

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

MODERN INDIAN HISTORY: 2

## **INDIAN RENAISSANCE AND REFORM MOVEMENT**

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

## Indian Renaissance and Reform Movement

### Contents

1. Background and Causes of the Reform Movement .....	3
2. Social and Religious Reform Movement .....	3
3. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Brahmo Samaj.....	5
4. Young Bengal Movement and Henry Vivian Derozio .....	7
5. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar .....	7
6. Dayanand Saraswati and Arya Samaj .....	8
7. Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda.....	8
8. Theosophical Society.....	9
9. M G Ranade and PrarthanaSamaj.....	10
10. Satyashodhak Samaj and Jyotiba Phule .....	11
11. Other Social Reformers .....	11
Balshastri Jambhekar .....	11
Pandita Ramabai: .....	11
Kandukuri Veeresalingam:.....	12
12. Muslim Reform Movements .....	12
Wahabi/ Walliullah Movement.....	12
Titu Mir's Movement .....	13
Faraizi Movement.....	13
Ahmadiya Movement.....	13
Sir.Syed Ahmed Khan and the Aligarh Movement	
Deoband Movement.....	14
13. The Sikh Reform Movement.....	14
14. Parsi Reform Movement .....	14

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

SevaSadan .....	14
RahnumaiMazdayasanSabha or Religious reform Association .....	14
15. Misc Movements.....	14
Sri Narayan Guru Dharma Paripalana (SNP) Movement .....	14
Self-Respect Movement.....	15
Vaikom Satyagraha .....	15
Deva Samaj.....	15
Dharma Sabha .....	15
Radhaswami Movement .....	15
The servants of India Society .....	15
16. Social Legislations in the 19 <sup>th</sup> and Early 20 <sup>th</sup> Centuries .....	16
17. Social Reform Movement - An Analysis .....	17
Character of the Social Reform Movement.....	17
Contributions of the Social Reform Movement .....	18
Limitations of the Social Reform Movement .....	19
18. Stand of Congress over social issues .....	19
Previous Years Questions: .....	20

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

## 1. Background and Causes of the Reform Movement

Indian Society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was caught in a vicious web created by religious superstitions and dogmas. All religions in general and Hinduism in particular had become a compound of magic, animism, and superstitions. The abominable rites like animal sacrifice and physical torture had replaced the worship of God. The priests exercised an overwhelming and unhealthy influence on the mind of people. The faithful lived in submission, not only to God, the powerful and unseen, but even to the whims, fancies, and wishes of the priests.

Social Conditions were equally depressing. The most distressing was the **position of women**. The birth of a girl was unwelcome, her marriage a burden and her widowhood inauspicious. Another debilitating factor was **Caste**. It sought to maintain a system of segregation, hierarchically ordained on the basis of ritual status, hampering social mobility and fostered social divisions. There were innumerable other practices marked by constraint, status, authority, bigotry and blind fatalism. Rejecting them as features of a decadent society, the reform movements sought to create a social climate for modernization.

The conquest of India by the British during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century exposed some serious weaknesses and drawbacks of Indian social institutions. The response, indeed, was varied but the need to reform social and religious life was a commonly shared conviction. It also brought in completely new sets of ideas and social world. The exposure to post-Enlightenment rationalism that came to signify modernity brought a change in the outlook of a select group of Indians.

The introduction of western education and ideas had the far reaching impact on the Indian Society. Through the glasses of utility, reason, justice, and progress, a select group of individuals began to explore the nature of their own society. There was a gradual emergence of public opinion. The debates between the Orientalists, scholars of Eastern societies like India on one side, and the Utilitarians, Liberals and Missionaries on the other also enabled the penetration of ideas, at least amongst the upper section of society. The resultant cultural change led to introspection about Indian traditions, institution, and culture.

The socio intellectual revolution that took place in the nineteenth century in the fields of philosophy, literature, science, politics and social reforms is often known as **Indian Renaissance**. An important part of this Renaissance was reforming Hinduism from within on the basis of Post-Enlightenment rationalism. The Renaissance was especially focused in Bengal and is popularly known as the Bengal Renaissance. However, the use of 'renaissance' is slightly problematic as in European history it is used to refer to the "rebirth" or revival of Greco-Roman learning in the fifteen and sixteenth centuries after the long winter of the dark medieval period. But in Indian context, it implied rediscovering rationalism from within India's past.

## 2. Social and Religious Reform Movement

Social Reform Movement are linked with different ideas including presence of Colonial government, Economic and Social backwardness of society, influence of modern western ideas, men in society, intellectual awakening in the middle class and poor rule in India acted as a catalyst to deep seated social changes. Western culture also influenced the Indian Life and thought in several ways. The most important result of the impact of western culture was the replacement of blind faith in current traditions, beliefs, and conventions by a spirit of rationalism.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

The major social problems which came in the purview of the reforms movements were emancipation of women in which sati, infanticide, child marriage and widow re-marriage were taken up, casteism and untouchability, education for bringing about enlightenment in society. In the religious sphere main issues were idolatry, polytheism, religious superstitions, and exploitation by priest.

Important characteristics of Social Reform Movement included leadership by wide emerging Intellectual middle class. Reform movement started in different parts of India in different period but having considerable similarities. They were link with one region or one caste. It was clear to them that without religious reformation, there cannot be any social reformation. Two Intellectual criteria of social reform movement included-

- Rationality
- Religious Universalism

Social relevance was judged by a **rationalist** critique. It is difficult to match the uncompromising rationalism of the early Raja Rammohan Roy or AkshaykumarDutt. Rejecting Supernatural explanations, Raja Rammohan Roy affirmed the principle of causality linking the whole phenomenal universe. To him demonstrability was the sole criterion of truth. In proclaiming that 'rationalism is our only preceptor', AkshaykumarDutt went a step further. All natural and social phenomena, he held, could be analysed and understood by purely mechanical processes. This perspective not only enabled them to adopt a rational approach to tradition but also to evaluate the contemporary socio-religious practices from the standpoint of social utility and to replace faith with rationality. In the BrahmoSamaj, it led to the repudiation of the infallibility of the Vedas, and in the Aligarh Movement, to the reconciliation of the teachings of Islam with the needs of the modern age. Holding that religious tenets were not immutable, Syed Ahmed Khan emphasized the role of religion in the progress of society: if religion did not keep pace with and meet the demands of the time it would get fossilized as in the case of Islam in India.

