
UNIT 3 REFORM MOVEMENT

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

It is an exciting job to explore the many faceted dimensions of the Indian religious and cultural history. The present study has the following objectives:

- To discover India's credentials, problem and position so as to make a new assessment from the Religio-cultural perspective.
- To enable the student to reinterpret the Indian socio-religious scenario
- To amend the mistakes of the past
- To envisage a modern India with a new ethos to cope up with the "signs of time" (Zeit-Geist)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Several contemporary groups, collectively termed Hindu reform movements, strive to introduce regeneration and reform in Hinduism. Although these movements vary individually in their specific philosophies they generally stress the spiritual, secular, logical and scientific aspects of the Vedic traditions, creating a form that is egalitarian that does not discriminate *Jâti* (caste or sub caste), gender, or race. Thus, most modern Hindu reform movements advocate a return to the ancient, egalitarian forms of Hinduism, and view the aspects of modern Hinduism, such as social discrimination and the caste system, as being corrupt results from colonialism and foreign influence. Modern Hindu reform movements emerged in the 19th century India with the impact of the West on the East and the interaction between Christianity and Hinduism, and as a challenge and response to this impact and the inter-religious encounter.

Scope of the Study

"Reform movements" in India grew out of the exigencies of modern social challenges resulting out of the East-West encounter and compels us to look at

religion critically and scientifically. Among the reformers and reforms there rests a confusion leaving not a conclusion. That prompts to further research, reflection and studies. It has real scope as long as it is oriented to the incessant search for the truth in consonance with the India's perennial quest for *satya* since time immemorial.

The present study explores the three major religious reform movements that have influenced the contemporary Indian people whatever caste, creed or religion they adhere to. A gleaning on the gurus and god-men who influence today's India on the religious, social and political scenario offers wide scope for research and reflection and is highly relevant amidst secularism.

3.2 MODERN REFORM MOVEMENTS : THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

India and the West: Cultural Interaction

As far as historically traceable, the Nordic Aryans initiated the first major foreign invasion in India. Presumably they must have come in through the northwest frontier in about 1500 B.C. According to the archaeological discoveries, in Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, India had at that time already developed a high standard of living with urban style of life and amenities. The religious features of the Indus civilization are considered to be "the ancestor of modern Hinduism".

Already in 326 B.C., Alexander the Great entered India and subjugated Punjab and the kingdoms of Indus valley. From 622 A.D. the Arabs controlled the trade. They were masters of the sea on the west coast, and had control over the maritime route from the Persian Gulf to India and also to China. "Up to the end of the fifteenth century A.D. the Indian contact with the West was confined only to coasting trade on the western side of India". Today modern India represents all the major races of the world – Negrito, Austroloid, Mongoloid, Caucasoid, the dominant ones being Dravidian and Aryan. All these people and races who entered India never conquered it wholly. They either merged with the dominant culture or disappeared, thereby making India a synthetic admixture of races and cultures.

Impact of the West

In 1498, Vasco da Gama sailed to India in his Cape de Bonne Esperance and landed at Calicut in south India. With his arrival, India's contact with the West took new dimensions. Many travelers and Christian missionaries followed him, whose narratives about India provide valuable documents which provide us with details about the 15th century India. In 1602 the Dutch founded the Dutch East Indian Company and established bases on the East coast of India and undertook 16 sails between 1595 to 1601 to the East.

As a result of the intermingling with various races, people and cultures, India represents today a heterogeneous social complex. Though the British came primarily to trade with India and make it a colonial empire, their involvement contributed to improve the moral and intellectual condition of Indians. Above all their system of education in India paved the way for an intensive encounter of India with the West. William Bentick, the Governor General of India (1828-1835) introduced into schools and colleges the western model of education and offered scope for the intellectual and social uplift of India. The Western system of education and the rationalistic thought of the 19th century Europe provoked

Indian intellectuals to be critical of their beliefs, traditions and social situations. Thus the renaissance in the 19th century India sprang from two sources. Firstly, western education and philosophy which were now introduced in the Indian colleges with its rationalistic and democratic ideals gave the Indians a broader and more liberal outlook. Secondly the discovery of the indigenous treasure of wisdom and Indian spirituality gave the Indian youth an impetus to make serious studies of their own scriptures. They studied Sanskrit literature and found out the great discrepancy between the spirit and practice of the time. These gave the Indians a new impulse to assert themselves and to bring religion and society back to their pristine purity.

