

UNIT-3 INDIAN RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICES

PRE-VEDIC AND VEDIC RELIGION

- In the pre and proto-historic sites people believed in the sanctity of the creative force and venerated the male and female aspects of divinity.
- They were worshippers of the forces of nature like the sun and the moon. This belief is also partly substantiated by the early literature of the Aryans.
- The nature of the religious beliefs and practices of the Aryans is also known from the Rig Veda, They believed in many gods like Indra, Varuna, Agni, Surya and Rudra.
- Sacrifices, and ritual offering of food and drink to fire in honour of the Gods, constituted the main religious practices.
- The Sama Veda and the Yajur Veda elaborated the different aspects of the sacrificial acts and this ritualism was further elaborated in the Brahmanas.
- The Aranyaka and Upanishad sections of the Vedic literature envisage a progressive outlook. The Upanishads, represent the early stage in the origin and development of the religions metaphysical concepts which were used later by the religious leaders and reformers of ancient and medieval India. Some of them followed the traditional lines while others proceeded along the paths of unorthodoxy.
- Religion of the Rig Vedic people was very simple.
- It consisted mainly of worship of numerous deities representing the various phenomena of nature through prayers.
- It was during the later Vedic period that definite ideas and philosophies about the true nature of soul or Atman and the cosmic principle or Brahman who represented the ultimate reality were developed.
- These Vedic philosophical concepts later on gave rise to six different schools of philosophies called shada darshana.
- They fall in the category of the orthodox system as the final authority of the Vedas is recognized by all of them.

SIX SCHOOLS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

- Philosophy arose in India as an enquiry into the mystery of life and existence.
- Indian Philosophy refers to several traditions of philosophical thought that originated in the Indian subcontinent.
- Over centuries, India's intellectual exploration of truth has come to be represented by six systems of philosophy. These are known as –
 - Vaishesika
 - Nyaya
 - Samkhya
 - Yoga
 - Purva Mimansa
 - Vedanta or Uttara Mimansa.
- These six systems of philosophy are said to have been founded by sages Konada, Gotama, Kapila, Patanjali, Jaimini and Vyasa, respectively.
- These philosophies still guide scholarly discourse in the country.
- The six systems of philosophy were developed over many generations with contributions made by individual thinkers.

- However, today, we find an underlying harmony in their understanding of truth, although they seem distinct from each other.

ORTHODOX SCHOOLS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

- Orthodox (astika) schools, originally called sanatana dharma, are collectively referred to as Hinduism in modern times.
- The ancient Vedas are their source and scriptural authority.
- Hinduism consists of six systems of philosophy & theology.

1. SAMKHYA (KAPILA):

- Samkhya is the oldest of the orthodox philosophical systems.
- It postulates that everything in reality stems from purusha (self, soul or mind) and prakriti (matter, creative agency, energy).
- Purush cannot be modified or changed while prakriti brings change in all objects.

2. YOGA (PATANJALI):

- Yoga literally means the union of two principal entities.
- Yogic techniques control body, mind & sense organs, thus considered as a means of achieving freedom or mukti.
- This freedom could be attained by practising self-control (**yama**), observation of rules (**niyama**), fixed postures (**asana**), breath control (**pranayama**), choosing an object (**pratyahara**) and fixing the mind (**dharna**), concentrating on the chosen object (**dhyana**) and complete dissolution of self, merging the mind and the object (**Samadhi**).
- Yoga admits the existence of God as a teacher and guide.

NYAYA (GAUTAMA MUNI):

- Nyaya Philosophy states that nothing is acceptable unless it is in accordance with reason and experience (scientific approach).
- Nyaya is considered as **a technique of logical thinking**.
- Nyaya Sutras say that there are four means of attaining valid knowledge: perception, inference, comparison, and verbal testimony.

