zeal –“create an army of followers who spread the message of Vedanta, Upanishad, Budhha & Jesus”.
- Argued that Indian masculinity is superior to Western masculinity as the former focuses on not just physical strength but also mental spirituality. Therefore, Indians are not feminine as argued by the British & in fact are superior. He started a movement for **setting up Akhadas/Gyms**.
- Believed in the supremacy of the Vedas, accepted idolatry & some Hindu Rituals as they simply help develop religious fervour. This led to greater acceptability among the masses and was more successful than Arya Samaj (1875).
- Represented Hinduism in the **Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA in 1893** where he argued that Western materialism & Indian spiritualism should come together for the welfare of mankind.

- Never gave a political message hence focus on cultural nationalism. Netaji Bose called him the **spiritual father of INM in Bengal**
- Today Ramakrishna Mission (1897) runs schools, dispensaries, relief work, and hospitals.
- After his death in 1902, revivalists took over by using Vivekananda's beliefs in the Supremacy of Vedas, his focus on some Hindu rituals, his faith in the glory of Hindu civilization and his view of degeneration in recent times was portrayed as degeneration during Muslim & Christian rule.

BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE (12:24 PM)

- Secular use of religion or Hindu secular outlook i.e. rational Hinduism.
- Wrote Novel **Anand Math (1882)** - Gave concept of Bharat Mata and also composed Bande Mataram which became the anthem of the Indian national movement.

TOPIC OF THE NEXT CLASS- SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REFORMS (TO CONTINUE)