Oriental Renaissance

The works of the Orientalists contributed to the renaissance of Hinduism in the 19th century. The most notable among them were Anquetil du Peron, Jones William, Charles Wilkins and Henry Colebrooke. They studied Sanskrit scriptures and began to translate them into English. Here lies the beginning of the so-called 'Oriental Renaissance'. Sir William Jones, renowned for his linguistic talents (he knew about 28 languages) attempted a serious exploration of Indian scriptures and translated Hitopadesha, a collection of fables and stories of an ideal society. He translated Kalidas's drama "Sakuntala" which became so popular in England that many compared it with Shakespeare's works.

Another remarkable achievement of Jones was laying the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. It fostered studies on Indian culture and religion. Jones was followed by Colebrooke who later became known as the "greatest of the Orientalists". He discovered the wealth of the Asiatic civilization and promoted the study of its culture. He discovered the wide gap between the caste system in practice and its theories found in the scriptures. He was the first to analyze the contents of the Vedas and to present them systematically. Above all he discovered the fact that the Vedas teach the unity of God. In 1840, he edited the "Essays". H.H. Wilson wrote his "Religious Sects" in 1828 and on Vishnu Purana in 1840. Max Müller spent as long as thirty years on translating the Vedic hymns, especially the Rigveda. "The History of Sanskrit literature" and "The Sacred Books of the East" are the valuable contributions which he made to the Oriental Studies.

Christianity and Hinduism: Religious Interaction

The early Christianity in India found itself integrated in the society and developed as "indigenous religion". However there was no significant encounter in depth between Hinduism and Christianity, but they lived in peaceful co-existence. On May 17th 1964, a new Secretariat was created with the purpose to do "all that would dissipate prejudice and ignorance among Christians and would establish fruitful contact with the members of all other religions". A decree was promulgated with the exhortation to live "prudently and lovingly through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions and in witness of Christian faith and life acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their societies and cultures".

Inter-religious Impact

Missionary Encounter in the 19th century

The Church in India acquired new dimensions with the arrival of the Missionaries from the West. It was Vasco da Gama who sailed to India and opened the way for

European Missionaries. Roberto de Nobili (1577-1656) initiated a new approach to evangelization of India and adapted the so-called “accommodation principle”. His theology took the dimension of the concept of Christ as guru. His apologetic method was aimed at refuting, but never condemning the values of Hinduism.

Christian missionary activities also contributed to the intellectual awakening of India in the 19th century. William Carey, who arrived on 11th November 1793 in Calcutta initiated a meritorious work. Along with Ward and Joshua Marshmann known as the “Serampore Trio” he opened a centre at Serampore, in Bengal, for Christian and Western cultural exchange. This provided a further opportunity for an East-West encounter. Aware of the valuable services of the Missionaries, the Government made the best of the Missions “as a civilizing ally” which contributed positively for the Indian renaissance.

A ‘western impact’ and an ‘Indian response’ could be traced in the renascent India. Hindu religion and society introduced a number of reforms and adaptations. Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission were the notable religious reform movements of the Modern India.

3.3 BRAHMA SAMAJ: THE UNIVERSALISTIC REFORM MOVEMENT

Rammohun Roy, the Father of Modern India

Raja Rammohun Roy (1774 - 1833) was born in an orthodox Brahmin family in Bengal. He married in his early childhood and that too thrice before he reached the age of nine. His polygamous life must have made him later a strong opponent of child marriage and polygamy. His studies in Patna, the then centre of Islamic scholarship led him to the democratic ideals of Islam and the logical element of Arabic thought especially the rationalistic schools of Mutazilites. His studies on Islam made him strongly denounce idolatry and superstitions. In 1804 he published his “Tuhfatul Muwahhiddin” (a gift to the Monotheists) which is a treatise on the theology of nature. He observed that the belief in the One God is not only natural but also common to people of all creeds.

Brahma Samaj and its Impact on India’s Awakening

The Brahma Samaj (One-God society) founded by Raja Rammohun Roy in 1828 was to be a place of common worship. According to the Trust Deed “no minister or reciter should retain any mark of caste or sectarian distinction” in the Samaj, it should rather foster unity and brotherliness. It was the first modern religious reform movement which interpreted the Hindu scriptures and traditions to establish the universality of Hinduism and Brahma Samaj as the convergence of religions.