VAISHESHIKA (KANADA):

- The basis of the school's philosophy is that all objects in the physical universe are reducible to a finite number of atoms and Brahman is regarded as the fundamental force that causes consciousness in these atoms.
- Vaisheshika system is considered as the realistic and objective philosophy of universe.
- The reality according to this philosophy has many bases or categories which are substance, attribute, action, genus, distinct quality and inherence.
- Vaisheshika thinkers believe that all objects of the universe are composed of five elements—earth, water, air, fire and ether.
- They believe that God is the guiding principle.
- The living beings were rewarded or punished according to the law of karma, based on actions of merit and demerit.
- **The Vaisheshika and Nyaya schools eventually merged** because of their closely related metaphysical theories (Vaisheshika only accepted perception and inference as sources of valid knowledge).

PURVA MIMAMSA (JAIMINI):

- This philosophy encompasses the Nyaya-vaisheshika systems and emphasizes the concept of valid knowledge.
- According to Purva Mimamsa, Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge.
- According to Mimamsa philosophy Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge, and religion means the fulfilment of duties prescribed by the Vedas.
- It says that the essence of the Vedas is dharma. By the execution of dharma one earns merit which leads one to heaven after death.

VEDANTA:

- The Vedanta, or Uttara Mimamsa, school concentrates on the philosophical teachings of the Upanishads (mystic or spiritual contemplations within the Vedas), rather than the Brahmanas (instructions for ritual and sacrifice).
- The school separated into **six sub-schools**, each interpreting the texts in its own way and producing its own series of sub-commentaries:

1.Advaita (Adi Shankara):

It states that both the individual self (Atman) and Brahman are the same, and knowing this difference causes liberation.

2.Visishtadvaita (Ramanuja):

It believes that all diversity is subsumed to a unified whole.

3.Dvaita (Madhvacharya):

It considers Brahman and Atman as two different entities, and Bhakti as the route to eternal salvation.

4.Dvaitadvaita (Nimbarka):

It states that the Brahman is the highest reality, the controller of all.

5.Shuddhadvaita (Vallabhacharya):

It states that both God and the individual self are the same, and not different.

6. Achintya Bheda Abheda (Chaitanya Mahaprabhu):

It emphasizes that the individual self (Jivatman) is both different and not different from Brahman.

UNORTHODOX SCHOOLS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Schools that do not accept the authority of Vedas are by definition unorthodox (nastika) systems. The following schools belong to **heterodox schools of Indian Philosophy**.

CHARVAKA (BRIHASPATI):

- Charvaka is a materialistic, sceptical and atheistic school of thought.
- According to Charvaka there is no other world. Hence, death is the end of humans & pleasure is the ultimate object in life.
- It is also known as the Lokayata Philosophy-the philosophy of masses.

BUDDHISM /BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY (SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA)

- Buddhism is a non-theistic philosophy whose tenets are not especially concerned with the existence or nonexistence of God.
- Buddha considered the world as full of misery and considered a man's duty to seek liberation from this painful world.

- He strongly criticized blind faith in the traditional scriptures like the Vedas.
- It is one of the major religions of the world that originated from the Indian subcontinent and has now spread to large parts of South-east Asia.
- The origin of Buddhism is attached to the story of **Siddhartha** who came to be known as **Buddha**.
- The traditions, beliefs and practices in Buddhism are attributed to Buddha.
- It is the **world's fourth largest religion** after Christianity, Islam and Hinduism.
- Around **7%** of the world's population embraces Buddhism.
- Buddhists make up **0.7%** of India's population, or 8.4 million individuals, with majority being in **Maharashtra**.

BASICS ABOUT BUDDHA

- Gautam Buddha was born at **Lumbini** (in present Nepal) in **563 BC** as Siddhartha Gautam, to **mother Maya and father King Suddhodana** of the **Sakyan** kingdom under **Kshatriya** clan.
- He was born on the auspicious day of **Vaishakhi Purnima**.
- He was **married to Princess Yashodhara** and had a son named **Rahul**.
- At the age of **29**, he left his house riding on his **horse Kanthaka** and along with the **charioteer Channa**, to find the truth of life and he wandered as an ascetic for next 6 years. Then, he came to Gaya (Bihar) and sat under a pipal tree.
- There he thought about everything and freed himself from all attachments and discovered the truth, the secret of happiness.
- **At the age of 35** on the same day of his birth, he attained **enlightenment (Nirvana)** under that **pipal tree** and became the Buddha, the Enlightened One.
- After attaining Nirvana in Bodh Gaya, he gave his **first sermon** to his five companions at the **Deer Park in Sarnath** near Varanasi.
- This event was called **Dharma-chakra-pravartana** (Turning the wheel of Law).
- The **Three Jewels (triratnas)** embraced under Buddhism are :

