

## MODULE - 1

India and the World  
through the Ages



Notes



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6

# RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL AWKENING IN COLONIAL INDIA

Read a conversation between Mimi, a thirteen year old girl, and her grandmother.

Mimi: “Which college did you go to read Grandma?”

Grandmother (smiling): “I never went to college, my dear. I only studied up to class 6 and was married when I was of your age.”

Mimi (shocked): “Married at thirteen! That is illegal, Grandma! Did you not protest?”

Grandmother: “Things were different at that time besides many of my friends got married at the same age.”

This made Mimi curious about the practices prevalent in the society when her grandmother was a child. She also wondered how things changed over a period of time. Who were the people responsible for bringing this change? Mimi wanted to know all this and more. In this lesson you will read how reforms were introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century in India. You will also read about the impact of these reforms on the society.



## OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- identify the social practices that existed in our society during the 19<sup>th</sup> century;
- discuss the importance of socio-religious reform movements during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in raising awareness about prevalent social practices;
- explain the efforts of the reformers to deal with issues like caste system, child marriage, sati pratha, through legislation and other means;
- discuss the role of reformers from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards in promoting school education in India;
- analyse the impact of the reform movement on Indian society.

## 6.1 SOCIETY IN THE EARLY 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The Indian society, which you see in 2012, is very different from the one in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Two major social causes prevented the society's progress. These were lack of education and subordination of women. Many sections of the Indian society were rigid and followed certain practices which were not in keeping with humanitarian values.

### 6.1.1 Lack of Education

Majority of people in those days were illiterate. All over the world education was in the hands of a very small number of people. In India also, education was limited to a handful of men belonging to the upper castes. Brahmins in India had access to the Vedas which were written in Sanskrit. It was a language known only to them. Religious texts were also controlled by these people. So they interpreted them in a way that benefitted them. Expensive rituals, sacrifices and practices after birth or death were outlined by this priestly class. It was mandatory for everyone to perform these rituals in the belief of a better life after death. Nobody could question the Brahmin priests because nobody knew what was written in the scriptures. Similarly in Europe, the Bible was written in Latin. It was the language of the Church and their priests interpreted the religious texts accordingly. And that is why, as a reaction, Europe saw the **Renaissance** and the **Reformation Movement** about which you have read earlier in this book. Even ideas like liberty, equality, freedom and human rights were introduced in Europe by various revolutions which took place there.

### 6.1.2 Position of Women

Girls and women today have better opportunities for their development. They have more freedom to study and work outside of home. However, way back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the life was much harder for majority of the women. Certain social practices like female infanticide, child marriage, sati pratha and polygamy were prevalent in some sections of Indian society. Female infanticide or killing of a girl child was a very common practice. Girls who survived were often married at a very young age and often to men who were much older. Polygamy, a practice of a man having more than one wife was an accepted norm among many castes and religion. In some parts of the country *Sati Pratha* was practiced in which a widowed woman was compelled to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. Those women who could escape the practice of *Sati* had to live a very miserable life. Women had no right to property. They also had no access to education. Thus, in general, women had a subordinate position in the society. The fear of the invader and loss of family honor was one reason. The other reasons were dowry and sharing of ancestral property which further deteriorated their status.



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It was evident that certain practices and superstitions were preventing Indians from progressing. Reforms were needed to bring a change in the social and religious lives of the people.



#### Do you know

**Infanticide:** The killing of an infant born alive; the killing of a newly born child;

**Child Sex Ratio:** The number of girls per 1000 boys in the 0-6 years age group. In India, the ratio has shown a sharp decline from 976 girls to 1000 boys in 1961 to 914 girls to 1000 boys as per the 2011 census. As per global terms, the normal child sex ratio should be above 950.



#### ACTIVITY 6.1

According to the 2011 census, the states with the highest and the lowest sex ratio is Kerala with 1084 females per 1000 males, and Haryana with 877 females per 1000 males. Find out any 5 states having sex ratio of less than 914 females per 1000 males.

Visit the website [www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in) for information.

### 6.2 A DESIRE TO CHANGE: SOCIO-RELIGIOUS AWAKENING

What do you think could be the reasons that led to the awakening of the people against discrimination and inequality? Reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Jyotiba Phule, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Pandita Ramabai understood that ignorance and backwardness in the society was responsible for hindering its progress and development. This realisation was reinforced when they came in contact with the Europeans and found that life was very different in other parts of the world. When the British missionaries started spreading Christianity, they criticized and questioned many of our social and religious practices. Many of their ideas were accepted by our reformers. The desire to reform the society was so strong that these reformers were now ready to face challenges as well as resistance from the orthodox Indians. They started several movements to bring desirable changes in the society.