Social and Religious Reforms

Rammohun discovered that social reforms in Hinduism are possible only through reforming religion. He said: “..it is, I think necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort”. He saw in idolatry the root of many social evils which destroyed the “texture of the society” and led to heinous practices like self-immolation, killing of friends and relatives under the pretext of performing religious rites.

Rammohun condemned also polytheism. In order to vindicate that the true spirit of Hinduism is monotheism, he published the “Translation of the Abridgement of the Vedanta, “A Defense of Hindu Theism” and “A Second Defense of the Monotheistic System of the Vedas”. He was convinced that the worship of God must be in spirit consistent with the true dictates of Hindu Sastras and according to the purest principles of morality.

One of Remount’s great contributions in the field of social reforms was the abolition of *sati*- the custom of burning of widows alive. He argued that no *sastras* have ever sanctioned *sati*. He criticized it as “deliberate female murder” and a perversion of Hinduism. Consequently he collected funds for a society for the relief of the destitute widows to liberate them. Rammohun defended also the right of women and condemned the polygamy of the Brahmins. He knew that a proper education is essential to bring self-awareness in the people and restore justice and equality. With the support of David hare, he opened a Hindu college in Calcutta in 1817. He fostered English education as profitable for intellectual re-awakening of the people and stressed the importance of a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy with other useful sciences.

Further developments of the Movement

With the foundation of Brahma Samaj, for the first time in India a place for public cult was established to spread the faith in One God which caused a breech with the traditional Hinduism, but reformed it and gave it a new and universal trait.

Brahma Samaj was an Indian theistic Church open to all irrespective of caste, creed and culture. As “One - God Society” it propagated the belief in One God, denounced all forms of idolatry and polytheism. It introduced religious and social reforms that promoted unity and tolerance among various religious denominations.

After the death Rammohun Roy Debendranath Tagore and then Keshub Chunder Sen took up the leadership of the Samaj. Keshub Chunder was an inspiring lecturer, writer and leader who discovered and promoted the harmony of religions. Today the Samaj is known as ‘Sadharan Brahama Samaj’.

Check Your Progress I

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
- b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.
- 1) What was the impact of the West on the Modern reform movement in India?
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2) Mention the contributions made by Raja Rammohun Roy in the social sphere

3.4 ARYA SAMAJ: THE NATIONALISTIC REFORM MOVEMENT

Arya Samaj, “Society of Arians”, literally “society of the Noble”, was a typical Hindu reform movement founded by Dayanada Saraswati in 1875. Dayananda Saraswati (1825-1888) was one of the most radical religious reformers of modern India who initiated a number of reform movements with the slogan “Back to the Vedas”. His original name was Moola Sankar Tiwari, born in 1824 in Gujarath. Born and brought up in an orthodox Brahmin family he was disgusted with the idolatry, caste and child marriage and abandoned his home in 1845. In 1860 found a guru Swami Virjanand Saraswati who was very strict and well versed in the Vedas. Moola Sankar underwent rigorous training under him, who gave him the name Dayanand. At the end of the training as Dayananda wanted to give him the *gurudakshina*, (tuition fee, a gift)Virajananda refused it and extracted a promise from him that he would devote his whole life for the revival of Vedic Hinduism.

Dayananda’s “Back to the Vedas”

Dayananda was a sannyasi who believed in the infallibility of the Vedas and cherished a very peculiar interpretation of the Vedas. He not only upheld the absolutism of the Vedas but also propound the philosophy of dynamic realism. The Vedas contain according to him the seeds of all sciences and knowledge. His book “Satyārtha Prakash” (Light of Truth) contains his major ideas, interpretation of the Vedas and other religions.

His Vedic exposition mostly derived from the Rig-Veda reflects the vision and mission of Dayananda’s religious and social reform programme. He was averse to *Gurukulas* and the traditional idol worship (*murthipuja*) and asked the students to do *sandhya* (a meditative prayer chanting mantras from the vedas). They had also to participate in the *agnihotra* (fire sacrifice) practice twice a day. He allowed also the non Brahmins to study the Sanskrit texts. The authority of the Vedas remained supreme which should pave way for the social regeneration of Hindu society.