Buddha

The enlightened One

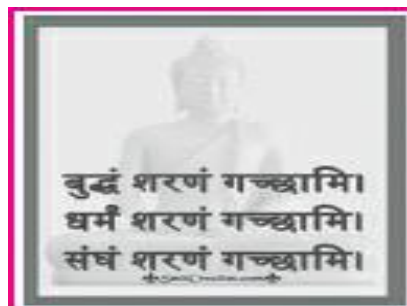
Dhamma

Teachings of Buddha (doctrine)

Sangha

The monastic order

- Out of the three jewels or triratnas, the concept of **Sangha (the Order)** was initiated by Buddha at the time of giving first sermon.
- These 5 companions along with Buddha became a Sangha (a group).



- Buddha attained **Mahaparinirvana** at **Kushinagar** (Malla Mahajanapada) in Uttar Pradesh at the age of 80 in **483 BC**.
- He is said to be contemporary for major part of his life to King **Bimbisara** and for last few years to **Ajatashatru** of Haryanka Dynasty.
- Buddha is known in various Buddhist texts also as **Tathagata and Sakyamuni**.

- The predecessor of Buddha under Buddhism was **Kassapa Buddha** and his successor will be **Maitreya**.

CONCEPTS AND PHILOSOPHY UNDER BUDDHISM

The basic tenets of Buddhism are explained through the **four major Noble truths**. They are:

- The truth of suffering (Dukkha)
- The truth of the origin of suffering (Samudāya)
- The truth of the cessation of suffering (Nirodha)
- The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering (Magga) i.e., Life is full of suffering (*dukkha*). All aspects of life contained the seeds of sorrow. Sorrow was caused by desires. This keeps us caught in *samsara*, the endless cycle of repeated rebirth, *dukkha* and dying again.
- If one could get rid of desires and needs, then one could be free and at peace. This can be attained through following the '**Noble Eightfold Path**'. They include:
 1. Kind
 2. Truthful and Right speech
 3. Honest, peaceful and Right action
 4. To find the right livelihood which does not harm any being
 5. Right effort and cultivating self-control
 6. Right mindfulness
 7. Right meditation and concentrating on the meaning of life
 8. The worth of the sincere and intelligent man is through right thoughts. One should avoid superstition and cultivate right understanding.

JAINISM/JAIN PHILOSOPHY (MAHAVIRA)

- A basic principle is *anekantavada*, the idea that reality is perceived differently from different points of view, and that no single point of view is completely true.
- According to Jainism, only the Kevalins, those who have infinite knowledge, can know the true answer, and that all others would only know a part of the answer.
- The word 'Jain' is derived from *jina* or *jaina* which means the '**Conqueror**'.
- They believe that their religion is comprised of people who have managed to control and conquer their desires.
- Jainism does not have a single founder, instead of that the truth comes to the world in difficult and different times by a teacher who shows the way or a **Tirthankara**.
- There were 23 *Tirthankaras* or great-learned men in Jain religion before Mahavira.
- It is commonly mistaken that **Mahavira** was the founder of Jainism, instead he was the last and 24th *tirthankara*.
- He would achieve the goal of spirituality and teach the others the right way to get moksha or liberation.
- He is like an incarnation of god who is in the form of a human body and has to go through penance and meditation to reach the pure stage of the soul.
- Jainism, like Buddhism, **rejects the authority of Vedas**. However, unlike Buddhism, it **believes in the existence of soul (atman)**.
- Soul is the core and the fundamental focus of the Jain philosophy. It is the soul that experiences existence and gains knowledge, not mind nor body as both are believed to be a heap of matter.
- **Major Jain pilgrimages** in India include Dilwara temple in **Mount Abu** (Rajasthan), **Palitana temples** (Gujarat), **Girnar** (Gujarat), **Shikharji** (Jharkhand) and **Shravanabelagola** (Karnataka).