Similarly, while the ambitions of reforms were particularistic, their **religious perspective was universalistic**. Raja Ram Mohan Roy considered different religion as national embodiments of Universal theism. The BrahmoSamaj was initially conceived by him as a Universalist church. He was a defender of the basic and universal principles of all religions- the monotheism of the Vedas and the Unitarianism of Christianity- and at the same time attacked polytheism of Hinduism and the trinitarianism of Christianity. Sir Syed Ahmed khan echoed the same idea: all prophets had the same din (faith) and every country and nation had different prophets. This perspective found clearer articulation in Kehsub Chandra Sen's ideas saying that our position is not that truths are to be found in all religions, but all established religions of the world are true. He also gave expression to the social implication of this Universalist perspective saying that whosoever worships the True God daily must learn to recognize all his fellow countrymen as brethren. Caste would vanish in such a state of a society.

Influenced by the universalist perspective was not a purely philosophic concern; it shaped the political and social outlook of the time, till religious particularism gained ground in the second half of the nineteenth century. For instance, despite Muslim tyranny were epithets often used to describe the pre-colonial rule, this was referred not a religious but a political institutions. The emphasis was not on the word 'Muslim' but on the word 'tyranny'. This is amply clear from Syed Ahmed Khan's description of the pre- colonial system: 'The rule of the former emperors

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

and rajas was neither in accordance with the Hindu nor the Mohammadan religion. It was based upon nothing but tyranny and oppression; the law of might was that of right; the voice of the people was not listened to.' The yardstick obviously was not religious identity but liberal and democratic principles. This, however, does not imply that religious identity did not influence the social outlook of the people; in fact, it did very strongly. The reformers' emphasis on universalism was an attempt to contend with it. However, faced with the challenge of colonial culture and ideology, universalism, instead of providing the basis for the development of a secular ethos, retreated in to religious particularism.

The socio religious reform movement, as a whole, was against backward element of traditional culture in terms of both religious and social evils. The focus was on regeneration of traditional institutions including medicine, education, and philosophy and so on. There were differences in methods of those reform movements but all of them were concerned with the regeneration of society through social and educational reforms.

In terms of their limitations, it can be said that these movements were not able to reach vast masses of peasantry and urban poor and there were inadequate focus on composite culture and heritage of masses including music, art, architecture and literature, and science and technological achievement. Each of these reform movements was confined, by and large, to a region or other and also was confined to a particular caste and religion.

In a nutshell, it can be argued that in the evolution of modern India the reform movements have made very significant contribution. They stood for the democratization of the society, removal of superstitions and decadent customs, spread of enlightenment and development of a rational and modern outlook. This led to the national awakening in India.

### 3. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Brahmo Samaj

Ram Mohan Roy, the father of Indian Renaissance was versatile genius, who opposed the idolatry, denounced Sati, polygamy and abuses of the caste system, favoured remarriage of Hindu widows. He started the '**Atmiya Sabha**' in 1815 and carried a consistent struggle against the religious and social malpractices. In first philosophical work "Tuhfat-ul-Muwahiddin" he analysed major religions of the world in light of reason and social comfort

As a reformist ideologue, Roy believed in modern scientific approach and principles of human dignity and social equality. He put his faith in monotheism. He wrote **Gift to Monotheists** and translated the **Vedas** and the **five Upanishads** into Bengali to prove his conviction that ancient Hindu texts support monotheism. In **percepts of Jesus**(1820), he tried to separate the moral and philosophical message of the New Testament, which he praised, from its miracle stories. **SambadKaumudi** (founded in 1921) was a Bengali weekly newspaper published from Kolkata in the first half of the 19th century by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. SambadKaumudi regularly editorialised against Sati, denouncing it as barbaric and un-Hindu. It was the main vehicle of Ram Mohan Roy's campaign against Sati. In August 1828, Roy

The society founded by him was the **Brahmo Sabha** which was later renamed

l, unscientific object of the BramhoSamaj was the worship and adoration of the et

Immutable God. It opposed idol worship and stayed away from practice of priesthood and sacrifice. The worship was performed through prayers, meditation, and readings from the Upanishads. Great emphasis was laid on "promotion of charity, morality, benevolence, and strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds"

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

It should be clearly understood that Ram Mohan Roy never intended to establish a new religion. He only wanted to purge Hinduism of the evil practices that has crept into it. Roy remained a devout Hindu till the end of his life and always wore the sacred thread.

From the beginning the appeal of **BrahmoSamaj** had remained limited to the intellectuals and educationally enlightened Bengalis living in the towns. The orthodox Hindu led by **Raja Radhakant Deb** organised the '**Dharma Sabha**' with the object of countering the propaganda of **BrahmoSamaj**. The early death of Ram Mohan Roy in 1833 left the BrahmoSamaj without the guiding soul and a steady decline set in.

