SOCIAL HISTORY OF MODERN INDIA

M.A. History

Semester - I

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SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE
Social History of Modern India

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INTRODUCTION

The impact of western education, economic exploitation of the country, and the influence of the Indian press led to the emergence of a new social class called the intelligentsia in India. They challenged the orthodox beliefs, customs, practices and prejudices prevalent in the society and are these contributed to the national awakening in India. This national awakening in the nineteenth century found expression in the socio-religious spheres. A strong wave of reformation activities swept the Indian society. The religious reformers of the time attempted to reform the rigid social practices inspired by the western concepts of reason, equality and liberty. This gave birth to socio-religious reform movements like the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj among the Hindus and the Wahabi and Aligarh movement among the Muslims. The proponents of these movements helped in the dissemination of ideas that helped bring change and transformation in the Indian society. The educated young Indians wanted to improve the status of women in the society and various legislations were passed to this effect.

A reform movement is a kind of social movement that aims at making a gradual change in certain aspects of society, rather than rapid or fundamental changes. A reform movement is distinguished from more radical social movements, such as revolutionary movements. The socio-reform movements continued well into the 20th century and saw the participation of women in the national movement. Various women leaders opened organizations that exclusively addressed women issues and aimed to uplift their position in the society.

This book, *Social History of Modern India,* has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode format and follows a simple pattern, wherein, each unit of the book begins with an *Introduction* to the topic followed by the *Objectives*. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with *'Check Your Progress'* questions to test the reader's understanding of the topic. A list of *Questions* and *Exercises* is also provided at the end of each unit, and includes short-answer as well as long-answer questions. The *Summing Up* and *Key Terms* section are useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

UNIT 1 SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA

Structure

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Society in the 18th century was marked by stagnation which reveled in the past glory. The society could be termed as a free one where socially and culturally people could not be compartmentalized. That is to say, there was no set pattern. However, the people were divided on the lines of religion, language, caste and every other possible structure. These divisions were deeply entrenched and gave rise to economic and social disparities. The upper class lived a different life from those in the lower strata. Since wealth concentrated in the hands of this section of society, this class of nobility were highly conscious of their supremacy. They presided over religious occasions and dictated social practices. The economically weaker classes were looked down upon and had to follow the diktats of the superior class.

Communities remained confined within their own customs and social traditions, and had no urge to create any social values. Any aberration from the established laws and conventions would lead to excommunication. The 18th century social structure was based on two premises. One was grading on the basis of official position and power, and the other was on ordering based on religion and traditional division of the society. The former was a reflection of the political system. The latter, on the other hand, was based on the caste and its stratification. For the Muslims, the grading was done on the basis of 'kufr'—believers and non-believers.

Right from the beginning of their relationship with India, the British, who had come as traders and had become rulers and administrators, had influenced the economic

and political systems of the country. Their impact on the cultural and social life of India was, however, gradual.

Till 1813, they followed a policy of non-interference in the social and cultural life of the Indians. Yet, changes were taking place in these fields (the social life of Indians). These changes related to education, the condition of women, the caste system and various social practices.

This unit describes different forms of change, indicators of development, process of change, and the concepts of sanskritization, westernization and secularization.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the social change that India underwent during the colonial period
- Explain the meaning of sanskritization, westernization and secularization
- State the effect of agricultural change on Indian society
- Discuss the changing caste equations

1.2 COLONIAL INTERVENTION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The presence of a colonial government on Indian soil played a complex, yet decisive, role. The impact of British rule on Indian society and culture was widely different from what India had known before.

The establishment of colonial rule in India was followed by a systematic attempt to disseminate colonial culture and ideology as the dominant cultural current. Faced with the challenge of the intrusion of colonial culture and ideology, an attempt to reinvigorate traditional institutions and realize the potential of traditional culture was made during the nineteenth century.

The impact of modern Western culture and consciousness of defeat by a foreign power gave birth to a new awakening. People became aware that because of internal weaknesses within Indian social structure and culture a vast country like India had been colonized by a handful of foreigners.

Role of Press and Literature

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an unprecedented growth of Indian-owned English and vernacular newspapers, despite numerous restrictions imposed on the Press by the colonial rulers from time to time. In 1877, there were about 169 newspapers published in vernacular languages and their circulation reached nearly 1,00,000.

The Press while criticizing official policies, on one hand, urged the people to unite and on the other it also helped spread modern ideas of self-government, democracy, civil rights and industrialization. The newspapers, journals, pamphlets and nationalist literature helped in the exchange of political ideas among nationalist leaders from different regions.

Western Thought and Education

Introduction of a modern system of education afforded opportunities for assimilation of modern western ideas, which, in turn, gave a new direction to Indian political thinking, although the English system of education had been conceived by the rulers in the interest of efficient administration. The liberal and radical thought of European writers like Milton, Shelley, John Stuart Mill, Rousseau, Paine, Spencer and Voltaire helped many Indians imbibe modern rational, secular, democratic and nationalist ideas.

English language helped nationalist leaders from different linguistic regions to communicate with each other. Those among the educated, who took up liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, etc.) often visited England for higher education. There they saw the working of modern political institutions in a free country and compared that system with the Indian situation where even basic rights were denied to the citizens. This ever-expanding English educated class formed the middle class intelligentsia who constituted the nucleus for the newly arising political unrest. It was this section which provided leadership to the Indian political associations.

1.2.1 Determinants of Social Change

The emergence of new social classes in India was the direct consequences of the establishment of a new social economy, a new transport system, a new type of state system and state administrative machinery and the spread of new education during the British rule.

1. Social and Cultural Changes

In the 19th century, awareness among the people about what was happening in the world was much more than in the previous centuries. This process was facilitated by the British rule in India. Comparison with European thought and practices led to questioning of the traditional practices and rituals. The spread of western education also had a major role to play in this. Some people tried to bring about changes in the country politically and socially. Many of these social changes in the country ultimately paved the way for its modernization. To address this objective, social reformers discarded elements like *purdah* and caste system which made the society backward.

Largely due to the efforts of social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati and many others, the British introduced some social and religious reforms.

- **Sati:** Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a social reformer from Bengal was against the custom of sati. This age old custom of sati was banned by Lord Bentinck and made punishable by law in 1829.

- **Widow remarriage:** The Hindu laws and customs did not allow the widows to remarry. In 1856, during the tenure of Lord Dalhousie, a law was passed allowing the widows to remarry.

- **Female infanticide and other practices:** In some families the unfortunate custom of killing baby girls was followed. This inhuman custom was banned by Lord William Bentinck. Slavery was declared illegal by legislation in India in 1843. Lord Hardinge abolished the practice of human sacrifice which certain tribal groups followed. Responding to the opposition of social reformers to the evil custom of child marriage, the government raised the marriageable age for boys and girls to 12 and 10, respectively.

2. Development of Transport

Until the Revolt of 1857, the transport system in India was quite inadequate. Only two half finished Trunk Roads, one between Calcutta and Delhi and the other between Bombay and Agra, existed. A little before the middle of the 19th century the British had begun to pay serious attention to the improvement of the means of transport and communication. The British policy was to use raw materials available in India for their own industries. Good means of transport were required to export these and also to bring back the finished goods and sell them in different parts of the country. Plans were made to interlink the major cities, ports, agricultural centres and markets through good network of roads, canals and railways. The British developed transport and communication to further their own interest, and not for the economic development of India.

- **Railways:** The credit of setting up the first railway line in India goes to Lord Dalhousie. The first railway line connecting Bombay to Thane was opened in 1853. The following year Calcutta was linked to the coalfields in Raniganj and Bombay was connected with Kalyan. In 1856, another line was opened to join Madras with Arakonam.