These were made possible by enlightened people like Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. They studied the religious scriptures and criticized the prevalent religious and social practices. According to them, society should be based on the concepts of liberty and equality both for men and women and this was possible

only by the spread of modern and scientific education especially among the women. These movements came to be called **socio-religious movement** because the reformers felt that no change is possible in a society without reforming the religion. We will read further to know why education and other privileges were available to only the upper classes in society.

### 6.2.1 The Caste System

Since ancient times, Indian society had a caste system which was originally occupation based. Over a period of time, interpretation of religious texts by the upper caste and lack of access to religious scriptures by the lower caste led to several superstitious practices in the name of religion. This also resulted in power being concentrated in upper caste and exploitation of the lower caste.

Hindu society was based on the *Varna* system, that is, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. According to this system people were divided on the basis of their occupation. The people who were engaged in praying and worshipping the Gods were categorized as *Brahmins*. Those who were engaged in wars were called *Kshatriyas*. Those whose occupation was agriculture and trading were known as *Vaishyas* and those who used to serve the upper three Varnas were known as *Shudras*. This caste system, which was purely based on occupation, had become hereditary. A person born in a particular caste could not change his/ her caste even though they might have changed their work. This created inequality in society. It also led to the exploitation of the lower castes. Therefore, caste system had become a major hindrance in the development of a healthy, democratic and progressive society

Many socio-religious reformers and organizations stepped forward to fight against this social practice. Organizations, such as Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission and reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Pandita Ramabai, Sri Narayana Guru, Periyar, Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and many others strongly protested against its rigidity. Most reformers considered the prevalent caste practices as against the original spirit of the Vedas and other scriptures. They considered the caste system as irrational and unscientific. They felt it was against the basic rules of humanity. The untiring and relentless efforts of the social reformers helped people to become more tolerant towards each other.



#### Do you know

Article 14 of the Constitution states that, '*it shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.*' This constitutional provision has facilitated the participation of the marginalized in the social, political and economic development of the country.



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**Notes****6.2.2 The Prevalent Religious Practices**

Most of the social practices were done in the name of religion. Hence, social reform had no meaning without religious reform. Our reformers were deeply rooted in Indian tradition and philosophy and had a sound knowledge of the scriptures. They were able to blend positive Indian values with western ideas and the principles of democracy and equality. On the basis of this understanding, they challenged the rigidity and superstitious practices in religion. They cited the scriptures to show that the practices prevalent during nineteenth century find no sanction in them. The enlightened and the rationalistic amongst them questioned the popular religion which was full of superstitions and was exploited by the corrupt priests. The reformers wanted society to accept the rational and scientific approach. They also believed in the principle of human dignity and social equality of all men and women.

**6.2.3 The Educational Scenario**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many children, especially girls, were not sent to school. Education was imparted in traditional Paathshalas, Madrasas, Mosques and Gurukuls. Religious Education was imparted along with subjects like Sanskrit, Grammar, Arithmetic, Religion and Philosophy. Science and technology had no place in the curriculum. Many superstitious beliefs existed in the society. In certain communities girls were not allowed to be educated. It was thought that educated women would soon become widows after marriage! But in reality lack of education and awareness was the root cause of social and religious backwardness among the Indians. So it was important to promote modern education.

All socio-religious reformers whether Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Parsis aimed at the spread of modern education. They believed that education was the most effective tool to awaken and modernize our society.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1**

1. List any two social practices against which the reform movement began.
2. Why the caste system was considered irrational and unscientific?
3. What was the basis of the reformers' criticism of rigidity in religion?
4. Read the excerpt below and answer the given question:

*Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar belonged to a poor Mahar family, considered an untouchable caste. He had his college education in India and later earned degrees and doctorates for his study and research from Columbia University*

and the London School of Economics. Dr. Ambedkar was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution. Despite facing social and financial hardships, Dr. Ambedkar spent his whole life fighting against social discrimination and was awarded the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1990.

- (i) In addition to education, which other attributes (qualities) enabled Dr. Ambedkar to withstand the discrimination and contribute to the society?



