

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL AWAKENING IN COLONIAL INDIA

L.No	Title of Lesson	SKILLS	Activity
6	Religious and Social Awakening in Colonial India	Empathy, Self Awareness, Critical thinking, Problem Solving	Understand the importance of the works of Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Swami Dayanand, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and work done by the Akali movements in building the Khalsa

Meaning

In the first half of 19th century the society was backward due (i) lack of education and (i) subordination of women. This prevented society's progress. Many reformers came up during this period who contributed to religious and social awakening helped in tranforming the society for betterment.

Lack of Education

- Education was limited to handful of men belonging to upper castes.
- Religious texts e.g. Vedas were written in Sanskrit and monopolized by the priestly class.
- Meaningless rituals, sacrifices and practices were outlined by priestly class for their own material gain.

Position of Women

- Women did not enjoy an equal status with men.
- Women had neither right to property nor access to education.
- Polygamy, i.e. (having more than one wife) was practised by men, while women could not have more than one husband.
- Widowed women were compelled to burn themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands (sati pratha).

Caste system

- Hindu society was based on varna system.
- People were divided on the basis of their occupation.
- Brahmins engaged in praying and worshipping gods.
- Kshatriyas engaged in wars.
- Vaishyas worked in the field of agriculture and trading.
- Shudras used to serve upper three varnas.

Social and Religious Reforms

- Social reform and religious reform to together.
- Reformers blended positive Indian values with western ideas and the principles of democracy & equality.

Educational scenario

- Pathshalas, Madarsas, Temples, Mosques, Gurukuls were centres of traditional education. Sanskrit, Grammar, Arithmetic, Religion and Philosophy were the subjects taught; there was no place for science and technology.

Socio-religious reformers of 19th century

- **Raja Ram Mohan Roy:** founded Brahma Samaj in 1828.
- **Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar:** dedicated his entire life to social reforms.
- **Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekanand:** Ramkrishna Paramhansa (1836-1886) highlighted unity of religions; Swami Vivekanand (1863-1902) was his foremost disciple.
- **Sir Syed Ahmed Khan:** believed that religion and social life of muslims could be improved only by imbibing modern western scientific knowledge and culture.
- **Jyotirao Govindrao Phule:** Along with his wife Savitri bai Phule in Maharashtra worked for education of women and lower castes.
- **Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade:** established Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and Prarthna Samaj in 1867 in Bombay to bring about religious reforms.
- **Swami Dayanand Saraswati:** founded Arya Samaj in 1875 in North India for reforming Hindu religion.
- **Pandita Ramabai:** fought for the rights of women and spoke against the practice of child marriage in Maharashtra; started *Arya Mahila Samaj* in 1881.
- **Annie Besant:** Member of Theosophical Society; came to India in 1893.

- **Muslim Reform Movement:** Mohammedan Literary Society of Calcutta founded by Abdul Latif in 1863.
- **The Akali Reform Movement :** A powerful Satyagraha in 1921 against the Mahants forced the Government to pass a new Gurdwara Act in 1925.
- **Reform Movement among the Parsis:** In mid 19th century, Narouji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji and S.S. Bengalee began religious reform movement among Parsis in Mumbai.

Impact of the Reform Movements on Indian Society

All movements worked to improve women's status and criticised the caste system, advocated social equality and strived towards liberty, equality and fraternity. Law was passed in 1872 for inter-caste and inter-communal marriages. Marriageable age of girls was raised to ten in 1860 by law and further to 14 for girls and 18 for boys under the Sharda Act, 1929.

Evaluate Yourself

- Q. What were the hinderances of Indian Society towards the path of progress?
- Q. Discuss the role of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar for the cause of social reforms.
- Q. Describe Muslim Reform Movement and Akali Reform Movement.
- Q. Write note on the contribution of swami vivekanand, Swami Dayanand Sarswati, Pandita Ramabai and Annie Besant.