Thereafter, the development of railways was given maximum encouragement and it made brisk progress. Railway lines connected the port cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras with their hinterlands from where the raw materials were transported. However, little attention was paid to link the various parts of the country, which would help in the movement of goods produced within the country from one part to another.

The same policy was also applied to protect the British interest in the freight charged. The rate of freight for goods going from one place to another within the country was higher than that of the goods moving between the port towns and other parts of the country. Again, areas which were important from the point of view of defence of the empire were linked together through elaborate railways to facilitate quick troop movement.

By 1876 about 5,000 miles of railway lines had been laid out connecting all the major centres in India, both by the government and private British companies. British businessmen and the contractors made huge profits by building railways in India. By the end of 19th century over 25,000 km of lines had been laid.

The introduction of railways made travelling and transport of goods faster, cheaper, easier and safer. Mining areas could be linked with industrial areas. Construction of railways also provided employment opportunities to thousands of unskilled labourers.

The most important outcome, which the British could not prevent, was the coming together of people from all parts of the country, which helped to promote integration. When the people of various castes and religions travelled together it helped to break caste barriers.

The construction of roads went along with the construction of railways. Gradually it connected more villages in its fray and the village gradually became part of the internal and external trade breaking its isolation in the process.

3. Growth of Industries

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the growth of plantation and machine industries. The demand for tea, coffee and indigo attracted many Europeans to the

plantation industry in India. Although the plantation industry provided some employment to the people of India, the British profited most as they were the exclusive owners.

The machine industry made its appearance in the form of jute and textile mills, a large number of which were owned by Indians. With the growth of modern industries there was an increasing demand for steel, cement, chemicals, and above all, power. Coal was the most important source of power so there was great demand for it. With the expansion of railways the demand for coal shot up. Rich British industrialists invested their surplus capital in the railways. Therefore, they did not encourage the growth of iron and steel industries in India, though both coal and iron ore were available in abundance. Railway engines, wagons, and tools were imported from Britain.

4. Inequality

With the growth of industries, two new classes emerged in the Indian society—the capitalists and the industrial workers. There was also the middle class or the intellectual class, which grew with the expansion of the administrative machinery, trade and industry. A professional class had also begun to emerge as many people took to professions like law, teaching and engineering. This class played a leading role in bringing about social reforms and modernizing society.

However, the economic condition was one of extreme poverty. Workers were burdened with problems like low wages, long working hours, unhygienic working and living conditions. According to an estimate, the per capita income in 1947 was ₹228, which works out to be less than a rupee a day. Moreover, there was an unequal distribution of income among the various sections of society. While landlords and factory owners were earning well, factory workers, labourers and poor peasants lived a miserable life.

The British government neither protected nor encouraged the development of industries. Indian capitalists and the middle class also suffered. Gradually, they began to raise their voice against British policies and demanded political rights as well as protection of India's economic interests. In 1938, the Indian National Congress set up a National Planning Committee to draw up a blueprint for India's economic development. It was from middle class that many leaders of the national movement emerged, and played a leading role in launching the national struggle for freedom against the British.

5. Education

Education in India was mainly religious in nature and a privilege of the rich and the upper classes of society. The English East India Company interested only in earning profits did not make any effort to bring about changes in the Indian system of education for more than half a century.

The Company government took its first step towards education with the Charter Act of 1813. The Company was asked to set aside a sum of rupees one lakh on education. For two decades thereafter this money lay untouched as no consensus could be reached on the medium of instruction and on whether it should be western education or traditional learning. Lord Macaulay, the Law Member in the Governor General's Council was insistent that western education should be imparted through English medium. In 1835, the Government decided to impart Western education in India through the medium of English language. The government announced that Indians educated in British schools would be considered for government jobs. In 1854, the British government

declared its intention of 'creating a properly articulated system of education from the primary school to the university' through the Despatch sent by Sir Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control. It laid the foundation on which the educational system of India subsequently developed. For higher education, universities were established in the British presidencies of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

1.2.2 Sanskritization

The noted Indian sociologist M.N. Srinivas had made a sincere effort to analyse the process of social change in Indian society through his significant work, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India* (1952). This book was probably the first such attempt to study change in the Indian context in a systematic manner. The term Sanskritization, coined by Srinivas during his study on the Coorgs, was primarily meant to analyse the process of cultural mobility. According to him, Sanskritization is a process which has been occurring throughout Indian history and will continue to occur in the future. Srinivas defined Sanskritization as 'The process by which a low Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently "twice-born" caste'. As he stated, such changes are initiated by a claim to a higher positions in the caste hierarchy than the particular caste traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community. The claim is made over a generation or two. Srinivas (1966) said that occasionally a caste claims a position in the caste hierarchy which its neighbours are not willing to concede. To illustrate this, he gives an example of the Harijan caste in Mysore. According to Srinivas, Harijans in Mysore will not accept cooked food and water from the Smiths who are certainly one of the touchable castes and therefore superior to Harijans even if their claim to be Vishwakarma Brahmins is not accepted. Similarly, the peasants or the '*Okkaligas*' and others such as shepherds or the '*Kurubas*' do not accept cooked food and water from *Marka Brahmins*, who are certainly included among the *Brahmins*.

Srinivas further maintained that Sanskritization is usually accompanied by and often results in upward mobility for the concerned caste. However, the mobility associated with Sanskritization is only positional change in the system of caste hierarchy and does not lead to any structural change, i.e., a particular caste moves up in the local caste hierarchy and the neighbour caste comes down, but this takes place in the broader caste hierarchy as a whole. There is no change to the caste structure as such.

Sanskritization, moreover, as a process is not confined to the Hindu system but also happens in the tribal groups such as the *Bhils* of western India, the *Gonds* and *Oraons* of central India, and the *Pahadis* of the Himalayas. This usually results in the tribe undergoing Sanskritization claiming to be a caste and, therefore, Hindu. In the traditional system, the only way to become a Hindu was to belong to a caste, and the unit of mobility was usually a group and not an individual or a family. The main argument that Srinivas wants to place is that contrary to the theoretical and book view of the caste system, there is scope for mobility inside the caste structure. According to Srinivas 'The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins, and adoption of the Brahminic way of life by

a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called as Sanskritization.'

Originally, Srinivas used the term 'Brahminization' to describe the process of mobility inside the Hindu caste system. However, looking at the broader nature of the process later, he used the term Sanskritization to denote inter-caste mobility. The term 'Sanskritization' is a much broader concept than 'Brahminization' because not only it encompasses non-Brahmin models like Kshatriyas model, Jat model, Vaishya model and models of other 'twice-born' castes but also denotes a wide spectrum of values and lifestyles (Hasnain 2006, 601). Srinivas said that Sanskritization was no doubt an awkward term, but it was preferred to Brahminization for several reasons — Brahminization is subsumed in the wider process of Sanskritization though at some points Brahminization and Sanskritization are at variance with each other. For instance, the Brahmins of the Vedic period drank '*Soma*', an alcoholic drink, ate beef and offered blood sacrifices. Both were given up in the post-Vedic times. It has been suggested that this was the result of Jain and Buddhist influence. Today Brahmins are by and large vegetarians; only the *Saraswat*, *Kashmiri* and *Bengali* eat non-vegetarian food. All these Brahmins are, however, traditionally teetotalers. In brief, the customs and habits of the Brahmins changed after they had settled in India. Had the term Brahminization been used, it would have been necessary to specify which particular Brahmin group was meant, and at which period of its recorded history. Again the agents of Sanskritization are not always Brahmins (Srinivas 1962[2002], 42–43). It is not only the Brahmins, but also local 'dominant castes' who have been the models of imitation. Srinivas (1966) defines 'dominant caste' as one that 'yields economic or political power and occupies a fairly high position in the hierarchy'. Traditionally, the castes having high ritual status were enjoying high political and economic power. However, later new factors began affecting dominance, i.e., western education, jobs in the administration and urban source of income became significant in contributing to the power and position of a particular caste. The dominant castes enjoy high status in the local hierarchy. The people belonging to lower castes look at them as their reference groups and imitate their lifestyles and rituals and, therefore, the dominant castes gradually became a source of socio-cultural change in the local caste system and a different model of Sanskritization.