Dayananda undertook a tour across the country, condemned the caste system, idolatry, and child marriages. His theology welcomed the advances of sciences and technology. To him, the Vedas as the source book contained the seeds of science and technology. He initiated a number of reform programmes starting with a Vedic school in contradistinction to other public schools at that time in order to propagate and impart the Vedic values and religion to youth. He emphasized the theory of karma and *samsara* and extolled the ideals of *brahmacharya* and *sanyasa*.

Unlike the universalistic outlook of Raja Rammohun Roy he was critical of other religions especially Islam and Christianity as his major work Satyarth Prakash indicates. The whole world must accept Vedism! The Hinduttwa movement, inspired by him, accepts as Dharma whatever is in full conformity with the Vedic infallibility and his ideology. Some of his major works are *Bhratnivarana*, *Sanskarvidhi*, *Ratnamala*, *Vedabhasya*. The Paropakarini Sabha located in the Indian city of Ajmer was founded by the Swami himself to publish his works and Vedic texts.

Founding of Arya Samaj

Together with the slogan “Back to the Vedas” he advocated the doctrine of Karma and reincarnation, and emphasized the ideals of *brahmacharya* (chastity) and *sanyasa* (renunciation). His voluminous work Satyarth Prakash laid the basic rules in the establishment and later growth of the organization of the Arya Samaj in 1875. It was a revolutionary social movement showing the falsehood of other religions and the purity and scientific background of the Vedas. Arya Samaj condemned idol-worship, animal sacrifices, pilgrimages, caste system, child marriage etc. and claimed to be a universalistic church.

The five principles of daily practice are:

- *Brahmayajna* (studies of Veda and meditation)
- *Devayajna* (fire sacrifice in which ghee and other incense are burned)
- Social Service (offering food to the wandering monks and the needy)
- *Gayatri mantra* recitation, purificatory rites before meditation
- Sacrifice according to the Vedic rituals

Arya Samaj set up schools and missionary organizations, in and outside India. The Samaj began to spread fast, and has today branches all over the world.

Faith and Principles of the Arya Samaj

The doctrines of the Samaj are summed up in Ten Principles:

- God is the primary cause of all true science and of all that can be known through it.
- ***God is Existent, Intelligent and Blissful. He is Formless, Almighty, Just, Merciful, Unborn, Infinite, Unchallengeable, Beginningless, Incomparable, the Support and Lord of all, Omniscient, Imperishable, Immortal, Fearless, Eternal, Holy and the Maker of the universe. To Him alone worship is due.***
- The Vedas are scriptures of true knowledge. It is the duty of all Aryas to read them, hear them being read and recite them to others.
- ***All persons should be ready to accept the truth and give up untruth.***
- All action should be performed in conformity with Dharma, that is, after due consideration of the right and wrong.
- ***The primary aim of the Arya Samaj is to do good for all, that is, promote physical, spiritual and social well-being.***
- ***All people should be treated with love, fairness and due regard for their merit.***

- *One should aim at dispelling ignorance and promoting knowledge.*
- *One should not only be content with one's own welfare, but should look for it in the welfare for others also.*
- *One should regard oneself under restriction to follow altruistic rulings of society, while all should be free in following the rules of individual welfare.*

Dayananda denounced the Puranas, even the Brahmans and Upanishads as being of minor importance. His aim was to establish a Hindu missionary movement to bring all the Hindus back to the one fold under the banner of Veda. However he upheld the theories of *kama* and *samsara*, popularized the *swaraj* (autonomy) for Bharat. Though it was successful among the orthodox Hindus, it lacked the tolerance towards alien religions and cultures and a universal vision and is criticized as a militant movement.

3.5 HINDU UNIVERSALISM OF 19TH CENTURY

When Raja Rammohun Roy initiated a movement based on the basic creed of humankind, faith in one God and gave it a universalistic trait taking ideas from the world religions. Arya Samaj propounded a universalistic religion based on the Veda alone. Ramakrishna Missions' motto was all inclusiveness, a syncretistic approach based on the teachings of Ramakrishna and Neo-Vedanta, interpreted and propounded by Swami Vivekananda.

Râmakrishna Paramahansa

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886), the modern sage of India, hailed as the incarnation of Râma and Krishna, possessed great wisdom and knowledge. The most important source about his life and teachings, the Gospel of Sri Râmakrishna, is written by his disciples. His cardinal religious tenet was *anubhava* (experience) and not *anumâna* (speculation), the hallmark of any religious person.