**Debendranath Tagore**, father of Rabindranath Tagore founded the TatvabodhiniSabha in 1839 to propagate Rammohun Roy's ideas. The TatvabodhiniSabha and its organ the *TatvabodhiniPatrika* promoted a systematic study of India's past in Bengali language and helped spread rational outlook. Tagore was a product of the best in traditional Indian learning and western thought, and gave a new life to BrahmoSamaj and a definite form and shape to the theist movement, when he joined the samaj in 1842. He worked on two fronts: Within Hinduism, the BrahmoSamaj was a reformist movement; outside, it resolutely opposed the Christian Missionaries for their criticism of Hinduism and their attempt at conversion. Under his leadership branches of the Samaj were established in various towns and the Brahmo message spread in the countryside of the Bengal.

The BrahmoSamaj experienced another phase of energy and vigor when **Keshub Chandra Sen** was made the acharya by Debendranath Tagore soon after the former joined the Samaj in 1858. Keshub was instrumental in popularizing the movement, and branches of the samaj were opened outside Bengal in the United Provinces, Punjab, Bombay, Madras and other towns. Unfortunately, Debendranath did not like some of Sen's ideas which he found too radical, such as cosmopolitanisation of the samaj's meetings by inclusion of teaching from all religions and his strong views against the caste system, even open support to inter caste marriages. Thus by virtue of his position Debendranath Tagore dismissed Kesub Chandra sen from the office of Acharya in 1865.

Keshubsen and his followers broke away from Brahmosamaj in 1866 and established what was called the '**BrahmoSamaj of India**'. Debendranath's more orthodox group came to be known as the '**AdiBrahmoSamaj**'. There was a second schism in the BrahmoSamaj on the issue of radical social reforms being preached by Keshab Chandra Sen. The schism, after the marriage of Keshub's 13 year old daughter to the minor prince of Cooch Behar with all the orthodox Hindu rituals caused another split in Keshub'sBrahmosamaj of India, resulting in formation of **SadharanBrahmoSamaj in 1878**, organized on more democratic lines.

The role of the BrahmoSamaj as the '**first intellectual movement which spread the ideas of rationalism and enlightenment in modern India**' cannot be over-emphasized. Its liberal approach to social and religious questions won the approbation of Europeans and Indians alike. Its educational and social reform activities instilled a new confidence which, in turn, contributed to the growth of national movement. A number of BrahmoSamajists were later prominent in the struggle of Independence.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

### Contribution of Brahmo Samaj

The overall contribution of Brahmo Samaj may be summed thus-

- It denounced polytheism and idol worship.
- It discarded faith in divine incarnations.
- It denied that any scripture could enjoy the status of ultimate authority transcending human reason and conscience.
- It took no definite stand on the doctrine of karma and transmigration of soul and left it to individual Brahmos to believe either way.
- It criticized the caste system.

### **4. Young Bengal Movement and Henry Vivian Derozio**

During the late 1820s and early 1830s, there emerged a radical, intellectual trend among the youth in Bengal, which came to be known as the 'Young Bengal Movement'. This trend was more modern than even Rammohun Roy's. A young Anglo-Indian, Henry Vivian Derozio, who taught at the Hindu College from 1826 to 1831, was the leader and inspirer of this progressive trend. Drawing inspiration from the great French Revolution, Derozio inspired his pupils to think freely and rationally, question all authority, love liberty, equality, and freedom, and oppose decadent customs and traditions. The Derozians also supported women's rights and education. Also, Derozio was perhaps the first nationalist poet of Modern India.

The Derozians, however, failed to have a long term impact. Derozio was removed from the Hindu College in 1831 because of his radicalism. The main reason for their limited success was the prevailing social condition at that time, which was not ripe for the adoption of radical ideas. Further, support from any other social group or class was absent. The Derozians lacked any real link with the masses; for instance, they failed to take up the peasants' cause. In fact their radicalism was bookish in character. But, despite their limitations, the Derozians carried forward Roy's tradition of public education on social, economic, and political questions.

### **5. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar**

The great scholar and reformer, Vidyasagar's ideas were a happy blend of Indian and western thought. He believed in high Moral values, was a deep humanist, and was generous to the poor. In 1850, he became the principal of Sanskrit College. He was determined to break the priestly monopoly of scriptural knowledge, and for this he opened the Sanskrit College to break the self-imposed isolation of Sanskritic learning. Also, as an academician, he evolved a new methodology to teach Sanskrit.

Vidyasagar started a movement in support of widow remarriage which resulted in legislation of widow remarriage. He was also a crusade against child marriage and polygamy. He did much for the cause of Women's education. As government inspector of schools, he helped organize thirty-five girls' schools many of which he ran at his own expense. As secretary of Bethune School (established in 1849), he was one of the pioneers of higher education for the women in India. The first lawful Hindu widow remarriage was celebrated in Calcutta in 1856 under the inspiration and supervision of Vidyasagar.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

## 6. Dayanand Saraswati and Arya Samaj

AryaSamaj ("Noble Society") is a Hindu reform movement founded by Swami Dayananda on 7 April 1875. He was a sannyasi who promoted the Vedas. Dayananda emphasized the ideals of brahmacharya (chastity). Swami Dayananda wandered as an ascetic for fifteen years (1845-60) in search of truth. The first AryaSamaj Unit was formally set up by him at Bombay in 1875 and later the headquarters of the samaj were established at Lahore.

Swami Dayanand gave the mantra, "Go back to Vedas" as he believed that priestly class and Puranas had perverted Hindu religion. He wrote a book SatyarthPrakash which contains his philosophical and religious ideas. He believed that every person had the right to have direct access to God. It started the **Shuddhi Movement** to bring back those Hindus who had converted to Islam and Christianity.

Today, temples set up by AryaSamaj are found all over India. The organization also has played an important role in spread of education through its network of schools known by name of Dayanand Anglo Vedic (DAV) schools in India.