Different castes have been found changing their traditional cultural practices while aspiring for higher positions in local hierarchy. The process of Sanskritization has many consequences. As Hasnain remarked, 'It may result in the erosion of cultural autonomy of the women folk which includes erosion in the freedom to choose life-partner and prevalence of a rigid sexual morality.' Changes in the family structure include a movement towards the orthodox Hindu joint family and the concomitant stronger authority of father, monogamy and a stronger caste organization with increased tendency of ostracism. A rigid commensality also prevails along with changed food habits prohibiting beef and pork and consumption of liquor while giving importance to higher education and adopting dowry practice instead of token 'bride-price'. Besides, in the sphere of religion, it frequently results in the donning of sacred thread, giving up animal sacrifice at the time of wedding and increased emphasis on pilgrimages and other orthodox rituals.

However, Sanskritization means not only the adoption of new customs and habits, but also exposure to new ideas and values which have found frequent expression in the vast body of Sanskrit literature, both the sacred as well as secular. *Karma*,

Dharma, *Papa*, *Maya*, *Samsara* and *Moksha* are some of the most common Sanskritic theological ideas, and when a group becomes Sanskritized, these words occur frequently in their talk (1962, 48). Srinivas stated that the spread of Sanskritic theological ideas increased during the British period. The advancement in science and technology and especially communication technology carried Sanskritization to areas which were inaccessible earlier and also the spread of literacy in the country carried it to lower caste groups who were mostly illiterate before. Besides, the introduction of western political institutions like the parliamentary democracy has also played phenomenal role in increasing the instances of Sanskritization in the country.

1.2.3 Westernization

M.N. Srinivas also discussed another process of social change known as Westernization. Westernization means a process whereby societies increasingly adopt western culture, life-styles, technology, food pattern, language, alphabet, religion, ideas, philosophies and value systems. Srinivas used the term 'Westernization' particularly to indicate the change that took place in Indian society during British rule in the 19th and early 20th centuries. He stated that 'Westernization refers to the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, and the term subsumes changes occurring at different levels—technology, institutions, ideology, values.' Westernization as a process started having its impact substantially on the elites of the country since they had access to modern and British education, especially English. Brahmins and other higher castes enjoyed power and position in society with the tradition of learning, eagerly took to secular education system that the British imparted with English as the medium.

Srinivas wrote that British rule produced radical and lasting changes in Indian society and culture. It was unlike any previous period in Indian history as the British brought with them new technology, institutions, knowledge, beliefs and values. New technology and the revolution in communication enabled the British to integrate the country as never before in its history. During the 19th century, the British slowly laid the foundations of a modern state by surveying land, settling the revenue, creating a modern bureaucracy, army, police, instituting law courts, codifying the law, developing communications like railways, post and telegraph, roads, canals, establishing schools, colleges and so on. They also brought with them the printing press that made a significant impact on Indian society since publication of books and journals transmitted modern and traditional knowledge to a large number of people.

Srinivas went on to make distinctions between westernization and two other related processes: industrialization and urbanization. According to him, although there were cities in the pre-industrial world, they differed from post-industrial revolution cities. For one thing, they needed large rural population for their support, so that ancient and medieval countries remained dominantly agricultural in spite of a few big cities. Again, while the industrial revolution resulted in an increase in the rate of urbanization, and highly urbanized areas are generally highly industrialized areas (urbanization is not a simple function of industrialization). For Srinivas, while most of the westernized people are usually found in big cities, it will be wrong to equate westernization with urbanization. Even in a country like India, there are people in rural areas who are as much and may be more westernized than many of their urban counterparts.

Westernization resulted not only in the introduction of new institutions like press, newspapers, journals, elections, and so on, but also in fundamental changes in the old

institutions. For example, although India had schools long before the British came to India, they were fundamentally different from the schools introduced by the British in that they were restricted to only upper-caste elites and transmitted mostly traditional knowledge. Besides, there were certain value preferences implicit to the process of westernization as well. One of the important values is 'humanitarianism'. This meant an active concern for the welfare of humanity irrespective of caste, class, religion, age and sex. It encompassed both equalitarianism and secularization. Humanitarianism resulted in many administrative measures taken by the British to fight epidemics, famines, and building schools, hospitals, and so on and also brought in several civil and procedural laws that put an end to certain inequalities that existed in Hindu and Islamic personal laws. Moreover, Christian missionary activities were remarkable in making humanitarian efforts especially in the form of providing education and health facilities. According to Srinivas, the missionaries were the bitter critics of the Hindu social customs like caste, untouchability, low status of women and child marriage. This led to reinterpretation of Hinduism at both ideological and institutional levels and the conversion of the lower castes like '*Harijans*' to Islam and Christianity. Such factors were instrumental in producing a changed attitude among the Hindu elites towards the traditional caste system and untouchability.

According to Srinivas, the increase in westernization does not retard the process of Sanskritization; rather both go hand in hand—increase in Westernization accelerates the process of Sanskritization. For instance, the postal facilities, railways, bus, and media which are the fruits of western impact on India rendered more organized religious pilgrimages, meetings, caste solidarities, and so on. As mentioned before, sanskritization and westernization are concepts that analyse the process of cultural change and have no scope for systematic explanation of changes in the social structure. Srinivas pointed out that to describe the social changes occurring in modern India in terms of sanskritization and westernization, we need to describe it primarily in cultural and not in structural terms.

According to Jena and Mohapatra, the process of westernization had its impact on both the 'little' and 'great traditions'. Its influence on little traditions is termed as primary westernization and on great tradition as secondary westernization.

1. **Primary Westernization:** Primary westernization means changes induced by the influence of the west on Indian traditions. Initially, western culture made its impact on peripheral aspects of Indian culture. It created a sub-cultural pattern limited to a very specific group of people within a particular geographical area. Thus, during the early periods of British rule, the influence of the west was localized and peripheral. For example, in British trade centres, like Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, emerged as a new commercial middle-class, the social composition of which differed from place to place. In Calcutta they were '*Baniyas*' (Merchants), in Madras it was the Brahmins, whereas in Bombay they were mostly *Parsis*. These commercial middle-classes served as middle-men between native Indians and the British traders. This class was not westernized though they adopted western dress, language and ways of living. In their basic psychological disposition, they were quite Indian. According to the Indian sociologist Professor Yogendra Singh, 'They can be termed as "quasi-westernized middle men"'. Towards the early part of the 19th century, another group emerged—a group of English-educated professionals who played a major role in the process of westernization. These English-educated people took up the

values and ideologies of western culture like humanism, equality, and so on. Different socio-cultural reform movements started in this period spearheaded by these English-educated classes to campaign against sati-system, untouchability, child marriage and other social evils. The role of movements like the *Brahmo Samaja*, the *Prarthana Samaja*, and so on, was very important in this context. Such reformist movements, though local in spread, influenced the British administration and as a result many progressive laws were passed for example, the prohibition of sati, child marriage, and widow remarriage. The expansion of modern education, transportation and communication served as a prelude to greater westernization in the basic structural pattern of Indian society. Western cultural traits of humanism, rationality and equality started stimulating Indian minds which later brought about changes in the 'great tradition' of Indian society.