### ACTIVITY 6.2

Cite at least two instances where you observed caste-based discrimination. Note down your reactions in 50 words.

## 6.3 SOCIO RELIGIOUS REFORMERS OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

Many Indian thinkers and reformers came forward to bring reforms in society. According to them society and religion were interlinked. Both needed to be reformed to achieve positive growth and development of the country. Hence our reformers took the initiative to awaken the Indian masses. Some of these reformers founded organizations to spread the awareness about which you will read now. Another major contribution of these reformers was in the field of education.

### 6.3.1 Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born in a Brahmin family of Bengal. He knew many languages and had read Quran, Bible and the New Testament along with Hindu scriptures in great depth. Liberal education exposed him to different cultures and philosophies. Deeply moved by the plight of his brother's widow, who had been forced to commit Sati, he was determined to uproot this social practice. This led him to challenge other unfair social and religious practices prevalent at that time. He founded *Brahmo Samaj* in 1828. He was the first person to take an initiative to challenge the practice of Sati and it soon became his life-long crusade. He mobilized public opinion and cited the scriptures to show that this practice had no sanction in Hindu religion. In the process he faced displeasure and enmity of orthodox



Figure 6.1 Raja Ram Mohan Roy



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Hindus. In his efforts he was supported by the then Governor General of India, Sir William Bentinck. A law was passed in 1829 making Sati illegal and punishable. He also made efforts to advocate widow re-marriage and condemned child marriage.

He represented a synthesis of the Eastern and the Western thoughts. An authority on the Vedas, Vedantas and Upanishads, he also took up the best in all religions as he was well versed in the scriptures. He advocated the importance of Vedas in reforming religion and upheld the fundamental unity among all religions. He held that all the principal ancient texts of the Hindus preached **Monotheism** (worship of one God) and opposed **Polytheism** (belief in more than one God). He was critical of idol worship and observance of meaningless rituals.

He strongly advocated the learning of English language, literature, scientific advancement and technology to modernize India. He maintained an English school in Calcutta at his own cost. Subjects like mechanics and philosophy were also taught among other subjects. A Vedanta college was opened in 1825. Raja Ram Mohan Ray helped in the opening of the Hindu college in Calcutta for higher learning.

### 6.3.2 Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

A great scholar and reformer, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar dedicated his entire life to the cause of social reforms. The first Hindu Widow Remarriage Act was introduced in 1856 owing to his relentless efforts. He also protested against child-marriage and campaigned against polygamy. Though he did not concern himself much with religious questions, he was against all those who opposed reforms in the name of religion.

Though he was a Sanskrit scholar, his mind was open to the best in Western thought. His major contribution was in the field of education. He encouraged the study of Sanskrit and Bengali literature. He also introduced the study of Western thought in the Sanskrit college to inspire the Indians to shake off their age-old beliefs and modernize their ideas. He believed that condition of women could be improved only through their education. His efforts in this direction were praise worthy. He helped in opening approximately 35 girls' school in Bengal. He was a champion of women's education. The admission of non-Brahmin students in the Sanskrit College was made possible through his efforts.



Figure 6.2 Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

### 6.3.3 Swami Dayanand Saraswati

The Arya Samaj founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875 undertook the task of reforming Hindu religion in North India. He considered Vedas to be infallible and

the foundation of all knowledge. He rejected all those religious thoughts which were in conflict with the Vedas. 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. *Satyarth Prakash* was his most important book.



Figure 6.3 Swami Dayanand Saraswati

Arya Samaj advocated social reform and worked to improve the condition of women. It fought untouchability and the rigidities of the hereditary caste system and promoted social equality. The use of Hindi language in which he wrote and preached made his ideas accessible to the people of Northern India. Arya Samaj also had a major role to play in the national movement as it inculcated a spirit of self respect and self reliance among the people.

The role of Arya Samaj was commendable in promoting education among the masses. Some of Swami Dayanand's followers later started a network of schools and colleges called D.A.V. (Dayanand Anglo Vedic) in the country to impart education on western lines without compromising on the Vedic teachings. They encouraged teaching of English and modern science along with Sanskrit and Vedic education.

#### 6.3.4 Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda

Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836-1886) highlighted the essential unity of religions and the need to lead a spiritual life. He believed that the different religions of the world are only different ways to reach the same god. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) was his foremost disciple.





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The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the Divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith in himself or itself, death comes. Believe first in yourself, and then in God.  
– Swami Vivekananda.