In bringing about a national awakening in the country, the samaj played a dual role at once progressive and retrogressive. Thus in attacking religious superstition, propagating mass education, inculcating equality of man to man as well as between man and woman, it acted as a catalyst for progressive reform. Yet in proclaiming the Vedas to be infallible, it denied the individual the exercise of his own independent judgement and substituted one supremacy, that of the Brahmins, by another.

Unlike the BrahmoSamaj, the PrathanaSamaj and several other 19<sup>th</sup> century reformist movements, the AryaSamaj never cut itself aloof from the mainstream of Hindu thought. In its formative phase the samaj made a signal contribution to the nationalist upsurge, yet after the twenties it contributed, however, unwillingly, to the growth of communal political consciousness.

## 7. Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda

Ramakrishna Paramhansa was a mystic who sought religious salvation in the traditional ways of renunciation, meditation and devotion. He was saintly person who recognized the fundamental oneness of all religions and emphasized that there were many roads to God and salvation and the service of man is the service of God. The teaching of Ramakrishna Paramhansa formed the basis of the Ramakrishna Movement.

The two objectives of the movements were:-

- To bring into existence a band of monks dedicated to a life of renunciation and practical spirituality, from among whom teachers and workers would be sent out to spread the Universal message of Vedanta as illustrated in the life of Ramakrishna
- ~~itable~~ in conjunction with lay disciples to carry on preaching, philanthropic and charitable works, looking upon all men, women and children, irrespective of caste, creed or color, as veritable manifestations of the Divine.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

**Narendranath Datta (1862-1902)**, who later came to be known as Swami Vivekananda spread Ramakrishna's message and tried to reconcile it to the needs of contemporary Indian Society. He emerged as the preacher of neo-Hinduism. Certain spiritual experiences of Ramakrishna, the teaching of the Upanishads and the Gita and the examples of the Buddha and Jesus are the basis of Vivekananda's message to the World about human values. He subscribed to the Vedanta, which he considered a fully rational system with a superior approach. His mission was to bridge the gulf between paramartha (service) and vyavahara (behavior), and between spirituality and day-to-day life.

**Vivekananda** was a great humanist. He believed in the fundamental oneness of God and said, "For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam, is the only hope." Emphasizing social action, he declared that knowledge without action is useless. He lamented the isolationist tendencies and the touch –me-not attitude of Hindus in religious matters. He frowned at religion's tacit approval of the oppression of the poor by the rich.

Vivekananda founded Ramakrishna Mission in 1897, headquarters of which is at Belur near Kolkata. He used Ramakrishna Mission for humanitarian relief and social work. The mission stands for religious and social reform. Vivekananda advocated the doctrine of service- the service of all beings. The service of jiva( living objects) is the worship of Shiva. Life itself is religion. By service, the Divine exists within man. Vivekananda was for using technology and modern science in the service of mankind. Ever since its inception, the Mission has been running a number of schools, hospitals and dispensaries. It offers help to the afflicted in times of natural calamities like famines, floods and epidemics. The Mission has developed into a worldwide organization. It is a deeply religious body, but it is not a proselytizing body. It does not consider itself to be a sect of Hinduism. In fact, this is one of the strong reasons for the success of the Mission. Unlike the Arya Samaj, the Mission recognizes the utility and value of image worship in developing spiritual fervor and worship of the eternal omnipotent God, albeit it emphasizes the essential spirit and not the symbols or rituals. It believes that the philosophy of Vedanta will make a Christian a better Christian, and a Hindu a better Hindu.

At the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893, Swami Vivekananda made a great impression on people by his learned interpretations. The keynote of his opening address was the need for a healthy balance between spiritualism and materialism. Envisaging a new culture for the whole world, he called for a blend of the materialism of the west and the spiritualism of the East in to a new harmony to produce happiness for mankind.

## 8. Theosophical Society

The Theosophical society was founded in the United States by Madam H.P. Blavatsky and Colonel H.S. Olcott in 1875. The two theosophist leaders reached India in 1882 and set up their Headquarters at Bombay before moving to Adyar, in Madras. By 1884, the society had 100 branches in India, apart from several in Europe and America.

The movement was revived and revitalized by Annie Besant who came out to India in 1893, after the death of Madame Blavatsky. She succeeded Olcott as the president of society in 1907 and endeared herself to large numbers of People by preaching the wisdom of Krishna and Gita, thus turning theosophy 'into something specifically Hindu'. In fact, that would largely explain the uniqueness of this movement- it was inaugurated by a non-indian who was a great admirer of Hinduism.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

Theosophical Movement won great popularity for its work in the education of youth. Mrs Besant's established the Central Hindu School at Benaras later developed by Madan Mohan Malaviya into the Benaras Hindu University. The society opened schools for boys, for women, for the depressed classes and took part in the Boy scouts movements.

## 9. M G Ranade and PrarthanaSamaj

Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842 –1901) was a distinguished Indian scholar, social reformer and author. He was a founding member of the Indian National Congress and owned several designations as member of the Bombay legislative council, member of the finance committee at the centre, and the judge of Bombay High Court.

A well-known public figure, his personality as a calm and patient optimist would influence his attitude towards dealings with Britain as well as reform in India. During his life he helped establish the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the PrarthanaSamaj, and would edit a Bombay Anglo-Marathi daily paper, the Induprakash, founded on his ideology of social and religious reform.

A man of varied interest, an economist, politician, historian, and social reformer, Ranade did not let his official work interfere with his duty to the country and its people. He sketched out a policy that would make India progress economically. He published books on Indian economics and on Maratha history. He saw the need for heavy industry for economic progress and believed in Western education as a vital element to the foundation of an Indian nation. He felt that by understanding the mutual problems of India and Britain both reform and independence could be achieved to the benefit of all and insisted that an independent India could only be stable after such reforms were made.