2. **Secondary Westernization:** Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the process of westernization started taking firm roots in the Indian social structure. Western culture emerged as the basic ideology. Many social reformers justified the adoption of the western cultural spirit in order to make Indians feel the necessity of liberty, freedom and equality. The cumulative effects on the changes in 'little tradition' and many other economic, political as well as administrative policies also affected the 'great traditions' of the country. Gradually, a new structural pattern with many new institutions started replacing many of its old institutions. Some such changes in the 'great tradition' of the country included introduction of the universalistic legal system, the expansion of modern, scientific and universal education, urbanization and industrialization, development in transport and communication, and the growth of the sense of unity and nationalism.

1.2.4 Emergence of Indian Renaissance

Indian Renaissance occurred when a mass religious and social awakening took place after the advent of the British. The reformists had undertaken the task of reforming the society with a lot of eagerness and enthusiasm. Renaissance stands for rebirth and Indian Renaissance refers to that period which was marked by the quest of knowledge and development of science and arts. The effects of Indian Renaissance reflected in the quality of life and the new frontiers scaled by dance, music and other performing arts.

The period when the Hindu religious system was revived can be termed as Hindu Renaissance, which was marked with the restoration of the Hindu deities and tradition. The late 18th century marked the beginning of a new era with movements essential for a complete reformation. The reformists never thought of discriminating on the basis of caste or sub caste, gender, or race. Hindu nationalism also rose to a great extent during this period.

As a result, the reformists or the native intellectuals got an opportunity to interact with the English class. Bengal became the leader of the Indian Renaissance, beginning from writers, politicians, historians, freedom fighters and religious saints.

Bengal Renaissance

The Bengali Renaissance refers to a socio-cultural and religious reform movement during the nineteenth and early twentieth century in undivided province of Bengal, though its impact was felt in the whole of India. The Bengal Renaissance is said to

have begun with Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1775–1833) and continued till the death of Rabindranath Tagore in 1941.

The Renaissance was the revival of the positives of India's past and an appreciation of the modern west that had emerged after the European Renaissance. Thus, the Bengal Renaissance blended together the teachings of the Upanishad to create public opinion against Hindu superstitions including Sati, infanticide, polygamy, child marriage, caste-division, inter-caste hatred, dowry, untouchability, etc. It also included the efforts of the Christian missionaries and the British Government of introducing western education, politics and law for people who indulged in superstitions and caste-based Hindu medievalism.

The nineteenth century became the high-point of British-Indian mutual reciprocation, especially within Bengal. This was a time of great cultural, social and political metamorphosis. A class of Bengali elite came into existence who could mingle with the British. This was the *Bhadralok*, a socially privileged and superior group, economically dependent on land rents, professional and clerical employments. This elite group in the second half of the 18th century started to reside in Calcutta. The Bengal renaissance started with Raja Ram Mohan Roy**,** who was the most prominent exponent of the transition.

Nineteenth century Bengal was a mixture of religious and social reformers, scholars, literary heavyweights, journalists, patriotic orators, and scientists. The major vehicle and expressions of the Bengal Renaissance were the following:

- Appearance of a large number of newspapers and periodicals
- Growth of different societies and associations
- Number of different religious and social reform movements

During this period, Bengal witnessed an intellectual awakening. People had started questioning the prevalent orthodoxies like the social status of women, marriage, superstitious beliefs and religion and the caste system. One of the earliest social movements that emerged during this time was the Young Bengal movement, that espoused rationalism and atheism as the common denominators of civil conduct among educated Hindus of the upper caste.

Brahmo Samaj, a socio-religious movement, was developed by Raja Ram Mohan Roy during this time. It had many leaders of the Bengal Renaissance as its followers. In the earlier years, Brahmo Samaj, like the rest of society, was not able to conceptualize a free India as it was greatly influenced by the European Enlightenment though it traced its intellectual roots to the Upanishads. Their version of Hinduism was devoid of practices like Sati and polygamy which was a rigid impersonal monotheistic faith, quite different from the multifaceted nature that Hinduism practiced.

Leader Keshub Chunder Sen was a devotee of Brahma, Krishna, Buddha and Christ. It is said that Brahmo Samaj movement could not gather support of the masses and remained restricted to the elite class only. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that many of the later Brahmos were among the leaders of the freedom movement.

Dwarkanath Ganguly, a Brahmo reformer in Bengal of British India, was a significant contributor to the enlightenment of society and the emancipation of women. He was married to Kadambini Ganguly, the first female graduate from India and the entire British Empire. She was also the first South Asian female physician, trained in western medicine, to graduate in South Asia. Both husband and wife were actively

involved in female emancipation and social movements to improve the work conditions of female coal miners in eastern India. She organized the Women's Conference in Calcutta in 1906 after the partition of Bengal.

Monomohun Ghose was the first practicing barrister of Indian origin. He is known for his contributions towards the education of women, for arousing patriotic feeling amongst the countrymen and for being one of the earliest one to be involved in organized national politics.

Ramgopal Ghosh was an Indian businessman, social reformer, orator and one of the leaders of the Young Bengal group. Ghosh was among the ones who helped John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune to establish a girl's school. He was the first, as early as 1853, to demand recruitment of Indians in civil service. In 1854, he became the first Indian to propose the establishment of universities in India. He supported Dwarkanath Tagore in sending four students to England for higher medical studies.

Debendranath Tagore was a Hindu philosopher and religious reformer, active in Brahmo Samaj. He was one of the founders in 1848 of the Brahmo religion. Brahmo Samaj was formed in 1843 by merging his Tattwabodhini Sabha with the Brahmo Sabha, ten years after the death of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Satyendranath Tagore was the first Indian to join the Indian Civil Service. He was an author, song composer, linguist and made valuable contribution towards the emancipation of women in Indian society during the British Raj.

British Orientalism significantly shaped the Bengal Renaissance. As English language education brought Western ideas to India, Orientalism helped in spreading of innovative cultural attitudes to the *Bhadraloka*. Even though the Bombay and Madras universities were founded within a few months of Calcutta's, perhaps these places were culturally too secure for a renaissance. Moreover, the dedicated involvement of people like Deroizio and Hare, not of Indian origin, inculcated the idea of French revolution and English radicalism in Bengal which was to a great extent responsible for the social movements in Bengal.

In its early days, the Renaissance was undoubtedly an elitist phenomenon: bright sons of upper class Hindus trained in Western literature, philosophy and science at the best colleges in Calcutta. But with the founding of the Calcutta University in 1857 the footprint widened.

1.2.5 Secularization

Secularization is another important process of social change in the modern Indian context. It refers to the transformation of a society identified with religious values, ideas and institutions towards non-religious ideas, values and institutions.

As societies progress and modernize, people follow values of reason and rationality; while religion, religious scriptures and institutions lose their influence on people and their social life. Thus, secularization is a process where societies lose their religious significance. The sociologist Max Weber opined that scientific and technological advancement would weaken peoples' belief on religion and supernatural powers. Rationality will also overpower superstitious beliefs and dogmas. Weber called this process the 'disenchantment of the world'.

The term 'secularization' was first used in Europe in 1648. It was then understood as the process of transferring the Church's properties to the control of rulers. The

British sociologist Bryan Wilson defined secularization as 'a process where religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance'.

Similarly, the Austrian-born American sociologist Peter Berger defined secularization as 'the process by which sections of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols'. Further, M. N. Srinivas wrote that 'the term secularization implies that what was previously regarded as religious is now ceasing to be such and it also implies the process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of socio-economic, political, legal and moral becoming increasingly discrete to each other.' Yogendra Singh remarked that secularism is a sub-process of modernization.

M.N. Srinivas wrote elaborately on the process of secularization in his analysis of social change in Indian society. According to him, British rule brought with it a process of secularization of Indian social life and culture, a tendency that gradually became stronger with the development of communications, growth of towns and cities, increased spatial mobility and the spread of education. The two World Wars and Gandhiji's Civil Disobedience campaigns, both of which socially and politically mobilized the masses, also contributed to increased secularization.