- The 24 tirthankaras under Jainism are:
Rishabhanatha or Adinatha, Ajita, Sambhava, Abhinandana, Sumati, Padmaprabha, Suparshva, Chandraprabha, Suvidhi, Shital, Shreyansa, Vasupujya, Vimala, Ananta, Dharma, Shanti, Kunthu, Ara, Malli, Muni Suvrata, Nami, Nemi, Parshvanatha and Mahavira.

JAINA TEACHINGS AND PHILOSOPHY

- Mahavira has taught the Jains the right path or Dharma and stressed on renunciation of the world, strict asceticism and moral cultivation.
- The Jains are morally bound by their religion to live in such a way that would not harm any being.
- **Anekantavada**, the fundamental doctrine of Jainism emphasizes that the ultimate truth and reality is complex, and has multiple aspects.
- Hence, there exists **non-absolutism**, that means no single, specific statement can describe the nature of existence and the absolute truth.
- They believe that through **three-jewel** (fold) path of: right belief (**samyakdarshana**), right knowledge (**samyakjnana**) and right conduct (**samyakcharita**), one can get rid of the bad karma and also pull themselves out of the cycle of rebirth and achieve salvation.
- Jains need to follow these **five constraints** in life:
 1. Ahimsa (non-violence);
 2. Satya (truthfulness);
 3. Asteya (not stealing);
 4. Aparigraha (non-acquisition) and
 5. Brahmacharya (chaste living).
- The fifth tenet was propounded by Mahavira.

TWO MAJOR SCHOOLS OR SECTS UNDER JAINISM

Jainism has two major ancient sub traditions:

1. **Digambaras** [Sub-sects include Mula Sangh (original community) and Terapanthi, Taranpathi and Bispanthi (these three are modern communities)]
2. **Svetambaras** (Sub-sects include Sthanakavasi and Murtipujaka)

There are several other smaller sub-traditions that emerged in the 2nd millennium CE.

1. DIGAMBARA SCHOOL:

- Monks of the *Digambara* tradition **do not wear clothes** as this sect believes in complete nudity.
- Female monks wear unstitched plain white sarees and are called **Aryikas**.
- Digambaras **follow all the five constraints** (Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Aparigraha and Brahmacharya) as per the teachings of Mahavira, unlike Svetambaras.
- **Bhadrabahu** was an exponent of Digambara sect and he moved to Karnataka along with his disciples after predicting long famine.
- The earliest record of *Digambara* beliefs is contained in the Prakrit **Suttapahuda** of Kundakunda.
- Digambara Jains believe that **women can't be tirthankaras** and that Malli was a man.
- Monasticism rules are **more rigid** under Digambara School.

SVETAMBARA SCHOOL:

- Svetambaras follow the **preachings of Prasvanatha**, i.e. they believe in **only four restraints** (except Brahmacharya) to be followed to **attain Kevalya**.

- Svetambara believe that the 23rd and 24th tirthankara did marry, unlike thought by Digambara.
- **Sthulabhadra** was a great exponent of this school and stayed in Magadha unlike Bhadrabahu who went to Karnataka.
- The monks of Svetambara School can have **simple white clothing**, a begging bowl, a brush to remove insects from their path, books and writing materials with them.
- They believe **tirthankaras can be men or women**, and say that Malli began her life as a princess.
- Svetambara tradition of Jainism **indicates five eternal substances in existence**: Soul (*jiva*), Matter (*pudgala*), Space (*akasha*), motion (*Dharma*) and rest (*Adharma*), **unlike Digambaras** which add the sixth eternal substance as time (*Kala*).

THE SUFI MOVEMENT

ORIGIN

- Sufism is the mystical arm of Islam.
- Sufis represent the inner side of the Islam creed (tasawwuf).
- It stresses on self realization, tolerance, righteousness and universal love for all.
- The word finds its roots in Arabic word for wool (*suf*), indicative of the garments of rough wool worn by the ascetics and even the prophets.
- The word Sufism is sometimes also traced to root word *safā* which in Arabic means purity.
- In beginning of 12 AD, some religious people in Persia turned to asceticism due to the increasing materialism of the Caliphate.
- They came to be called the 'Sufis'.