With his friends Dr Atmaram Pandurang, Bal Mangesh Wagle and Vaman Abaji Modak, Ranade founded the PrarthanaSamaj, a Hindu movement inspired by the Brahmo Samaj, espousing principles of enlightened theism based on the ancient Vedas. PrarthanaSamaj was started with inspiration from Keshav Chandra Sen, a staunch Brahma Samajist, with the objective of carrying out religious reforms in Maharashtra.

The four point social agenda of PrarthanaSamaj were

- Disapproval of caste system
- Women education
- Widow remarriage
- Raising the age of marriage for both males and females

The **Main difference** between the PrarthanaSamaj and Brahma Samaj was that the members of the Prarthanasamaj remained Hindus and started progressive reforms within Hinduism as Hindus whereas the Brahma Samaj assailed Hinduism by forming an organization more or less outside the Hindu orbit. They were much attracted to the ideals of the modern west, and proceeded to imitate Western methods of education.

Ranade founded the **Poona Sarvajanik Sabha** and later was one of the originators of the Indian National Congress. He has been portrayed as an early adversary of the politics of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and a mentor to Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

**Ranade** was a founder of the **Social Conference movement**, which he supported till his death, directing his social reform efforts against child marriage, the shaving of widows' heads, the heavy cost of marriages and other social functions, and the caste restrictions on traveling abroad, and he strenuously advocated widow remarriage and female education. He was one of the founders of the Widow Marriage Association in 1861. Ranade attempted to work with the structure of weakened traditions, reforming, but not destroying the social atmosphere that was India's heritage.

## 10. Satyashodhak Samaj and Jyotiba Phule

Jyotiba Phule belonged to the Mali (gardener) community and organized a powerful movement against upper caste domination and brahminical supremacy. Phule founded the **Satyashodhak Samaj** (Truth Seekers' Society) in 1873, with the leadership of the samaj coming from the backward classes, Malis, Telis, Kunbis, Saris, and Dhangars.

The main aims of the movement were

- Social service
- Spread of education among women and lower caste people

Phule's works, *Sarvajanik Satyadharma* and *Ghulamgiri*, became source of inspiration for the common masses. Phule used the symbol of Rajah Bali as opposed to the brahmins' symbol of Rama. Phule aimed at the complete abolition of caste system and socio-economic inequalities. This movement gave a sense of identity to the depressed communities as a class against the Brahmins, who were seen as the exploiters.

## 11. Other Social Reformers

### Balshastri Jambhekar

He is known as Father of Marathi journalism for his efforts in starting journalism in Marathi language with the first newspaper in the language named 'Darpan' in the early days of British Rule in India. He was one of the pioneers in Bombay who attacked orthodoxy and tried to reform popular Hinduism.

Other prominent reformers in western India were **Gopalhari Deshmukh (Lokhitawadi)** and **Gopal Ganesh Agarkar** who attacked Hindu orthodoxy and criticized blind dependence on tradition and false glorification of past.

### Pandita Ramabai:

A renowned social reformer of Maharashtra fought for the rights of women and spoke against the practice of child marriage. She promoted girls education and started the Arya Mahila Samaj in 1881, in Pune, to improve the condition of women, especially child widows. In 1889, she established the Mukti Mission, in Pune, a refuge for young widows who had been deserted and abused by their families. She also started Sharda Sadan which provided housing, education, vocational training, and medical services to widows, orphans and the visually challenged. She also wrote many books showing the hard life of women, including child brides and child widows. The Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission is still active today.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

### Kandukuri Veerasingam:

He was born on 16 April 1848. He was a social reformer who first brought about a renaissance in Telugu people and Telugu literature. He was influenced by the ideals of BrahmoSamaj particularly those of KeshubChunder Sen. He got involved in the cause of social reforms. In 1876 he started a Telugu journal and wrote the first prose for women. He encouraged education for women, and started a school in Dowlaishwaram in 1874. He started a social organisation called Hitakarini (Benefactor). Unfortunately, he passed away on 27 May 1919.

### Table of Reform Movements (Among Hindus)

<b>Eastern India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BrahmoSamaj</li> <li>• TattvabodhiniSabha</li> <li>• BrahmoSamaj of India</li> <li>• Young Bengal Movement</li> <li>• PrarthanaSamaj</li> </ul>
<b>Western India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student's Library and Scientific Society</li> <li>• ParamhansaMandalis</li> <li>• SatyashodhakSamaj</li> <li>• Servants of India Society</li> </ul>
<b>Southern India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNDP Movement</li> <li>• VokkaligaSangha</li> <li>• Justice Movement</li> <li>• Self-respect Movement</li> <li>• Temple Entry Movement</li> </ul>
<b>Pan India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ramkrishna Movement</li> <li>• AryaSamaj</li> <li>• Theosophical Movement</li> </ul>

## 12. Muslim Reform Movements

The Muslim community, like their Hindu counterpart was equally caught by religious diktats and fatwa's issued by the Muslim Clerics class. Many Muslim leaders also believe that Islam in India had been degenerated, under the influence of Hinduism, hence need to be reformed. They took upon themselves the task of purifying and strengthening Islam resulting in Wahabi and Faraizi Movement. Apart from this, the official Government view on the revolt of 1857 held the Muslims to be the main conspirators. This view was further strengthened by the activities of the Wahabis. Hence the need for a cooperative attitude towards the British to improve the community's social condition was felt by many liberal Muslim. This resulted in Aligarh Movement.

### Wahabi/ Walliullah Movement

Shah Walliullah inspired this essentially revivalist response to western influences and the degeneration which had set in among Indian Muslims. He was the first Indian Muslims leader of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to organize Muslims around the two fold ideals of this movement.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

- The desirability of harmony among the four schools of Muslims jurisprudence which had divided the Indian Muslims
- The recognition of the role of individual conscience in religion where conflicting interpretation were derived from the Quran and the Hadis

The teachings of Walliullah were further popularized by Shah Abdul Aziz and Syed Ahmed Barelvi who also gave them a political perspective. India was considered to be dar-ul-Harb(land of kafirs) and it needed to be converted to dar-ul-Islam(land of Islam).