Following independence, the Constitution of India also recognized India as a secular state and maintained that all citizens are equal before law. Comparing both Sanskritization and secularization, Srinivas opined that of the two, secularization is the more general process, affecting all Indians; while Sanskritization affects only Hindus and tribals. As he mentioned, broadly, it would be true to say that secularization is more marked among the urban and educated sections of society and Sanskritization among the lower Hindu castes and tribes.

Quoting the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, he elaborated that one of the essential elements of secularization is rationalism, a comprehensive expression applied to various theoretical and practical tendencies which aim to interpret the universe purely in terms of thought, or which aim to regulate individual and social life in accordance with the principles of reason and to eliminate as far as possible or to relegate to the background everything irrational.

The main ingredients of secularization are discussed below:

- **Decline in religiosity:** Religion is based on a distinction between sacred and profane in which the term sacred is associated with a faith in a mythical or supernatural power. However, the process of secularization in contrast implies a gradual decline of religious feelings. In a perfectly secularized society, religious considerations are replaced by rationalistic considerations. Thus, as the process of secularization proceeds, the social institutions and individual actions become increasingly free from the influence of religion.

- **Rationality:** With the gradual decline of religious controls, there takes place a corresponding increase in rationalism in the process of secularization. People start thinking about the problems of their day-to-day life. Reason takes the place of faith. Instead of taking everything for granted, people try to find out the cause of happenings in their individual as well social life. A tendency towards establishment of cause and effect relationship becomes increasingly popular.

- **Empiricism and commitment to scientific world views:** The process of secularization results in growth in empiricism and scientific world view. Human knowledge is based on observation, experimentation and verification. Experience

and experimentation governs the human consciousness. Beliefs, faiths and mythical orientation are increasingly replaced by the scientific knowledge derived from empirical observation.

- **Process of differentiation:** The growth of empiricism and rationalism necessarily results in a corresponding differentiation in the social structure. Different aspects of social life come to be differentiated from each other. Each such aspect for example, economic, legal, political and moral subsystems becomes increasingly distinct. Each sub-system gets further differentiated which results in the increasing specialization and professionalization.

To sum up, it can be said that secularization is a process which brings change in the approach of people towards things where rationality and reason increasingly influence their attitude and orientations and where religious and superstitious beliefs have less control on human behaviour.

As stated above, the process of secularization in India started with British contact. However, there is a difference between the Western model of secularization and the Indian model of secularization. The Indian experience of secularization is a unique one. In the West, especially in Europe, secularization meant isolating the Church/religion from public life/control. Thus, the Western model is without religion. However, the Indian model of secularization is with religion. The Indian Constitution mentions in its 'Preamble' that it is a 'secular' country where each and every religion will be treated by the state equally and that there would not be any state religion. The Constitution also defines that every individual has the freedom to practice, profess and propagate any religion.

It has been instituted as one of the fundamental rights of Indian citizens. The right to freedom of religion is guaranteed under Article 25 of the Constitution of India. Article 25(1) states, 'Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.' Article 25 (2) says, 'Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law: (a) Regulating or restricting any economic financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice; (b) Providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.' Thus, this Article in the Constitution of India guarantees that every person in India shall have the freedom of conscience and shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate religion, subject to the restrictions that may be imposed by the state on some grounds.

Theories of Secularism

Secularization theory explains that as modern society advances, it will become increasingly secular, and religion will become increasingly hollow. Since the rise of science in the 17th Century, sociological commentators have realized that religion may be in a permanent decline, and some have proposed that science and intelligence, both rooted in the Enlightenment, are anathema to religious faith. Karl Marx (1818–1883), Emile Durkheim (1857–1917) and Max Weber (1864–1920), the founders of sociology, and William James (lectures from 1901–1902) are four eminent men who all noted this decline of religion.

Gandhi's secular theories took on a special significance in the particular context of the Indian National Movement. Indian society has been traditionally plagued by the evils of caste and creed-based discrimination. The caste oriented stratification of the

Indian society has hindered all chances of national unification from the early days of Indian society. The situation was complicated by the presence of various religious groups within the country, who were not ready to compromise on any ground to reach a platform of commonality. The traditional rhetoric of the religious and the self-styled spiritual preachers fuelled these divisions more often than not. It was a great pain for Gandhi that India's age old tradition of religious tolerance was not being maintained when it was needed the most. What particularly disturbed him was the realization that it would be impossible to organize any nationwide movement against the common enemy—the British oppressors—if society continues to remain divided on religious grounds. Secularism for Gandhi was an absolute necessity to bring about any form of constructive and all-encompassing political movement.

Gandhi preached his ideals of secularism and religious tolerance across the length and breadth of the country. He showed his understanding of the Muslim leaders through the support that the Congress extended to the Khilafat movement. Gandhi wrote extensively on the need of secularism in India, and made speeches to the same effect all over the country. It was not the easiest of tasks for Gandhi. The British were bent upon implementing the policy of divide and rule, and it took its worst form after the declaration of separate elections for the different communities in the Government of India Act in 1935. Indian National movement has always been plagued by communal tensions, and haunted it till the very end. Gandhi's monumental efforts at bringing together the various communities in India were not fully realized.

The British policy of 'divide and rule' had its effects, and the demand for a separate Muslim nation was fast gaining currency. Gandhi was hurt, but he realized his helplessness. Even at the time of intense riots on the eve of Indian independence, Gandhi was on the roads trying to unite the warring communal factions. Even his death can in many ways be related to his lifelong commitment to secular principles.

Significance of Secularism

The importance of secularism to India, and in fact the world, can hardly be overemphasized. Religion is so personal and emotional that it has the power to destroy any society if used as a political weapon. States must keep religion out of the political system to ensure peaceful co-existence. Most modern, liberal democracies have imbibed secularism as the defining characteristic of their political system.

There are many religions in the world and the questions that arise at this juncture are:

- Which religion should be followed by a person?
- Can a State compel its citizens to follow a particular religion?
- Can a State have its own religion?
- Can a State give preferential treatment to the followers of a particular religion?

The answer to all these questions is negative if the State has adopted the principle of secularism. A secular state is neither supposed to compel its citizens to adopt a particular religion nor it can give preferential treatment to the followers of a particular religion. Secularism eliminates God from the matters of the State. This is essential to keep religion in the private sphere.

Secularism ensures that religion does not determine State policy. It insulates public policy-making from the influence of religion and, thereby, eliminates any bias or discrimination that can creep into this process.

Check Your Progress

1. Who coined the term Sanskritization?
2. Define Sanskritization according to Srinivas.
3. What is secularization?
4. What do you understand by westernization?
5. Which was one of the earliest reform movements in Bengal in the colonial period?

1.3 SOCIAL CONSEQUENCE OF TRANSFORMATION OF INDIAN AGRICULTURE

Before the British invasion, India was a very significant agricultural power. The per capita production of food in this region (which is of average fertility) was more than five times its produce today. Between 1762 and 1766 there were villages whose levels of production reached up to 12 tons of paddy a hectare. This level of production is only feasible in areas of the country where the effect of Green Revolution was the highest. Nowadays, only the best, most advanced, expensive and often environmentally ruinous technologies are able to give such results. The annual availability of all food averaged five tons per household. The British government disrupted these statistics. In few areas they levied tax as per a percentage figure of the total tax revenue going to the institutions and fixed it as a dollar amount.