Râmakrishna considered God as personal and impersonal and sought to experience him existentially. He advocated the theory that the life of a householder doing good works and the life of a *sannyasi* by renunciation are equally good. He taught the harmony of religions and considered the many religions as the branches of the same tree. He advocated that social activities have value only if they help to the spiritual awakening of the self. He used to spend hours and sometimes whole night in prayer and meditation. Crying for God-experience he used to spend hours and days in front of the statue of Kali whom he called the divine mother; thus he highlighted the once ancient Indian credo of the feminine aspect of God. His experience of Kâli, Sita, and the variety of experience of God according to the Veda, Vçdânta, Purânas and Tantras and the world religions convinced him of the unity and harmony of religions. His teaching can be summarised as realization of God as the core of religion and the ultimate goal of human existence. People with religious experience live in harmony, the absence of which generates fight, tension and dissension. Ramakrishna synthesized the ways of *jñâna*, *bhakti* and *karma* as conducive to the same God-realization.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902): Founder of Ramakrishna Mission
Movement

See the Unit on Swami Vivekananda and Aurobindo

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.
- 1) Briefly describe the Dayananda’s call “Back to the Vedas”

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3.6 GURU MOVEMENTS : THE NEW
SYNCRETISM

The basic riddle of human existence in Hinduism is not a moral but a metaphysical one. Why do I exist? Why do I suffer? According to Hinduism, it is not because I have broken a moral law, but am ignorant of my own true nature. My original consciousness is pure, the awareness of which leads me to moksha, salvation.

Throughout the history of Hinduism, emerged gurus and god-men who interpreted human existence in a monistic or dualistic sense. In the former sense the truth-realization is not an intellectual act, but transcends it. Sankara would endorse this view. The Gurus and several god-men and women of today have a variety of interpretation of human existence and adopt a syncretistic way to tackle the problems of every day life.

Sathya Sai Baba (1926)

Satya Sai Baba is an Indian guru and religious leader well known as a god- man and miracle worker. In October 1940, at the age of 14, he left the family to bring “regeneration” to humanity. The five values advocated by him are : *sathya* (truth), *dharma* (right conduct), *ahimsa* (non-violence), *prema* (love) and *shantih* (peace).

There are today an estimated 1,200 Sathya Sai Baba Samitis (centers) in 114 countries world-wide. With around 6 million adherents he is considered to be an *avatar* and the reincarnation of the Sai Baba of Shirdi.

Social Activities

Sai Baba has established a model education system, which includes schools, colleges and an accredited university with three campuses, offering undergraduate, Masters, and Ph.D. degrees. In addition to emphasizing the pursuit of academic excellence, Sathya Sai Baba’s system of “integral education” is designed to foster self-discipline and pro-social conduct. Sathya Sai Baba says that “the end of education is character”. Medical services in well equipped hospitals is an another

aspect of his social service. According to his motto all people should have access to the basic requirements for the maintenance of human life.

Sai Baba's Guiding Principles

*If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.
If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.
If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.
When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.*

Critics like Sanal Edamaruku, the leader of the Indian Rationalist Association, said that the Indian media is scared of Sai Baba's political influence. Basava Premanand, concluded after his research on the life of the gurus of past in his research that Sai Baba is deceptive and sexually abusive. Basava Premanand was attacked several times and was under threat of murder. Another person is Conny Larsson, devotee of 21 years openly exclaimed that he has been sexually abused by Sai Baba. He later broke away from the movement, was under constant threat.

Bhagavan Rajneesh and the Neo-Sannyasa Movement

Rajneesh Chandra Mohan Jain (1931-1990) was professor of philosophy and founder of the Neo-Sannyas-movement in Pune. He was called first Acharya Rajneesh then Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (till 1988) and from 1989 till his death Osho. He claimed to be the guru, the spiritual teacher of modern India. Rajneesh raised his voice against socialism, Mahatma Gandhi, and institutionalized religions. In 1974, he established an ashram that attracted many foreigners. The ashram offered yoga classes and allied therapies derived from the Human Potential Movement and offered a permissive atmosphere. He was known as the "sex guru" in India and "Rolls-Royce guru" in the United States.