Vivekananda was the first spiritual leader who thought beyond religious reforms. He felt that Indian masses needed secular as well as spiritual knowledge to empower them to believe in themselves. Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna mission after the name of his guru Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Through his speeches and writings, he brought out the essence of Hindu culture and religion. He believed in the spirit of Vedanta and the essential unity and equality of all religions. He laid stress on the removal of religious superstitions, obscurantism, and outdated social customs. He tried to remove caste rigidities, and untouchability. He motivated the people to respect women while he himself worked for women's upliftment and education. Vivekananda attached primary importance to the removal of ignorance among the people.



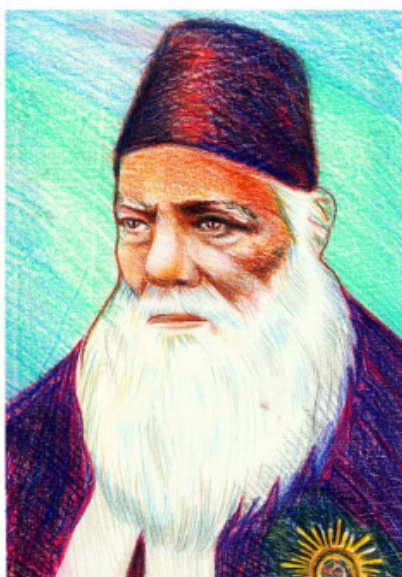
**Figure 6.4** Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda

### 6.3.5 Sir Syed Ahmed Khan

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan believed that the religious and social life of the Muslims could be improved only by imbibing modern western scientific knowledge and culture. His major concern was the removal of social and educational backwardness among the Muslims. He worked hard to raise the status of the Muslim women. He was against

the *purdah* system, polygamy, easy divorce and lack of education among the girls. Though he was opposed by the orthodox Muslims, he made commendable efforts in promote women's education. He tried to interpret the Quran in the light of reason and spoke out against fanaticism and ignorance. He also initiated social reforms for the upliftment of Muslim society.

Throughout his early life, he advocated the study of English language even against the opposition of the orthodox Muslims. He considered that only modern education could lead Muslims towards progress. He established an English school in Ghazipur (present day Uttar Pradesh) in 1864. He started the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College (M.A.O.) at Aligarh in 1875 which later developed into the Aligarh Muslim University. It provided education in humanities and science through English medium. He also established a scientific society for translating English books. He also published a journal for spreading awareness among the Muslims towards social reforms especially towards modern education. He started the Mohammadan educational conference for spreading liberal ideas among the Muslims. The movement for reform started by him is known as the Aligarh Movement which proved to be an important step towards social and political awakening among the Muslims.

**Notes**

**Figure 6.5** *Sir Syed Ahmed Khan*

### **6.3.6 Jyotirao Govindrao Phule**

Jyotirao Govindrao Phule from Maharashtra worked to attain equal rights for peasants and the lower caste. He and his wife, Savitribai Phule, are most known for their efforts to educate women and the lower castes as well as the masses. He first educated his wife, after which both of them opened a school for girls in India

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in August 1848. took up the cause of women and started a girls' school in Poona (Pune) in 1851. He is also remembered for his efforts towards promoting widow remarriage. In September 1873, Jyotirao along with his followers formed the *Satya Shodhak Samaj* (Society of Seekers of Truth) with the main objective of liberating the lower castes and protecting them from exploitation and atrocities. He was popularly known as Jyotiba.