The British taxes spread poverty among the families of cultivators and farmers. Since the taxes were so high there was no money left for the farmers to support their families. British schemes lowered the growth of crops and weakened the Indian system of self-sufficiency. On a broad scale, three key types of land revenue systems were implemented in British India. These land revenue systems were:

- **Zamindari system:** This system was put in place to make sure that the revenue is finally directed to the British colonial power. A zamindar was given the charge of management and collection of revenue, on a condition of payment of a fixed amount of the revenue to the British regime. The farmers were transformed into tenants of the land they worked on. They were deprived of the land title and the other rights and privileges that they enjoyed during the Mughal period. The zamindars employed several intermediate collectors to collect revenue from the farmers. The larger share of the produce went to the zamindars and the farmer was left with a bare minimum which was not even sufficient to support his family. Thus the farmers were struck with poverty.

- **Rywotari system:** This system recognized the rights of ownership of farmers on their land and it was similar to the revenue system during the Mughal period, to a large extent. However, the zamindari system gradually started penetrating within regions that worked on the Rywotari system, particularly in the princely states and the areas governed by the feudal lords.

- **Mahalwari system:** In this system revenue was fixed on the entire village, considering it as a single unit. The farmers paid the revenue share of whole village that was proportional to their individual earnings. This gave moneylenders the power to recover old debts by mortgaging the land holdings of farmers. This had serious consequences. The biggest of them was the transfer of land from cultivators to non-cultivators. As a result, rural society in Rywotari and Mahalwari areas exhibited the division of land in favour of landlords and rich peasants. As a result, tenants and agricultural labourers became landless and the distribution of land was highly unequal.

- **Commercialization:** This was yet another side effect of British economic policies in India. The production of commercial agriculture crops for market rather than for consumption purpose was encouraged by colonial rulers. The commercialization of agriculture disrupted the traditional structure of Indian village economy. The

new land system had already made the existing rural framework weak. Now it was completely destroyed by the effects of commercial agriculture. This process of commercialization also had negative impact on the life and economic position of the farmers and the cultivators.

1.3.1 Commercialization of Agriculture

The British rule had a considerable impact on the agricultural sector of India. It eventually led to the commercialization of agriculture. The term commercialization of agriculture is generally used for the process of production of crops for market to be sold for cash rather than for family use. This process of commercialization of Indian agriculture started in the beginning of the 19th century and gained momentum in the latter half of the 19th century. As a result of this process, agriculture was no more devoted to the production of food or for internal consumption. It was made to subserve the new commercial policy. More and more land was brought under cultivation for the purpose of exportation.

It has been noted that even in ancient periods India exported agricultural goods and products to other countries and built up large reserves of gold. However, during the British rule, not only the surplus products of the village were traded, the peasant also produced at least partly for the market for the sake of money. Further, now the Indian exports exclusively consisted of primary agricultural products rather than the finished goods that India used to export. From traders, India was reduced to the status of providers of raw material to other nations under pressure of the British. The British also systematically destroyed the Indian handicrafts and other industries and replaced them by British manufactured goods.

The British came to realize the export potential of Indian products such as cotton, jute, indigo, etc. towards the close of the 18th century. It took an initial step in this regard in 1833 when jute cultivation was introduced in Bengal with a view to export the same to the foreign markets. Soon after this, it undertook cultivation of cotton in the Deccan and also introduced certain foreign varieties of cotton. The indigo planters, nearly all Europeans, also compelled the tenants to grow indigo which they processed in factories set up in rural areas. The peasants were forced to grow indigo on the best of the land they had even if they wanted to devote this land and labour to other cash crops. The total system involved great loss to the cultivators who were deceived with fraudulent contracts, low prices and other enforcements from the law. However, during this time the volume of Indian exports was very limited. It was only in the later part of the 19th century that rapid progress was achieved in the direction of commercialization of agriculture.

Causes of Commercialization of Agriculture

The various factors that led to the commercialization of agriculture are as follows:

- The agricultural policy adopted by the British East India Company also greatly contributed to the commercialization of agriculture. The Company encouraged the diversion of domestic production towards those articles which could bring higher profits. Thus, they encouraged the cultivation of poppy, indigo and tea.

  The government encouraged the commercialization of agriculture through its new irrigation policy as well.

- The policy of ruthless suppression of Indian manufacturers followed by the British resulted in millions of artisans being thrown out of their jobs forcing them to fall

back on agriculture. Mostly these artisans were encouraged to take to commercial crops.

- The process of commercialization of agriculture received a great fillip on account of the development of roads and railways. As a result, it became possible to transport huge quantities of crops from one region to another and even to foreign markets. This encouraged the peasants to produce for the world market where Indian food grains had a good market and commanded a high price.

- The American Civil War of 1861-65 also contributed to the acceleration of the pace of commercialization of agriculture in India. The British manufacturers of cotton goods who were getting bulk of their raw material supplies from the United States grew apprehensive about regular supplies from the USA and started looking for alternatives sources of supply. They procured the supply of cotton from Indian ports like Bombay. As the English offered quite a high price for cotton, the Indian cultivators tried to considerably increase cotton production.

The British Government also adopted a deliberate policy to encourage the Indian agriculturists to grow commercial crops like oilseeds, jute, and cotton for export to Britain. Thus, we can say that the American Civil War provided encouragement to the policy of commercialization of agriculture by increasing demand for Indian cotton and pushing up its price.

- As a result of the opening of the Suez Canal in the year 1869, the distance between India and Europe was greatly reduced. This not only cut short the time and cost of Indian exports to Europe but also made it possible to export those goods easily. The opening of the Suez Canal also encouraged competition among the shipping companies and resulted in considerable reduction in freight charges.

This ultimately provided a chance to the Indian exports and large quantities of raw materials were exported to England and other European countries.

Effect of Commercialization of Agriculture

The commercialization of agriculture in India only benefited the British planters, traders and manufacturers. No doubt it also led to the establishment of some industries in India as well but it was a poor consolation because these industries were managed and controlled by British capitalists. On the whole, the common Indian people greatly suffered on account of the policy of commercialization of agriculture. It resulted in considerable decline in the area under food crop cultivation. Even the Department of Agriculture set up by the British Government tried to encourage the cultivation of commercial crops. As a result of this policy while the area under cultivation of commercial crops continued to grow steadily, the area under cultivation of food crops declined. As a result, Indians could not get sufficient supplies of food grains to support their own needs.

The commercialization of agriculture also led to the breakup of the self-sufficiency of the villages. As the village markets were linked with the outside markets as well as the foreign markets, they ceased to be mere local markets for agricultural commodities. For some time, no doubt, this helped the farmers to increase their incomes by assuring them more remunerative prices for their products, it also linked their fate with world events. Such impacts were felt by the Indian farmers during the American Civil War and the Great Depression of 1929.

Another effect of the commercialization of agriculture in India was the growth and increasing dominance of the moneylenders over the village economy. Majority of the peasants lived in debt to the moneylenders who charged exorbitant interests and exploited the poor peasants. They were encouraged by the government because the government considered them as the mainstay for the payment of revenue. Thus, the moneylenders became, though indirectly, the instruments of colonial exploitation of India.

Till now we have only discussed the negative effects of the commercialization of agriculture but we cannot deny the fact that the commercialization of agriculture also had some positives. It was due to the commercialization of agriculture that more and more land was brought under cultivation to increase the production of cash crops. Also, it greatly added to the income of agriculturists. As they produced various crops, keeping in view the demand and prices prevailing in the market, they were able to considerably add to their income. As a result, there was an overall improvement in their income. The commercialization of agriculture also led to the introduction of a number of new crops like tea, coffee, potato, groundnuts and vivid varieties of fruits and vegetables.

This resulted in widening of the markets for the Indian agricultural crops. In light of all the above, we can say that the commercialization of Indian agriculture by the British was a mixed blessing.

1.3.2 Growth of Agricultural Labour

The British rule in India also resulted in the growth of the agricultural labour. Before the advent of the British in India, the Indian economy was largely based on the principle of self-subsistence in which cultivation was carried on by the farmers with the help of other family members. It was only after the British destroyed the self-sufficient village economy that the old production relations underwent a change and a large number of peasants who were deprived of their lands emerged as agricultural labourers.