Neo-Sannyasa

Rajneesh wanted to create a "new man" combining the spirituality of Buddha and the zest for life exemplified by Zorba, the Greek, with a full integration of matter and spirit. In contrast to the Indian traditional value of material renunciation (sannyasa) he called himself "the rich man's guru". His approach was syncretistic and highlighted meditation, awareness, love, creativity and humor which found unquestioned acceptance among his followers.

Osho's "Ten Commandments"

- Never obey anyone's command unless it is coming from within you also.
- There is no God other than life itself.
- Truth is within you, do not search for it elsewhere.
- Love is prayer.
- To become a nothingness is the door to truth. Nothingness itself is the means, the goal and attainment.
- Life is now and here.
- Live wakefully.
- Do not swim – float.
- Die each moment so that you can be new each moment.
- Do not search. That which is, is. Stop and see.

Osho was a “freethinking agnostic” and enjoys wide recognition as thinker, writer and orator. Khushwant Singh, the former editor of the Hindustan Times, described him as “the most original thinker that India has produced: the most erudite, the most clearheaded and the most innovative”. Critics diverge in their appraisal as some hail him as the 20th century’s greatest spiritual teacher as well as the one of the most maligned figures in history. His ideas on sex, family and human relationships roused opposition and severe critics in India and abroad.

3.7 ISKCON MOVEMENT

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), also known as ,the Hare Krishna‘ movement, was founded in 1966 in New York by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Its core philosophy is based on traditional Hindu scriptures such as the *Úrîmad Bhâgavatam* and the *Bhagavad-gîtâ*, and upholds the Vaishnava tradition. ISKCON highlights the practice of *bhakti* yoga (devotion to God) pleasing the Supreme Lord, Krishna.

ISKCON’s highest mantra is:

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare
Hare Rama, Hare Rama
Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

The Seven goals of ISKCON as presented by Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada are-

- To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all people in the techniques of spiritual life in order to check the imbalance of values in life and to achieve real unity and peace in the world
- To propagate a consciousness of Krishna, as it is revealed in the Bhagavad-gita and the Srimad-Bhagavatam
- To bring the members of the Society together with each other and nearer to Krishna, the prime entity, thus to develop the idea within the members, and humanity at large, that each soul is part and parcel of the quality of Godhead (Krishna).
- To teach and encourage the sankirtana movement, congregational chanting of the holy names of God as revealed in the teachings of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.
- To erect for the members, and for society at large, a holy place of transcendental pastimes, dedicated to the personality of Krishna
- To bring the members closer together for the purpose of teaching a simpler and more natural way of life
- With a view towards achieving the aforementioned purposes, to publish and distribute periodicals, magazines, books and other writings

The Four regulative principles for spiritual growth propounded by Bhakti Vedanta Prabhupada are:

No eating of meat, fish or eggs; No illicit sex; No gambling; No intoxication (including alcohol, caffeine, tobacco and other recreational drugs).

Reform Movement

The four legs of Dharma are: *Daya* (Mercy), *Tapas* (Self-Control or Austerity), *Satyam* (Truthfulness), *Āuṣam* (Cleanliness of body and mind).

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What social outlook did Sai Baba uphold?

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2) Name the ten commandments of Osho.

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3.8 LET US SUM UP

Most Hindus still adhere to traditional teachings and practices passed down from their ancestors. As we have seen above, what has been termed “modern Hinduism” has grown largely out of a number of reform movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These movements had a relatively small number of followers and by no means replaced or superseded the major traditional forms of Hinduism. Some specific reform movements, like the Ramakrishna Mission, still continue to be influential. These movements largely emerged from the growing contact that Hindu thinkers had with Western thought, culture and religion.

3.9 KEY WORDS

- Avatar** : Avatar or Avatara (Sanskrit for “descent”) refers to the appearance in physical form, having descended from heaven to earth, of a deity. It is mostly translated into English as “incarnation,” though more accurately as “appearance” or “manifestation.”
- Decree** : A decree is a rule or law issued by a head of state (such as the president of a republic).

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3.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) In 1498, Vasco da Gama sailed to India in his Cape de Bonne Esperance and landed at Calicut in south India. With is arrival, India’s contact with the West took new dimensions. Many travelers and Christian missionaries followed him, whose narratives about India provide valuable documents which provide us with details about the 15th century India. In 1602 the Dutch founded the Dutch East Indian Company and established bases on the East coast of India and undertook 16 sails between 1595 to 1601 to the East.