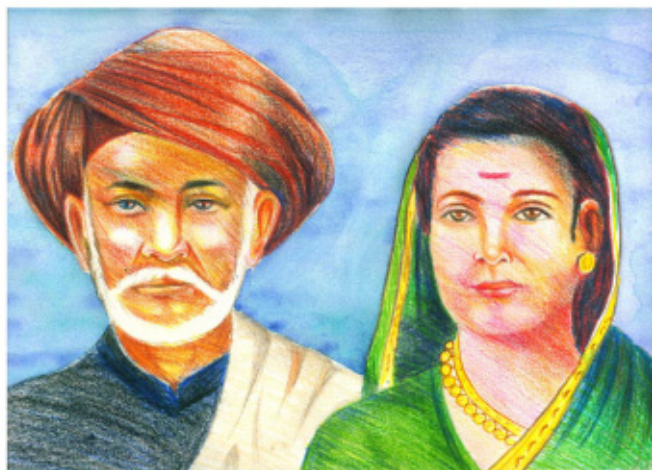


Figure 6.6 Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule

### 6.3.7 Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade

Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade established the Poona *Sarvajanik Sabha* and the *Prarthana Samaj* in 1867 in Bombay to bring about religious reforms. It sought to remove caste restrictions, abolish child marriage, the shaving of widows' heads, the heavy cost of marriages and other social functions; encourage education of women and promote widow remarriage. Like *Bramho Samaj*, it advocated the worship of one God. It condemned idolatry and the domination of the priestly castes in religious matters. He introduced vernacular languages in the University curriculum which made higher education accessible to Indians. He attempted to reform the rigid traditions in the society without destroying the social atmosphere of India's rich cultural heritage. He was also a founding member of the Indian National Congress.

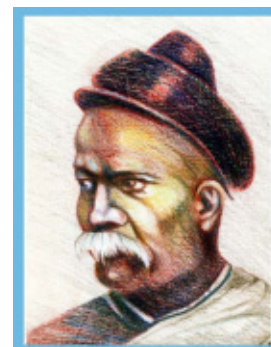


Figure 6.7 Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade

### 6.3.8 Pandita Ramabai

In Maharashtra, Pandita Ramabai, a renowned social reformer, 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.



Figure 6.8 Pandita Ramabai



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### 6.3.9 Annie Besant

Annie Besant was a member of the Theosophical Society and came to India for the first time in 1893. This movement was led by Westerners who glorified Indian religious and philosophical traditions and encouraged vernacular languages and literary works to instill a sense of pride in Indian heritage and culture. It aroused political awakening and helped Indians recover their self-confidence and get a sense of pride in their own country. The society also preached the universal brotherhood of man. It made immense contribution towards the development of Modern India. Annie Besant became the President of the Theosophical Society in 1907.



Figure 6.9 Annie Besant

Besant opened a college for boys, the Central Hindu College at Banaras based on Theosophical principles with the aim to build a new leadership for India. The students studied religious texts along with modern science. The college became a part of the new University, the Banaras Hindu University from 1917.



### ACTIVITY 6.3

Identify any two social practices or superstitions which are still prevalent despite several reform movements and government regulations. What can you, as an individual do to challenge these social practices or superstitions?

**Clue:** Social practices or superstitions like dowry, gender discrimination, illiteracy, child marriage, female infanticide.

Possible Action: Lead by personal example, organise group discussion; write a letter to the newspaper, assist people in distress in public places etc.



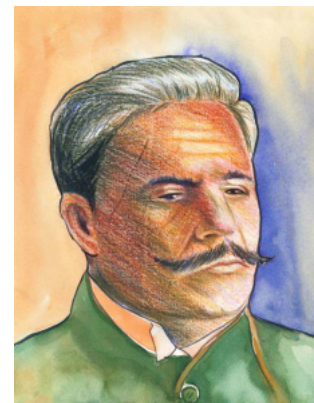
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**6.3.10 Muslim Reform Movement**

A few movements were launched which aimed to spread modern education and removing social practices like the polygamy. The Mohammedan Literacy Society of Calcutta was founded by Abdul Latif in 1863. It was one of the earliest organisations that promoted modern education among the upper and middle class Muslims. It also played an important role in promoting Hindu-Muslim unity. Shariatullah of Bengal, leader of the Faraizi movement in Bengal, took up the cause of the peasants. He also condemned the evils of the caste system among the Muslims.

There were several other socio-religious movements which in one way or the other helped the national awakening of the Muslims. Mirza Ghulam Ahmed had founded the Ahmediya Movement in 1899. Under this movement, a number of schools and colleges were opened all over the country. They emphasised the universal and humanitarian character of Islam. They favoured the unity among Hindus and Muslims.

One of the greatest poets of Modern India, Muhammad Iqbal (1876-1938) influenced the philosophical and religious outlook of several generations through his poetry.



**Figure 6.10** *Muhammad Iqbal*

**? Do you know**

Muhammad Iqbal wrote the famous song ‘Saare jahaan se achcha hindustaan hamaara. . .’