CHARACTERISTICS

- The Sufis tried to purify their inner self by rigid introspection and mental struggle so as to remove even the smallest sign of selfishness and attain **ikhlās**, absolute purity of intention and act.
- The mystics realized that beyond the knowledge of outward sciences, intuitive knowledge was required in order to receive that illumination to which reason has no access.
- Dhawq, direct "tasting" of experience, was essential for them.
- Sufism strictly follow the concept of pir-murshidie. Guru Shisya tradition.
- Sufis emphasise that Islamic knowledge should be learned from teachers and not exclusively from books.
- The ultimate goal of Sufism is Union with God.
- According to Sufism, Love of God meant love of humanity, they believe service to humanity equals service of God.
- Sufism inculcated a spirit of tolerance among its followers.
- They rejected elaborate rituals but didn't promote strict asceticism like the Bhakti saints.
- Their religious outlook borrowed not only from Islam but Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism etc.
- Most of the Sufis in India conceived and preached divine unity in terms of idealistic monoism and many Hindus found the Sufi ideas very similar to those of Vedantic philosophy.
- They believed in the essential unity of all religions, equality of all human beings and universal brotherhood of man.
- The early Sufis were not only ascetics but also lived a life of voluntary poverty shunning all types of worldly pleasures.
- Most Sufis use the vocabulary of love and intimate affection while describing their experience with god.

- It was a badge of honor for the Sufi to be known as the lover of god or of their Sufi masters.
- They were even called 'ahl-I dil or master of the heart'.
- The Sufi saints are *Fakirs* (poor man) or *Dervishes* (standing by the door for alms).

The essential characteristics of Sufism are:

- **Fana:** Spiritual merger of devotee with Allah
- **Insan-e-kamil:** Perfect human with all good virtues,
- **Zikr-tauba:** remembrance of god all the time(zikr),
- **Wahadatul-wazudi:** one god for entire universe; unity of god and being.
- **Sama:** spiritual dance and music to promote their concepts, though music is un-Islamic.

STAGE PERIOD CHARACTER

According to some historians, there are three stages in the history of Sufism:

1st stage: Khanqah 10th century Also called the age of Golden Mysticism.

2nd Stage: Tariqa 11-14th century When Sufism was being institutionalised and traditions and symbols started being attached to it.

3rd stage: Tarifa 15th century onwards The stage when Sufism became a popular movement.

- These three stages occurred simultaneously too and happened till the saint's successors also became associated with his **barkat** and **karamat**.
- The lands which were the abode of war after coming under the Sufi's spiritual authority and the king's political authority became the land of peace (Dar-al Islam).
- The basic tenants of Sufism included the concept of '**Purity**'.
- Sufism became the process of purification of hearts (*tasfiyat al-qulub*) which means a rigorous ethical discipline based on **meditative exercises**.
- The basic point in the Sufic philosophy is the primacy of the inner reality and believing that God was the first, the last and the outer and the inner.
- The Sufi khanqah was not without its hierarchies. While the Sufi saint had obtained *wilaya* or the Islamic doctrine of sainthood, which made him close to God and was protected by the grace of God.
- There are many terms for the teacher and guide like *pir* or *sheikh* whose main task was to transmit the teachings to the student, i.e. the **murid**.
- Chief disciples are chosen to act as the successor (*khalifa*) or representative (*muqqaddam*) of the master.
- There was an unspoken and invisible spiritual and territorial authority of the saints.
- Those who were from all ordinary classes and castes occupied the outer level but were not *murids*.
- There are two different philosophies in Sufi mystical thought. One is the concept of *Wahadat al-Wujud* or the '**Oneness of Existence**' which was coined by Ibn Arabi. The philosophy emphasises that 'there is no true existence except the Ultimate Truth (God)' and that the only truth within the universe is God, and that all things exist within God only.
- The other is the concept of **Wahadat ul-shujud** or the '**unity of appearance**'. This school was formulated by 'Ala al-Dawlah Simnānī, was to attract many followers in India, including Ahmed Sirhindi who provided some of the most widely accepted formulations of this doctrine in the Indian sub-continent.
- He held that **God and creation are not identical**; rather, the latter is a shadow or reflection of the Divines Name and Attributes when they are reflected in the mirrors of their opposite non-beings.