As a result of the intermingling with various races, people and cultures, India represents today a heterogeneous social complex. Though the British came primarily to trade with India and make it a colonial empire, their

involvement contributed to improve the moral and intellectual condition of Indians. Above all their system of education in India paved the way for an intensive encounter of India with the West. William Bentick, the Governor General of India (1828-1835) introduced into schools and colleges the western model of education and offered scope for the intellectual and social uplift of India. The Western system of education and the rationalistic thought of the 19th century Europe provoked Indian intellectuals to be critical of their beliefs, traditions and social situations. Thus the renaissance in the 19th century India sprang from two sources. Firstly, western education and philosophy which were now introduced in the Indian colleges with its rationalistic and democratic ideals gave the Indians a broader and more liberal outlook. Secondly the discovery of the indigenous treasure of wisdom and Indian spirituality gave the Indian youth an impetus to make serious studies of their own scriptures. They studied Sanskrit literature and found out the great discrepancy between the spirit and practice of the time. These gave the Indians a new impulse to assert themselves and to bring religion and society back to their pristine purity.

- 2) Rammohun discovered that social reforms in Hinduism are possible only through reforming religion. He said: “..it is, I think necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort”. He saw in idolatry the root of many social evils which destroyed the “texture of the society” and led to heinous practices like self-immolation, killing of friends and relatives under the pretext of performing religious rites. Rammohun condemned also polytheism. In order to vindicate that the true spirit of Hinduism is monotheism, he published the “Translation of the Abridgement of the Vedanta, “A Defense of Hindu Theism” and “A Second Defense of the Monotheistic System of the Vedas”. He was convinced that the worship of God must be in spirit consistent with the true dictates of Hindu Sastras and according to the purest principles of morality.

One of Ram Mohan’s great contributions in the field of social reforms was the abolition of *sati*- the custom of burning of widows alive. He argued that no *sastras* have ever sanctioned *sati*. He criticized it as “deliberate female murder” and a perversion of Hinduism. Consequently he collected funds for a society for the relief of the destitute widows to liberate them. Rammohun defended also the right of women and condemned the polygamy of the Brahmins. He knew that a proper education is essential to bring self-awareness in the people and restore justice and equality. With the support of David hare, he opened a Hindu college in Calcutta in 1817. He fostered English education as profitable for intellectual re-awakening of the people and stressed the importance of a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy with other useful sciences.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Dayananda was a sannyasi who believed in the infallibility of the Vedas and cherished a very peculiar interpretation of the Vedas. He not only upheld the absolutism of the Vedas but also propound the philosophy of dynamic realism. The Vedas contain according to him the seeds of all sciences and knowledge. His book “Satyarthha Prakash” (Light of Truth) contains his major ideas, interpretation of the Veads and other religions.

His vedic exposition mostly derived from the Rig-Veda reflects the vision and mission of Dayananda's religious and social reform programme. He was averse to *Gurukulas* and the traditional idol worship (*murthipuja*) and asked the students to do *sandhya* (a meditative prayer chanting mantras from the vedas). They had also to participate in the *agnihotra* (fire sacrifice) practice twice a day. He allowed also the non Brahmins to study the Sanskrit texts. The authority of the Vedas remained supreme which should pave way for the social regeneration of Hindu society.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Sai Baba has established a model education system, which includes schools, colleges and an accredited university with three campuses, offering undergraduate, Masters, and Ph.D. degrees. In addition to emphasizing the pursuit of academic excellence, Sathya Sai Baba's system of "integral education" is designed to foster self-discipline and pro-social conduct.. Sathya Sai Baba says that "the end of education is character". Medical services in well equipped hospitals is an another aspect of his social service. According to his motto all people should have access to the basic requirements for the maintenance of human life.
- 2) Osho's "Ten Commandments":
 - Never obey anyone's command unless it is coming from within you also.
 - There is no God other than life itself.
 - Truth is within you, do not search for it elsewhere.
 - Love is prayer.
 - To become a nothingness is the door to truth. Nothingness itself is the means, the goal and attainment.
 - Life is now and here.
 - Live wakefully.
 - Do not swim – float.
 - Die each moment so that you can be new each moment.
 - Do not search. That which is, is. Stop and see.