

## 5. Social and Religious Reforms

Along with spread of english education, there was spread of new thoughts, new ideas, new philosophy. Indians were also introduced to western thoughts and culture. Due to it, there were changes in social, religious, economic and cultural aspects of Indian society.

The modern educated Indians became aware that the backwardness of India was due to superstitions, casteism, old customs, class system and lack of critical outlook. It was necessary to eradicate the flaws and undesirable tendency for progress of the country. And to create a new society based on the principles of Humanity, Equality, and Fraternity. The educated thinkers started social awareness through writings to solve the various problems in the society. The intellectual awakening in the contemporary society is called 'Indian Renaissance'.

### Era of Religious and Social Reforms

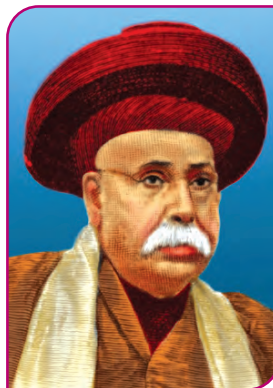


**Raja Rammohan Roy**

#### **Brahmo Samaj :**

In 1828, Raja Rammohan Roy established the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal. He had studied many languages and religions. Through it his ideology of Advaita philosophy was developed. Monotheism, caste and class equality, protest against rituals and following the way of prayers were the principles of Brahmo Samaj. He opposed Sati practice, child marriage, Purdah system. He promoted widow remarriage and female education. He founded Hindu College in Kolkata. He created public

awareness through the newspaper 'Samvad Kaumudi'.



**Dadoba P. Tarkhadkar**

#### **Prarthana Samaj :**

Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar established Paramhansa Sabha in Mumbai in 1848. Later Paramhansa Sabha was dissolved and some of its members founded the Prarthana Samaj. Dadoba's brother, Dr. Atmaram Pandurang,

was the first President of Prarthana Samaj. The prestige of the institution increased due to the enrollment of young graduates from Mumbai University.

Justice Ranade, Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar carried forward the work of Prarthana Samaj. The opposition to idol worship, monotheism, opposition to rituals were the principles of Prarthana Samaj. They stressed on devotion and prayers. For reforming the society, Prarthana Samaj started orphanage, women's education institutes, night schools for workers and society for dalits. Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde, a member of Prarthana Samaj, established 'Depressed Classes Mission'. Through the mission an attempt was made to solve the social problems.

#### **Satyashodhak Samaj :**

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule started the Satyashodhak Samaj in 1873. Satyashodhak Samaj worked on the principle of formation of society on basis of equality. They protested against untouchability. They advocated education among the depressed classes and women. Mahatma Phule reformed the society through the medium of books like 'Brahmananche Kasab', 'Gulamgiri',

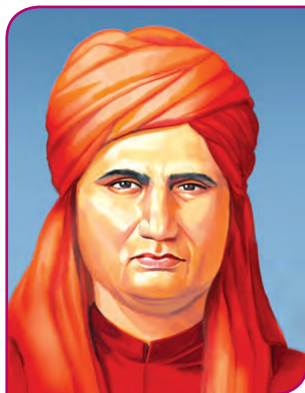


**Mahatma Jyotirao Phule**

‘Shetkaryacha Asud’ and ‘Sarvajanic Satya Dharma’. He severely criticised the traditions and customs that made discrimination between man and woman, or rather human being himself.

### **Arya Samaj :**

Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875. He wrote the book ‘Satyarth Prakash’ as a commentary on Vedas. Ancient vedic religion is true religion which had no place for casteism and there existed gender equality. ‘Go Back to the Vedas’ was the slogan of Arya Samaj. The branches of Arya Samaj were opened all over India. Many education institutions were established through the medium of Arya Samaj.



**Swami Dayanand Saraswati**

**Ramkrishna Mission :** Ramkrishna Mission was established by Swami Vivekananda, a close disciple of Ramkrishna Paramhansa, in 1897. Ramkrishna Mission worked for service to the society. The mission worked for providing help to the famine stricken people, patients, medical help to the poor, female education and spiritual growth. Swami Vivekananda was



**Swami Vivekananda**

an excellent orator. He attended the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 as representative of Hinduism.

‘Arise, Awake and stop not till the goal is achieved’ was the message given by him to the Indian youth.

### **Social reforms among the Sikhs :**

The Singh Sabha was established at Amritsar to achieve reforms in Sikh religion. This institute worked for spread of education among the Sikh community and bring in modernisation among them. Later the Akali movement continued their tradition of reformation.

### **Emancipation of Women :**

During the expansion of British rule in India, the position of women was very miserable. They had no right of education. They were not treated equally. Child marriage, dowry system, sati, keshavapan, opposition to widow remarriage such customs prevailed in the society. The then Governor Lord Bentinck took help of social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy to pass the Sati Prohibition Act. Gopal Hari Deshmukh, popularly known as ‘Lokhitwadi’ advocated gender equality through his writings in ‘Shatapatre’.