There are several economic and social causes of the growth of agricultural labour. The chief one is the British rule. It has been found that the British also contributed to the growth of the agricultural labour through its policy of commercialization of agriculture, demanding revenue in cash, and making land transferable, etc. As a result of all this, the peasant sunk deeper into debts, till ultimately their land was consumed by the moneylenders and they were rendered landless labourers.

Slave Trade

It was also due to the British policy and rule that Indian labourers became part of the slave trade. In the first place there were labourers who virtually lived as slaves. This category of labourers came into existence because they undertook to serve the man from whom they borrowed money till it was repaid. As they could not repay the loans they got converted into bonded slaves of the creditors. These labourers depended for food on the creditors and for all other purposes virtually lived like serfs. They were sold, purchased and even mortgaged like ordinary commodities.

Indentured Labour

Indentured labour also known as forced labour is yet another outcome of British rule in India. With the abolition of slavery in many British colonies, there was a huge shortage of labourers. As a result of which most of the sugar plantation companies put pressure

on the British government. In fact, the economic condition of the British went on the verge of decline. In order to overcome this situation, the British government emigrated a large number of indentured labourers from India to its colonies that were producing sugar. These labourers were mainly emigrated from Bengal, Gujrat, Tamilnadu and Bihar and their economic condition was very poor. The situation of the indentured labourers was very weak.

Shift of Labour from Agriculture to Industries

With the advent of British rule, the dependency of agricultural labourers on agriculture industry shifted to other sectors as well. The British rule introduced the concept of industrialization in the Indian economic sector. As a result of which, in order to gain more income, most of the Indian labourers switched to other occupations leaving behind agriculture as their secondary source of income. Now there were agricultural workers who did not entirely depend on farm work. They pursued some other occupation and took to farm work with a view to supplement their income from the main occupation as the same was not adequate. Most of these labourers worked on their tiny holdings and were unemployed in the sense that they did not get adequate earnings from their cultivation.

Rural Indebtedness and Bonded Labour

Initially, India was a self-sufficient country. It was rich in all natural and agricultural resources but when the British landed in India they succeeded in carving out a strong empire here. They ruled for two centuries and brought tremendous changes in the country's economic system. They almost destroyed the isolationist and self-sufficing character of the villages.

As the traditional rural economy worked on the basis of self-sufficient village systems and the principle of hereditary division of labour, it was not possible for an individual to come out of the system. It was under the British rule that the problem of rural indebtedness assumed serious dimensions. As a result of commercialization of agriculture and the policy of monetization which accompanied it, a class of moneylenders made its appearance and worked as a tool for the British colonial exploitation. These moneylenders lent money to the peasants on the basis of a legal contract and could realize these loans through the legal machinery. Thus, money lending became an easy method of earning an income and subsequently of acquiring valuable titles to lands.

The legal system provided by the British also greatly contributed to rural indebtedness. So far the peasants used to get loans from moneylenders without any formal contract and the terms were settled between the creditor and the debtor by mutual consent. Under this arrangement, the village community was always able to protect the interests of the peasants, and prevent their undue exploitation by the moneylenders. The British introduced the system of civil courts and cultivators were obliged to conclude formal contracts with moneylenders for the necessary loans. The high rate of interest charged by the moneylenders and the various types of malpractices adopted by them to squeeze interest from the debtors also greatly contributed to rural indebtedness. The exorbitant rates of interest charged by the moneylenders made it difficult for the peasant to clear off the principal. As a result, while they continued to pay huge sum of money as interest, the principle amount always stayed, rendering the peasants under debt perpetually.

If the cultivators were not able to discharge their liabilities under the contract, the law courts assisted the creditors to realize their credits. This change clearly went in favour of the money lending classes, which was left free to charge an exorbitant interest rate. In case of the inability of the debtor to discharge his liability, the money was refunded by confiscating the cattle, implements, etc. of the debtor. Thus, we can say that the problem of rural indebtedness arose on account of numerous causes but the most significant contribution in this regard was made by the British Government, which left a deep impact on the Indian economy.

The growing rural indebtedness left a deep impact on the Indian economy. In the first place, it greatly added to the miseries of the cultivators. The cultivators were not able to pay the high rates of interest on the money borrowed by them. So, they were obliged to mortgage their land to the moneylenders. Generally, they were not able to get the land redeemed and it remained with the moneylender. As a result large numbers of cultivators were reduced to the position of tenants. This change in status of the cultivators greatly dampened their incentive and adversely affected the produce. In India, the transfer of lands into the hands of moneylenders did not result in the consolidation of holdings and large-scale production. On the other hand, it led to the subdivision and fragmentation of land which resulted in lower production.

The other bad effect of rural indebtedness was that the peasants were reduced to the position of serfs. They not only lost their lands to the moneylenders, but also often mortgaged their personal liberty in return for loan. As they were never able to pay off their loan, they continued to work as labourers on the land of the moneylenders. They were virtually reduced to the status of a livelong slave of the creditor.

The exploitation of the peasants by the moneylenders generated a lot of social tension and disturbed the traditional peace and harmony of village life. This growing tension often found outlet in the shape of incidents of looting and the murder of moneylenders. In certain areas, this anger of the peasants against exploitation by moneylenders erupted in the form of rebellions.

1.3.3 Emergence of New Social Class

The emergence of new social classes in India was the direct consequences of the establishment a new social economy, a new type of state system and state administrative machinery and the spread of new education during the British rule.

In agrarian area the new social class was as follows:

- Zamindars created by the British Government
- Absentee landlords
- Tenants under zamindars and absentee landlords
- Peasant proprietors
- Agricultural labourers
- Modern class of merchants
- Modern class of moneylenders

In urban areas, they were:

- Modern class of capitalist, industrial, commercial and financial
- Modern working class engaged in industrial, transport, mining and other such enterprises

- Class of pretty traders and shopkeepers
- Professional classes such as technicians, doctors, lawyers, professors, journalists managers, clerks and others, comprising the intelligentsia and the educated middle class

The new social classes came into existence due to the basic economic transformation brought about by the different acts of the British Government, for example, new type of land relations, commercial penetrations of Indian society from the outside capitalist world, and the establishment of modern industries in India.

The introduction of private property in the form of land by the British gave rise to the Zamindari and Ryotwari brought into being the new classes of large estate owners— zamindars and peasant proprietors. Tenants and sub-tenants emerged due to the creation of the right to lease land, the creation of to purchase and sell land together with the right to hire and employ labour on land created conditions for the growth of the absentee landlords and that of the agricultural proletariat.

With the new agrarian-economic system, intermediaries developed between the zamindar and the cultivating tenants in the zamindari zones. A chain of intermediaries such as moneylenders, absentee landlords, and merchants emerged between the cultivating tenants and the state in the Ryotwari area.

In the agrarian area, a group of modern moneylenders and merchants who were unknown in pre-British Indian society, developed on an increasing scale. They became the intermediaries between the peasants and the market, and absentee landlords.

Under the British rule, the internal and external trade expanded resulting in the emergence of a class of commercial bourgeoisie, engaged in extensive internal and foreign trade. These new merchant classes traded in rural and urban, agriculture and industrial commodities in the country.

The establishment of railways and accumulation of wealth in the hands of the Indian trading class, a section of zamindars and wealthy members of the professional classes led to the rise of Indian owned textile, mining, and other industries. The growth of a new class of industrial bourgeoisie such as mill owners, mine owners, and other owners of new capitalist enterprises also merged during this period. Along with this class, emerged the new class comprising of factory workers, mine workers, railway workers, and workers on the plantation. Hence, with the growth of modern industries in India the new class of the modern bourgeoisie and modern proletariat came into existence.