### **Titu Mir's Movement**

Titu Mir was a disciple of Sayyid Ahmed Raebareli, the founder of Wahabi Movement. Titu Mir organised the Muslim peasants of Bengal against the Hindu landlords and the British indigo planters. The British records say it was a militant movement which wasn't completely true.

### **Faraizi Movement**

The movement also called the Fara'idi Movement because of its emphasis on the Islamic pillars of faith, was founded by Haji ShariatAllah. Its scene of action was East Bengal, and it aimed at the eradication of social innovations current among the Muslims of the region.

Under the leadership of Haji's son, DuduMian, the movement became revolutionary from 1840 onwards. He gave the movement an organizational system from the village to the provincial level with a khalifa or authorized deputy at every level. The movement survive merely as a religious movement without political overtones after the death of DuduMian in 1862.

### **Ahmadiya Movement**

This movement was founded by MirzaGhulam Ahmed in 1889. It was based on liberal principles. It described itself as the standard bearer of Mohamedan Renaissance, and based itself, like BrahmoSamaj, on the principle of Universal religion of all humanity, opposing jihad. The movement spread western liberal education among the Indian Muslims. However, the Ahmadiya Movement, like Baha'sm which flourished in the west Asian Countries, suffered from mysticism.

### **Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and the Aligarh Movement**

Syed Ahmed Khan, born in 1817 in a respectable Muslim family, was a loyalist member of the judicial services of the Government. After retirement in 1876, he became a member of Imperial Legislative Council in 1878. His loyalty earned him a knighthood in 1888. He wanted to reconcile western scientific education with the teaching of the Quran which were to be interpreted in the light of contemporary rationalism and science even though he also held the Quran to be the ultimate authority.

In pursuit to stimulate a process of growth among Indian Muslims through better education and employment opportunities, a section of Muslims led by Syed Ahmed Khan was ready to allow the official patronage. He argued that Muslim should first concentrate on education and jobs and try to catch up with their Hindu Counterparts who had gained the advantage of an early

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

start. Syed's progressive social ideas were propagated through his magazine **Tahdhib-ul-Akhlaq** (Improvement of Manners and Morals)

The Aligarh Movement emerged as a liberal, modern trend among the Muslim intelligentsia based on Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh. It aimed at spreading:-

- Modern education among Indian Muslims without weakening their allegiance to Islam.
- Social reforms among Muslims relating to purdah, polygamy, widow remarriage, women's education, slavery, divorce, etc.

### **Deoband Movement**

Deoband Movement was established by Mohammad Qasim Nanautavi (1832-1880) and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1828-1916) as a revivalist movement with the twin objectives of propagating pure teachings of Quaran and Hadis among Muslims and keeping alive the spirit of jihad against the foreign rule.

In contrast to the Aligarh Movement which aimed at the welfare of Muslims through western education and support of the British government, the aim of Deoband Movement was moral and religious regeneration of the Muslim community.

### **13. The Sikh Reform Movement**

The formation of the two Singh Sabhas at Amritsar and Lahore in the 1870's was the beginning of religious reform movement among the Sikhs. The setting up of Khalsa College in Amritsar in 1892 helped promote Gurumukhi, Sikh learning and Punjabi literature. In 1920, the **Akali movement** which rose in Punjab started the cleansing of the management of the Gurudwaras or Sikh Shrines, from the corrupt Mahants (Priest).

### **14. Parsi Reform Movement**

#### **Seva Sadan**

A parsi social reformer, **Behramji M. Malabari**, founded the Sevasadan in 1885. The organization specialized in taking care of those women who were exploited and then discarded by society

#### **Rahnumai Mazdayasan Sabha or Religious reform Association**

It was founded by **Narouji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji, S.S. Bengalee** and others to begin religious reform among the Parsis. They played important role in the spread of education, especially among girls. They also campaigned against orthodox practices in Parsi religion.

### **15. Misc Movements**

#### **Sri Narayan Guru Dharm Paripalana (SNP) Movement**

This movement was an example of a regional movement born out of conflict between the depressed classes and upper non-Brahmin castes. It was started by **Sri Narayan Guru Swamy** among the Ezhavas of Kerala, who were a caste of toddy trappers and were considered to be

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

untouchables. The Ezhavas were the single largest caste group in Kerala. Sri Narayan Guru initiated a programme of action- the Sri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana (SNP) Yogam- 1902. The SNP Yogam took up several issues, such as

- The right of admission to public schools
- The recruitment to government services
- Access to roads and entry to temples
- Political Representation

The movement as a whole brought transformative structural changes such as upward social mobility, shift in traditional distribution of power and a federation of 'backward castes' into a large conglomeration.

### **Self-Respect Movement**

South India witnessed a different kind of reform movement where **EV Ramasamy Naicker (Periyar)** opposed Brahminical religion through his **Self-Respect Movement**. This movement was started by **E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker**, a Balija Naidu, in the mid-1920s. The movement aimed at nothing short of a rejection of brahminical religion and culture which Naicker felt was the prime instrument of exploitation of the lower castes.

### **Vaikom Satyagraha**

It was led by K P Kesava, was launched in Kerela demanding throwing open of Hindu Temples and roads to untouchables. Again, in 1931 when Civil disobedience Movement was suspended, **temple entry movement** was organized in Kerela.