**Gopal Hari Deshmukh**

In 1848, Mahatma Phule started the first school for girls at Bhide Wada in Pune. His wife Savitribai Phule supported him. Savitribai Phule had to face great criticism from the Society but she continued to work in education. Mahatma Phule established the

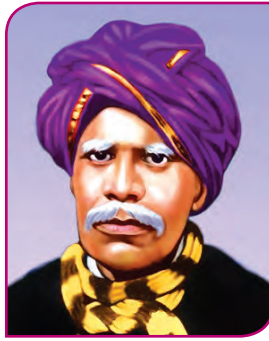


**Savitribai Phule**

‘Bal Hatya Pratibandhak Gruha’ in his own house. He conducted a strike of barbers against the custom of shaving the heads of the widows.

For gaining permission to widow remarriage, Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Vishnushastri Pandit, and Vireshalingam took up special efforts.

In his newspaper, Sudharak, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar gave his staunch opinion about child marriage, law of consent. Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde organised a conference against the practice of



**Vireshlingam Pantulu**



**Maharshi Karve**

Devdasi. In her book, ‘Stri Purush Tulana’, Tarabai Shinde very fiercely put up her views about women’s rights. Maharshi Dhondo Karve started the ‘Anath Balikashram’ an orphanage for girls.

His intention was to give education to all women and make them stand on their own feet. Through his efforts, the first women’s university was set up in the 20th century. Pandita Ramabai founded the Sharada Sadan and took up the responsibility of taking care of disabled children and women. Ramabai Ranade, through the medium of Seva Sadan Institute, started the Nursing course for women. She demanded the right to vote for women. Through articles, Dr. Ambedkar spoke about the injustice towards women. Mahatma Gandhi also advocated education of women. Women have given valuable contribution during the freedom movement.

Women’s reform movement helped in

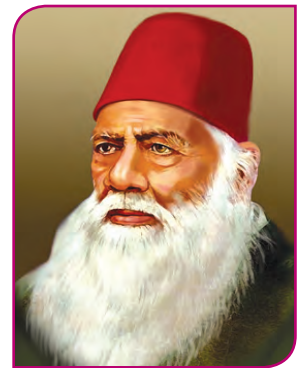
closing down many unjust practices in the society. The voice for problems against the women broke out. Women started putting up their own thoughts through their writings. Their performance in every sectors of life flourished due to education.

#### **Just think about it?**

- \* If the social reformers had not started the education of women?
- \* At present, what kind of transformation is seen in the life of women due to education?
- \* Do you think there is a need for taking further efforts regarding education of women? If yes, then what efforts need to be taken?

**Religious reforms among the Muslims :** Abdul Latif started the social reform among the muslim community. He established ‘The Mohammedan Literary Society’ in Bengal.

Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khan founded ‘The Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College’. It later developed into the ‘Aligarh Muslim University’. He advocated western science and technology. He firmly believed that Muslims could make progress only by studying modern education and science.



**Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khan**

**Movement in Hindu Society :** In 1915, ‘Hindu Mahasabha’ was established to give a respectable position to the Hindu community. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya laid the foundation of ‘Banaras Hindu University’. Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, in 1925, established Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh at Nagpur. Its aim was to set up a disciplinary and virtuous





**Dr. Keshav  
Baliram Hedgewar**

organisation of Hindu youth. V.D.Savarkar built the 'Patit Pawan Temple' at Ratnagiri, open to all castes of Hindu religion. Common dining programmes were also arranged.



### Do you know ?

#### Manifestation of Renaissance in other areas :

Just as the reform movement, the development in various fields of literature, art and science during the renaissance period is also important. In the field of literature, Rabindranath Tagore and in the field of Science C.V.Raman received the Nobel prize. This gives us an idea of the progress in India. This progress was responsible for building

up Modern India. Stories, novels gave inspiration to gain independence. They also expressed thoughts on social reforms.

During this period, women also took up writing. New newspapers and magazines became a source of social reform and political awakening.

There was development in the field of art as well. Music became more popular. Indian style and western techniques were combined and a new school of painting came forward.

Many books were written based on Science. People started realising that experimentation and scientific attitude were important for the progress of the Country.

In the history of Modern India, the movement of renaissance is very important. On the principles of Liberty, Equality and Nationalism, the Indian social reformers set up a nation wide political movement. The study of this movement will be dealt in the next chapter.

### Exercise

#### 1. Rewrite the statements by choosing the appropriate options.

(Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khan, Swami Vivekananda, Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde)

- (1) ..... established the Ramkrishna Mission.
- (2) The Anglo-Mohammedan Oriental College was established by .....
- (3) The Depressed Classes Mission was founded by .....

#### 2. Complete the following table.

Name of social reformer	Organisation	Newspaper / Book	Work of the organisation
Raja Rammohan Roy	.....	Samvad Kaumudi	.....
.....	Arya Samaj	.....	.....
Mahatma Phule	.....	Gulamgiri	.....

#### 3. Explain the following statements with reasons.

- (1) The Social and religious reform movement began in India.
- (2) Mahatma Phule conducted a strike of barbers.

#### 4. Write Short notes.

- (1) Ramkrishna Mission
- (2) Reforms for women by Savitribai Phule

#### Project

- (1) Organise an essay competition on the topic 'Education of women'.
- (2) Collect the photographs of social reformers.