DIFFERENT SUFI ORDERS IN INDIA

- The Sufis came to be organized into orders or 'silsilas'. **Ain-I –Akbari** mentions a dozen silsilahs. They were divided into 'Beshara' and 'Ba-shara'.
- The Bashara Sufis followed the law of Islam (ie Sharia) and the silsilah (continuity) founded by one saint was continued by his disciples.
- There were 12 such silsilahs.
- They include silsilahs like **Chishti, Suhrawardi, Firdausi, Qadariya, Naqshbandi**, etc.
- The Be-shara did not believe in sharia. They came to be called 'Mast kalandars/Malangs/Haidaris'. These wandering saints were commonly known as 'babas'. They hardly left any written accounts. Usually, they followed very harsh forms of asceticism and defied or ignored the rituals.

THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT

- An important feature of the cultural history of medieval India was the silent revolution in society brought about by a galaxy of socio religious reformers, a revolution known as the Bhakti Movement.
- It refers to the theistic devotional trend that emerged in medieval age in India and later revolutionized the society.
- Certain factors necessitated the emergence of Bhaktism.
- Hinduism had become extremely ritualistic and was ridden by the caste system.
- Both Jainism and Buddhism preached extreme austerity and suffered from lack of patronage. On the other hand Sufi movement was gaining popularity because of its egalitarian values, ease of worship.
- The people were seeking an avenue to satisfy their emotions and spiritual needs. These factors led to the rise and growth of the Bhakti tradition within the fold of Hinduism.
- Bhakti saints rejected institutionalized religion and proposed several reforms.

ORIGIN

- The Bhakti movement originated in the Southern parts of India, especially Tamil Nadu between 7th and 12th century; it slowly percolated to the northern belt by the end of 15th century.
- In South India, there were two main groups of Bhakti saints: **Nayanars** (Shiva devotees) and **Alvars** (Vishnu Devotees) who preached devotion to God as a means of salvation and disregarded the austerities preached by Buddhism and Jainism.
- Most of their poetries were focused on the love between the devotee and God.
- They spoke and wrote in vernaculars like Tamil and Telugu so that the common people could easily read and recite it.
- Presence of priest was not required in Bhakti tradition. This made their movement immensely popular.
- The word 'Bhakti' is derived from the Sanskrit word "**bhaj**" which means to share, participate and belong to.
- In contrast to erotic love, Bhakti is spiritual and refers to complete devotion.

FEATURES OF THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT

- Intense love and devotion as the means of salvation.
- Unity of God (Universalism) and repeating the one true name again and again
- Rejection of rituals and ceremonies
- No caste discrimination and keeping an open mind on religious and gender issues.

- They allowed both men and women to seek salvation. They even took their meals together from the common kitchen.
- Using local and regional languages to spread their messages.
- They stressed on the idea of a personal God, Need of a true Guru (teacher) to realize God.
- They propagated equality and spirit of brotherhood like the Sufis
- They despised priests who they thought were middlemen and instead focused on establishing a personal connection with God.

THE TWO SCHOOLS OF BHAKTI

- The Bhakti saints were divided into two schools depending on the way they imagined God.
- One school of thought imagined God as formless with no attributes or quality.
- This school of thought is the-

Nirguna School:

1. They are more focused on acquiring knowledge.
2. They rejected the scriptures and condemned every form of idol worship.
3. The prominent figures of this school of thought were **Kabir, Guru Nanak and Dadu Dayal**.

- The Second school is-

THE SAGUNA SCHOOL :

1. The Saguna school thought of God as having a definite form, quality and positive attributes.
2. The god manifests himself in incarnations such as Rama and Krishna.
3. His spirit is to be found in the **idols and images** worshipped at home and in temples.
4. The **Saguna School** emphasizes on love and devotion.
5. They accept the spiritual **authority** of the Vedas and the need of a human Guru as mediator between God and his devotee.
6. **Ramanuja, Ramananda and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu** belonged to this school of thought.