### **Deva Samaj**

It was founded in 1887 at Lahore by **Shiv Narain Agnihotri**. This sect emphasized on the eternity of the soul, the supremacy of the guru, and the need for good action. It called for an ideal social behaviour such as not accepting bribes, avoiding alcohol, and non-vegetarian food. Its teachings were compiled in a book, Deva Shastra.

### **Dharma Sabha**

**Radhakant Deb** founded this sabha in 1830. An orthodox society, it stood for the preservation of status quo in socio-religious matters, opposing even the abolition of sati. However, it favoured the promotion of western education, even for girls.

### **Radhaswami Movement**

**Tulsi Ram**, a banker from Agra, also known as Shiv Dayal Saheb , founded this movement in 1861. The Radhaswamis believe in one Supreme Being, supremacy of the guru, a company of pious people (satsang), and a simple social life.

### **The servants of India Society**

**Gopal Krishna Gokhale**, the liberal leader of Indian National Congress, founded the Servents of India Society in 1905. The aim of the society was to train national missionaries for the service

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

prepare a cadre of selfless workers who were to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit.

## 16. Social Legislations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

In the early decades of the nineteenth century there began internal movements within Hindu Society against its own customs and practices. In the light of the changing consciousness among the people, the Government too changed its policies. It was a coincidence that the British initiated social legislation when the Indian reformers created an opinion in their favour.

The East India Company proceeded very hesitantly and cautiously against the abolition of the custom of sati till Ram Mohan Roy represented the view of rational Indians against the evil. On 4 December, 1829, by **Regulation XVII of the Government**, the custom of sati was declared illegal and punishable by the Criminal Courts.

A less significant social measure than the abolition of sati was the introduction of widow marriage. Opinion in its favour developed very slowly though no widespread interest was noticed. The abolition of sati indirectly brought into prominence the problem of the fate and future of the young widows who were saved from destruction but thrown into a pitiable state of existence. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar launched a campaign for widow marriage.

Such justifications had no meaning unless law came to the help of the widows for their marriage and subsequent legal status. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, therefore, presented a petition to the Government on behalf of about one thousand prominent persons. Accordingly, on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 1856, the Act XV was passed legalizing widow marriage and giving the status of legitimacy to the children of the married widows. After the Widow Marriage Act 1856, the Bengal reformers became desirous of abolishing polygamy by legislation. Vidyasagar was the mastermind behind this move as well. In June-July 1856, petitions signed by fifty thousand men and women were submitted to the Government to abolish polygamy. In spite of the Act, the cause of remarriage of Hindu widows did not make much headway. Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in Bengal and Vishnu Shastri in Western India put their heart and soul into propagating this reform. A Widow Remarriage Association was started in Bombay in 1866. Prof. D. R. Karve founded the Widow Home in Poona in 1896. Several legislations, starting from 1807, forbade slavery and slave trade and keeping slaves or trafficking in them became an offence under the Indian Penal Code, enacted in 1860. Another brutal custom of "**hook-swinging**"(a ritualistic torture practised among the Mandan Indians, in which a voluntary victim was suspended from hooks attached to the flesh of the back) was suppressed in 1865. Another Act passed in 1872, at the instance of the Brahmo Samaj, abolished polygamy and marriage of minor girls (below 14 years) and sanctioned inter-caste marriages and remarriages of widows.

Several important measures were also taken in the cause of female education. The initial efforts in this direction were made by the Christian missionaries. But the social reformers also greatly contributed towards the growth of female education. A mention ought to be made in this regard of the efforts of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar who opened nearly 35 girl's schools in 1857-58 in Bengal. Prof. Karve founded several educational institutions in Maharashtra, the most notable being India's first Women's University in Bombay in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The spread of female education led to several other social reforms of great consequences, such as, the abolition of purdah, which further led to the participation of women in the freedom struggle.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

But there came a sudden turn in the social policy of the British India. The Rising of 1857 swept over the country and prolonged discussions were held in England on the possible causes of Indian discontent. Rightly or wrongly, one of the causes was supposed to be British Interference with the socio-religious habits of the people. The new administration wrongly decided not to interfere in the social affairs of the Indian people.

Before the transfer of power, the Government of the East India Company had to their credit two more meritorious works, namely, the suppression of human sacrifice among the Khonds of the Orissa-Madras hill tracts, and the abolition of infanticide among the Rajputs and Bedis in the north and North West.

In the twentieth century, policies regarding social change mainly resulted from Indian opinion rather than from British interests. The progress of western education and the growth of political consciousness created a new atmosphere in the country affecting various socio-economic problems. The press played a useful role in giving appropriate prominence to these issues.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act XIX of 1929 (popularly known as Sarda Act) was a long awaited social measure in favour of which opinion had been growing for many years. It came into force on 1 April, 1930. 'No Marriage to which a child i. e., a male under 18 years of age or a female under 15 years of age, is a party may be solemnized.'

#### **List of Legislative Measures for Women**

- Bengal regulation (1829) banning sati
- Bengal Regulations (1795, 1804) declaring infanticide illegal
- Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act, 1856
- Age of Consent Act, 1891
- Sarda Act, 1929
- Special Marriage Act, 1954
- Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- Hindu Succession act, 1956
- Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act
- Maternity Benefits Act, 1961
- Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

## **17. Social Reform Movement - An Analysis**

#### **Character of the Social Reform Movement**

- Target of the Social reform Movement

The targets of the intellectual attack were the existing socio-cultural evils and malpractices such as obscurantism, superstitions and irrationality imbedded in the Society. The social reform movement did not, however, attack the social system as a whole; their attack was mainly only on the perversions and distortions that had crept into it. They did not advocate a sharp rupture in the existing social structure of the country.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

- **Reformation and not revolution**

They did not stand for structural transformation; changes were sought within the framework of the very structure. In a word, they were advocates of reform and not exponents of revolution. The upliftment of the position of women, late marriage, monogamy, widow-marriage, elimination of caste distinctions, monotheism, etc., did not signify any revolutionary change in the society. Even they themselves were not unaware of the reformist nature of their ideas and endeavours. The course they delineated for transformation was to be evolutionary, and not revolutionary.