**6.3.11 The Akali 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 Gurmukhi, Sikh learning and Punjabi literature. The college was set up with help from the British. In 1920, the Akali movement which rose in Punjab, started the cleansing of the management of the Gurudwaras or Sikh shrines. A powerful Satyagraha in 1921 against the Mahants forced the Government to pass a new Gurdwara Act in 1925. With the aid of this act and by direct action, they freed the sacred places from the control and domination of corrupt Mahants.

### 6.3.12 Reform Movement among the Parsis

Narouji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji, S.S. Bengalee and others began religious reforms among the Parsis in Mumbai in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1851, they founded the *Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Sabha* or Religious Reform Association. They played an important role in the spread of education, especially among girls. They also campaigned against the orthodox practices in Parsi religion. In course of time, the Parsis became one of the most progressive sections of Indian society.

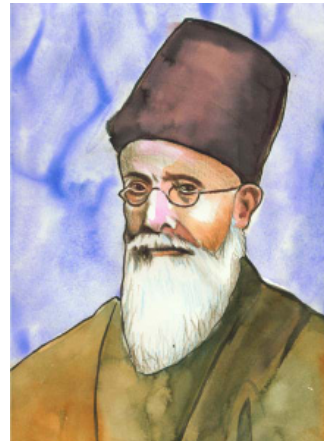


Figure 6.11 Dadabhai Naoroji



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### ACTIVITY 6.4

Make a list of 10 eminent personalities who have contributed towards making our society a better place to live in. Also find out the field in which they have contributed.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2

1. Fill in the blanks with correct answer:
  - (i) He ..... did not represent the synthesis of the thought of East and West
 

(a) Swami Vivekananda	(b) Rammohan Roy
(c) Dayanand Saraswati	(d) Iswarchandra Vidyasagar
  - (ii) He did not emphasize the infallibility of the Vedas
 

(a) Swami Vivekananda	(b) Ramakrishna Paramhans
(c) Dayanand Saraswati	(d) Syed Ahmed Khan
  - (iii) The movement started to free the sacred places from the control and domination of corrupt Mahants
 

(a) Akali Movement	(b) Caste reform movement
(c) Shuddhi movement	(d) Satyagraha movement.
2. Match the following:
 

(i) Bramho Samaj	(a) Swami Vivekananda
(ii) Arya Samaj	(b) Annie Besant
(iii) Ramakrishna Mission	(c) Swami Dayanand Saraswati

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- |                           |                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (iv) Theosophical Society | (d) Jyotiba Phule                 |
| (v) Akali Movement        | (e) Pandita Ramabai               |
| (vi) Satya Shodhak Samaj  | (f) Raja Ram Mohan Roy            |
| (vii) Aligarh Movement    | (g) Sikhs                         |
| (viii) Arya Mahila Samaj  | (h) Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade |
|                           | (i) Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan          |
|                           | (j) Dadabhai Naoroji              |

- Write any two limitations of the reform movements.
- Read the excerpt below and answer the given questions:

*Ramvati is working as a peon in NIOS office. She got married at the age of 21, but unfortunately her husband passed away when she was 28. She was offered her husband's job at NIOS because she had completed her secondary school education. With this job Ramvati is now able to look after her children and herself. She leads a dignified life and her children are proud of their mother.*

- What could have happened if Ramvati had got married as a child?
- If Ramvati was not allowed to work outside home, what could have happened to her and her family?

### 6.4 IMPACT OF THE REFORM MOVEMENTS ON INDIAN SOCIETY

The reform movements were able to create socio-religious consciousness among the Indians during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. All these movements laid stress on rational understanding of social and religious ideas and encouraged a scientific and humanitarian outlook. The reformers felt that modern ideas and culture could be best imbibed by integrating them into Indian cultural streams. The introduction of modern education guided the Indians towards a scientific and rational approach to life. All the movements worked to improve women's status and criticized the caste system especially the practice of untouchability. These movements looked for social unity and strived towards liberty, equality and fraternity.

Importance was given to education especially women's education. Some legal measures were introduced to raise the status of women. For example Sati Pratha and infanticide were declared illegal. Widow Remarriage was made possible by a law passed in 1856 and condition of widows improved. A law passed in 1872, sanctioned inter-caste and inter-communal marriages. Marriageable age of girls was raised to ten by a law passed in 1860. Further, Sharda Act was passed in 1929 preventing child marriage. According to it, a girl below 14 and a boy below 18 cannot

be married. The impact of the efforts of these reformers was most evident in the National Movement. A large number of women came out to take part in the freedom struggle. The role of women like Captain Laxmi Sehgal of Indian National Army, Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Aruna Asaf Ali and many others was extremely important in the freedom struggle. Women now came out of the *purdah* and took up jobs.