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS

- From the late 19th century a number of European and Indian scholars started the study of ancient India's history, philosophy, science, religions and literature.
- This growing knowledge of India's past glory provided to the Indian people a sense of pride in their civilization.
- It also helped the reformers in their work of religious and social reform for their struggle against all type of inhuman practices, superstitions etc. Since they had become associated with religious beliefs, therefore most of the movements of social reform were of a religious character.
- These social and religious reform movements arose among all communities of the Indian people.
- They attacked racism, superstition and the hold of the priestly class and worked for abolition of castes and untouchability, purdah system, sati, child marriage, social inequalities and illiteracy.
- Some of these reformers were supported directly or indirectly by the British officials and some of the reformers also supported reformatory steps and regulations framed by the British Government.

BRAHMO SAMAJ AND RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy deserves special mention among the great reformers.
- He presented a fine combination of East and the West.
- A man of great literary talent and well versed in Indian culture, he also made special effort to study Christianity and Islam so that he could deal with them with understanding. He felt great revulsion for many practices prevailing in India that enjoyed religious approval.
- His main pre-occupation was how to rid the Hindu religion of image worship, sacrificial rites and other meaningless rituals. He condemned the priestly class for encouraging these practices. He opined that all the principal ancient texts of the Hindus preached monotheism or worship of one God.
- His greatest achievement in the field of religious reform was an setting up in 1828 of the **Brahmo Samaj** and abolition of **Sati** in **1929**.
- The Brahmo Samaj was an important organization of religious reforms. It forbade idol-worship and discarded meaningless rites and rituals.
- Raja Rammohan Roy believed that man should adopt truth and goodness and should give up things based on falsehood and superstition.
- His campaign against Sati aroused the opposition of the orthodox Hindus who bitterly attacked him.
- He was also deeply opposed to the caste system that prevailed in Indian society.
- Another important area that concerned him was Hindu theology. Study of the Vedas and Upanishads gave him ground to show that monotheism was the original Hindu belief and he proclaimed that there is only one God for all religions and for all humanity.
- He advocated the rights of widows to remarry.

Thus became the first organized vehicle for the expression of national awakening and inaugurated a new era for the people of India. It left its impact on the intellectual, social and political life of Bengal.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

- Gadadhar Chattopadhyaya (1836-86) was a poor Brahmin priest who later came to be known as Ramakrishna Paramahansa.
- His education did not proceed beyond the elementary stage and he had no formal education in philosophy and Shastras.
- He dedicated his life to God. He believed that there were many roads to God and the service of man was the service of God, because man was the embodiment of God.
- He realised the divinity in humanity and looked upon the service of mankind as a means to salvation.
- Narendra Nath Datta (1863-1902) later known as Swami Vivekananda was the most devoted pupil of Ramakrishna Paramahansa who carried the message of his Guru Ramakrishna all over the world, especially in America and Europe.
- Vivekananda was proud of India's spiritual heritage.
- He condemned the caste system, rigid rituals, century old superstitions and advocated liberty, free thinking and equality.
- He was indeed, a patriot from the core of his heart. He had tremendous faith in the evolution of Indian culture and an intense zeal to revive all that was good and great in it.

- Swami Vivekananda laid stress on Ramakrishna's teaching on the essential oneness of all religions. He promoted the Vedanta philosophy which he considered the most rational system.

SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI (1824-1883) AND ARYA SAMAJ

- This was the basic contribution of Mool Shanker an important representative of the religions reform movement in India from Gujarat.
- He later came to be known as **Dayanand Saraswati** (1824-1883), founder of the **Arya Samaj** in **1875**.
- It was the most influential movement of religious and social reform in northern India.
- He held that the Vedas contained all the knowledge imparted to man by God and essentials of modern science could also be traced in them.
- He was opposed to idolatry, ritual and priesthood, particularly to the prevalent caste practices and popular Hinduism as preached by the Brahmins.
- He favored the study of western science.
- With all this doctrine, he went about all over the country and in 1875 founded the Arya Samaj in Bombay.
- **Satyarth Prakash** was his most important book.
- The use of Hindi in his writings and preachings made his ideas accessible to the common people of northern India.
- Arya Samajis opposed child marriages and encouraged remarriage of widows.
- It made rapid progress in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- A Network of schools and colleges for boys and girls was established throughout northern India to promote the spread of education.
- Dayanand Anglo-Vedic School of Lahore, which soon developed into a premier college of Punjab, set the pattern for such institutions.
- Arya Samaj tried to inculcate the spirit of self-respect and self-reliance among the people of India.
- This promoted nationalism.
- At the same time one of its main objectives was to prevent the conversion of Hindus to other religions.
- It also prescribed a purificatory ceremony called suddhi for those Hindus who had been converted to other religions like Islam and Christianity.