- **Urban Phenomenon**

The intellectual movement in India was an urban phenomenon; it originated and greatly operated in the urban areas only. The main means used for the propagation of ideas add for the creation of favourable public opinion were the urban communication channels such as the press, lectures, and sabhas, propaganda network.

- **Spread of the Movement**

Despite being a localised affair, it was, however, not regional in its inspirations and aspirations. Although their activities remained confined to certain urban pockets, the intellectuals extended their vision to comprehend the problems of different regions and the country as a whole. Moreover, they made conscious attempts to undermine the notions of provinciality and regional distinctions.

#### **Contributions of the Social Reform Movement**

- In spite of the opposition from the orthodox sections of the society, these movements contributed towards liberating people from the exploitation of priests. The religious texts were translated into vernacular languages; there was more emphasis on interpretation of scriptures and simplification of rituals, thus making worship a more personal experience.
- The movement gave the upcoming middle class cultural roots and reduced the sense of humiliation that the British powers had created.
- Modern, rational, secular, and scientific outlook was promoted realizing the need of the modern era. The reformers aimed at modernisation rather than outright westernization. A favourable social climate was created to end India's cultural and intellectual isolation from the world.
- It was greatly due to the constant endeavours of the reformers that abolition of Sati and legalisation of widow-marriage were achieved during the nineteenth century. There was much intellectual fervour, prolonged agitation and acute discussion during the controversy over the age of Consent Bill. Such debates, even if they failed to bring about any concrete change immediately, raised the level of consciousness.
- The ideas and activities of the intellectuals were directly or indirectly related to the task of nation-building and national reconstruction. The social reform movement, as a matter of fact, was not an isolated phenomenon; it was loaded with wider national political and economic considerations. In a way, the social reform movement was a prelude to nationalism.

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

### Limitations of the Social Reform Movement

- **Narrow Social Base**

Reform in practice in any case affected a very small minority. Only the educated and urban middle class was involved in the social reform movement, while the needs of vast majority of peasants and the urban poor were ignored.

- **Movement did not reach rural India**

Given the situation of **widespread illiteracy in the rural areas** and because of the absence of modern and diversified communications network, they were doomed to have a very limited audience, mainly urban-based. Thus even in terms of its practical appeal the movement remained urban, besides its other limitations.

- **Casteism remained strong**

Caste distinctions remained strong and the religious and social practices did not die away. Caste and customs proved to be hard to eradicate from Indian consciousness. The tendency of the reformers to appeal to the greatness of the past and to rely on scriptural authority led to compartmentalising religions as also alienating high caste Hindus from lower caste Hindus.

- **Communal Consciousness**

Overemphasis on religious, philosophical aspects of culture while underemphasizing secular aspects led to the Hindus praising ancient Indian History and Muslims confining to the medieval history. This created a notion of two separate segments of people and increased communal consciousness.

### 18. Stand of Congress over social issues

Congress, which was founded in 1885, deliberately avoided social issues till 1917. In the annual session of 1887, DadabhaiNaoroji said that Congress was a political body meant to convey the political aspirations to British, and not to discuss social reforms. This was because it was so difficult at that time to create consensus on political issues, that to create consensus on social issues would have been nearly impossible.

**Indian National Social Conference** which was founded in 1887 by M.G. Ranade and RaghunathRao, met on the side-lines of the Congress annual cells, deliberated on social issues. It has also been called as the social cell of Congress. However, due to opposition of Tilak and other extremists in 1895, Social Conference has to disassociate itself completely from Congress.

Position changed in 1917: extremists and moderates had shed their differences and Congress and Muslim League were on a same platform by this time. There was an anticipation of British promise for eventual self-government. Hence, it was required to broad base the national movement. There were also certain calls from lower classes asking for representation according to numbers of 'Depressed classes'. A resolution was passed in 1917 urging upon the people to remove all disabilities imposed by custom upon the depressed classes. LokmanyaTilak also

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**

denounced untouchability and asked for active steps to be taken to abolish it. However, no concrete steps were taken in this direction.

Gandhi's leadership introduced a major change in the position towards untouchability. In 1923, the Congress decided to take active steps for the removal of untouchability. The basic strategy was to educate and mobilise opinion among caste Hindus over the issue.

**Previous Years Questions:**

1. What was the character of socio-religious reforms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and how did they contribute to the national awakening in India? 2007/30 marks
2. Characterize the main features of Indian Renaissance? 2006/15 marks
3. In what way did Ramakrishna infuse a new vigour and dynamism into Hinduism? 1999/10 marks
4. Assess the contributions of IshwarchandraVidyasagar to the making of modern India? 1999/10 marks
5. The name of Raja Ram Mohan Roy stands foremost in the field of religious and social reforms. Elucidate 1997/10 marks
6. 'Swami Vivekananda might well be called the father of Indian Nationalism.' Elucidate. 1997/10
7. Discuss the various aspects of social legislation introduced by the East India Company in the first half of the nineteenth century. 1995/ 15 marks
8. Discuss the role of Theosophical Society in the history of religious movement in India. 1991/10 marks
9. Give a critical account of the Ramakrishna Mission with special reference to the role played by Swami Vivekananda. 1990/10 marks
10. Explain the significance of the following in the socio- religious context (50 words each) 1986/10 marks
  - a) Faraizi Movement
  - b) Suddhi Movement
  - c) Self Respect Movement
  - d) Rahnumai Mazda Yasnam
  - e) The Wahabi Movement

# **PS AND VISIONS – MODERN HISTORY: 2**