The persistent efforts of the reformers had immense impact on the society. The religious reform movements instilled in the minds of Indians greater self-respect, self-confidence and pride in their country. These reform movements helped many Indians to come to terms with the modern world. People became more conscious of their identity as Indian. It was ultimately responsible for their united struggle against the British in the freedom movement of India.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially after 1919, the Indian National Movement became the main propagator of social reform. Indian languages were used to reach the masses. They also used novels, dramas, short stories, poetry, the press and in the 1930's used the cinema to spread their views. The movements promoted the feelings of self-confidence, self-respect, awareness and patriotism and thereby developed a feeling of national consciousness. Do you remember reading some of the novels and seeing some films related to Independence Movement. For a beginning start making a list of some such authors and their book. Make a list of some films also. Also make a list of some songs. May be this clue will help you "*Insaf ki dagar pe, Bachhon dikhao chal ke, yeh desh hai tumhara, neta tumhi ho kal ke*", or "*Vande Mataram*" sung by **Lata Mangeshkar** in the same film.

These reform movements had certain limitations. It affected a very small percentage of the population, mostly the educated class and could not reach the vast masses of the peasantry and urban poor who continued to live in the same conditions.

**Humanitarian:** Having the concern for or helping to improve the welfare and happiness of all people.

**Liberty:** Freedom to act or think as you chose.

**Fraternity:** A group of people with something in common.



### WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- The Indian society was challenged by issues like superstitious beliefs, backwardness and evil practices such as Sati or widow immolation and untouchability.
- Some educated Indians like Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Jyotiba Phule, Swami Dayanand Swaraswati, Sir. Syed Ahmed Khan, Swami



Notes



## MODULE - 1

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Notes

### Religious and Social Awakening in Colonial India

Vivekananda took the initiative to reform the society by introducing reforms in the religion first as the social practices were often driven by religious beliefs.

- All the socio-religious reformers emphasized upon modern education and scientific knowledge to reform the society. Women's education has been specially emphasized upon to improve the position of the women in the society.
- The impact of the reform movements in the society was immense. Due to the persistent efforts of the social reformers many such practices like Sati, untouchability was abolished by law. Widow-remarriage was introduced. Modern education was encouraged in the society.
- Despite all the efforts, India still require more involvement of the educated people in spreading awareness. The role of media is very crucial in this regard.



### TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. Explain the social practices that existed in 19<sup>th</sup> century India.
2. Why do you think reforms were needed to awaken our society?
3. Why do you think that the social reform movement had no meaning without religious reforms?
4. Do you think the reformers were able to bring change in the Indian society?
5. How did the socio-religious reform movements lead to the National Movement?
6. Explain the role of following reformers in challenging caste system and advocating widow remarriage:
  - (a) Raja Ram Mohan Roy
  - (b) Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar
  - (c) Jyotiba Phule
7. Identify the common features amongst the following reformers:
  - (a) Theosophical Society and Ramakrishna Mission
  - (b) Akali Movement and Arya Samaj
8. Explain the hindrances in the growth of women's education in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century India.
9. Who introduced English education among the Muslims? Explain his/her contribution in this area.
10. Study the map carefully and answer the questions that follow:
  - (a) Name the places where Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and M.A.O. College became popular.
  - (b) Name the social reformers who were active in Western India and also mark the places where they were active.



Notes



Figure 6.12



## ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

### 6.1

1. Sati, Caste System, Child Marriage, Plight of Widows.
2. Because it was against the basic tenets of humanity.
3. Courage, determination, motivation and a vision to achieve goals.
4. They found that the scriptures do not sanction rigidity and superstitions.

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### Notes

#### 6.2

1. (i) (c) (ii) (d) (iii) (a)
2. (i) (f) (ii) (c) (iii) (a) (iv) (b) (v) (g) (vi) (d)  
(vii) (i) (viii) (e)
3. (a) She would have been illiterate, would have been married at an early age, would have many children and possibly had been suffering due to ill health as a result of child-birth at a very early age. She would probably have been dependant on her parents or in-laws for her survival.  
(b) She would be dependent on others resulting in low socio-economic status.
4. (a) It affected a very small percentage of the population, mostly the educated class.  
(b) It did not reach the masses.