REFORM MOVEMENTS AMONG PARSIS

- Religious reform began among the Parsis in Mumbai in the middle of the 19th century.
- In 1851, the Rehnumai Maz'dayasan Sabha or Religious Reform Association was founded by Nauroji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji, S.S. Bengalee and others.
- They started a journal Rast Goftar, for the purpose of social-religious reforms among the Parsis.
- They also played an important role in the spread of education, especially among girls.
- They campaigned against the entrenched orthodoxy in the religious field and initiated the modernization of Parsi social customs regarding the education of girls marriage and the social position of women in general.
- In course of time, the Parsis became socially the most westernized section of Indian society.

RELIGIOUS REFORM AMONG SIKHS

- Religious reform among the Sikhs was started at the end of the 19th Century when the Khalsa College started at Amritsar.
- Through the efforts of the Singh Sabhas (1870) and with British support, the Khalsa College was founded at Amritsar in 1892.
- This college and schools set up as a result of similar efforts, promoted Gurumukhi, Sikh learning and Punjabi literature as a whole.
- After 1920 the Sikh movement gained momentum when the Akali Movement rose in Punjab.
- The chief object of the Akalis was to improve the management of the Gurudwaras or Sikh Shrines that were under the control of priests or Mahants who treated them as their private property.
- In 1925, a law was passed which gave the right of managing Gurudwaras to the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee.

OTHER SOCIAL REFORMERS

ISHWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR

- An outstanding reformer in Bengal was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891 A.D.).
- A scholar of great depths, he dedicated himself to the cause of the emancipation of women.
- It was due to his sincere efforts that obstacles to the marriage of widows were removed through a law in 1856.
- He played a leading role in promoting education of girls and started and helped the setting up a number of schools for girls.
- Vidyasagar did not concern himself much with religious questions. However, he was against all those who opposed reforms in the name of religion.

GOPAL HARI DESHMUKH LOKAHITWARI JOTIRAO GOVINDRAO PHULE (Western India)

- Jotirao Govindrao Phule popularly known as Jotiba and Gopal Hari Deshmukh were two great social reformers.
- They worked for the upliftment of women, took up the cause of women and downtrodden masses.
- Jyotiba with his wife started a girls school in Poona, in 1857.
- He also opened a school for the children of the depressed classes.
- Jotiba Phule was also a pioneer of the widow remarriage movement in Maharashtra.

MAHAVDEV GOVIND RANADE (PRARTHANA SAMAJ/1842-1901)

- Mahadev Govind Ranade devoted his entire life to Prarthana Samaj.
- He was the founder of the **Widow Remarriage Association** (1861) and the **Deccan Education Society**.
- He established the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha as well.
- To Ranade, religious reform was inseparable from social reform. He also believed that if religious ideas were rigid there would be no success in social, economic and political spheres.
- He was the leader of social reformation and cultural renaissance in Western India.

ADI SHANKARACHARYA

- The teachings of Shankara can be summed up in half a verse:
- “Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya Jivo Brahmaiva Na Aparah—Brahman (the Absolute) is alone real; this world is unreal; and the Jiva or the individual soul is non-different from Brahman.”
- His teachings are available in the book **Upadesa Sahasri** A Thousand Teachings, written by the great philosopher himself.
- Shankaracharya peethas (monasteries), called "mathas," in the four corners of India to uphold his spiritual teachings.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SRI SHANKARACHARYA

- His teachings are based on the unity of the soul and Brahman, in which Brahman is viewed as without attributes.
- Shankara travelled across India and other parts of South Asia to propagate his philosophy through discourse and debates with other thinkers.
- He was a major proponent of the Vedanta tenet that "Lord Brahma and men are of one essence and every individual should try to develop this vision of oneness."