Another new social group that emerged during the British rule in India was the professional class comprising lawyers, doctors, teachers, professors, managers, clerks, engineers, chemists, technologies, journalists and others. These social groups linked up with modern industry, agriculture, commerce, finance, administration, press and other sections of the new social life, were unknown to pre-British Indian society. This social group is commonly known as 'Middle class' and 'Elite'. By 1870, India witnessed the rise and growth of middle-class consciousness which is reflected in the aspirations of native associations started in Madras, Bengal and Bombay presidencies.

The ideology of the most of the English-educated elite was motivated by a desire of change rather than defending conservation or privi-leges of caste. The English-educated elite in many cases became the torchbearers of modernity based on reason and social justice and made personal sacrifice to lead the Indian society on progressive lines of

western outlook. Some of the English-educated elite emerged as intelligentsia and guided the destiny of Indian nation by their ideas and deeds.

The intelligentsia of 19th century stood for reform and revival as in the case of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda Saraswati and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Some intellectuals impressed by the progressive ideas of the West, successfully convinced that the Indian society was in need of urgent social change and acted as catalysts in bringing out the desired change. At the same time some intellectuals resisted total modernization based on secular values. Thus, middle-class elite played a critical role in-shaping and moulding the destiny of India by their critical understanding of western outlook based on reason, social justice and equality.

In addition to the new classes enumerated above, there existed in the urban area, in every town and city, a big class of petty traders and shopkeepers which had developed with the growth of modern cities and towns.

1.4 CHANGING CASTE EQUATION

There has been much debate among scholars on the concepts of *varna* and *jati*. As social hierarchies were conceptualized across regions in India, numerous *jatis*, referred to as castes, became more important for practical social organization. More than 3,000 *jatis*, as occupational groups, emerged in modern India, and they were often sub-divided into sub-castes on the basis of professional specialization. The membership of *jati* or castes as occupational groups was determined by birth, and its exclusivity was maintained by rigid rules of endogamy and commensality restrictions. Every caste was ascribed a ritual rank, which located its members in an elaborate hierarchy that encompassed the entire society. A purity-pollution scale determined the social rank: the Brahmin being the embodiment of purity was located at the top of the scale, and the untouchables being impure were at the bottom.

The caste system cannot be confused with the class system. Even if a Brahmin priest was economically less affluent, he was always more powerful than a Kshatriya king. Although this implies a rigid social order in accordance with the scriptures, the reality of caste society differed significantly from this ideal and its hegemony was from time to time contested from within. During the medieval times, the caste system was attacked by the Bhakti Movement, which questioned the ritualistic foundation of religious and social life and emphasized simple devotion in its place. With new opportunities of trade, extension of agriculture to the wasteland and the emergence of new technology aided lower caste groups to achieve social mobility. These groups were able to improve their economic and political status, and to translate that into higher ritual ranks in the caste hierarchy. In addition, the caste system had a great deal of vagueness in the middle caste rungs; there are many instances where various peasant castes competed with each other for the superiority of status.

In many ways, the colonial rule redefined the caste system. On one hand, it created opportunities that led to caste emancipation, but on the other, it entrenched caste system in the society by making it less flexible and more rigid. Colonial knowledge often worked against colonial institutions and policies. The orientalist scholars immersed themselves in understanding the ancient past. They focussed on classical texts often ignoring the Indian customs that were not part of scriptures but were equally important in governing social life. Their interpretation of classical texts highlighted the caste system as the most essential form of Hindu social organization, thereby giving

it a rigid definition and curbing the flexibility of the pre-colonial caste structure. It began to define the caste system as the only peg around which the structure of Hindu society rested.

As the colonial state gathered knowledge on the Indian society to facilitate its rule, the colonial ethnographers came to play an important part and collected more information on caste hierarchy. The process of gathering information by the colonial state gave another new twist to the caste angle. When Henry Risley became the census commissioner in 1901, he proposed not only to enumerate all castes, but also to determine and record their location in the hierarchy of castes. Caste was gradually given an enumerated shape, and above all an official legitimacy. To the Indian public, the decennial census classification of castes appeared to be an official attempt to conceal the hierarchy, which had been fluid and constantly changing over time.

However, the impact of the colonial state is not limited to the entrenchment of the caste system. It also provided a public space to various caste groups that ultimately led to the emergence of various caste-based movements. In the initial phase, the colonial state introduced policies that created opportunities that were ostensibly open to all castes. Educational institutions and public employment were thrown open to talent irrespective of caste or creed. Equality before law became an established principle of judicial administration. However, only the higher castes with excess resources could avail English education, and could take advantage of the new judicial system. Gradually, the colonial administration too discovered the schism between the high caste Hindus and others, particularly the untouchables. A number of policies were initiated by the colonial state to protect the interests of the untouchables, now described as the 'depressed classes'. They initiated a policy of 'protective discrimination' in their favour; jobs were reserved in the public employment and special schools were introduced for their education.

In addition, the introduction of a common Indian penal code (1861) and the code of criminal procedure (1872), to a large extent, facilitated the modern political thought based on equality and social egalitarianism. The extension of railway network (anyone could buy ticket and occupy any seat) and the growth of western system of education blurred the boundaries associated with caste. Along with the growth of national consciousness, the popularity of the modern political thought based on caste equality created a social and political climate in which caste system could not be defended. Politically, the colonial state through the Act of 1919, made a special representation of the 'depresses classes' in the legislative councils through nominations. Later in the communal award of 1932, separate electorates were announced for the 'depressed classes'.

What all these measures resulted in was a relatively greater distribution of wealth and power across lower caste ranks. The upwardly mobile groups sought to legitimize their new status by emulating the ritual practices of the upper castes. This was one of the reasons why customs like sati, widow remarriage and child marriage—the performance of which was regarded as the hallmarks of the high caste status—were in the nineteenth century more widely practised by the upwardly mobile lower peasant groups. Paradoxically, this behaviour signifies an approval of the caste system, seeking a positional readjustment within the existing ritual hierarchy.

However, not all castes at all time followed the path of 'sanskritization'. There was also a growing realization of the significance of the new sources of status, i.e., education, jobs and political representation, and how these tools of power were monopolized

by the Brahmins and the upper castes. This led to organized demands for more special privileges and reservation from the colonial state. Caste consciousness emerged in the lower caste groups who now struggled for caste equality. Various non-Brahmin organizations emerged with greater political consciousness. These caste groups gradually evolved into tools of modernization in colonial India. Their goals shifted from being just claims for higher ritual ranks to being secular, they tried to educate their members in the methods and values of political democracy.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay's *Caste, Culture and Hegemony* addresses both the status of caste as an analytical category and caste politics, as it stresses the centrality of caste in Bengali Hindu social formations and reconstructs the ways in which caste shaped the power system in Bengal. Bandyopadhyay shows that the hegemony of high caste groups was remarkably durable throughout this period. The book also addresses the status of caste and caste politics as an analytical category and stresses the importance of caste in Bengali Hindu social formations. Bandyopadhyay shows that the hegemony of high caste groups of this period did not change even after political reform and social change. He acknowledges that 'traditional' caste structures were put under pressure by social mobility and by advocates of social reform.

1.4.1 Non-Brahmin Movements in Western India

Various movements emerged that questioned the fundamentals of this caste-based social organization, the most notable of them being the non-Brahmin movements in western India. The non-Brahmin movement started in Maharashtra under the leadership of the great activist, thinker, writer, philosopher and social reformer, Jyotirao Phule, of the *mali* (gardener) caste. His contribution to the education of lower caste women and the removal of untouchability has been remarkable. In September 1873, Phule established the Satya Shodhak Samaj (Society of Seekers of Truth) aiming at the liberation of the Bahujans, Shudras and Ati-Shudras in order to protect them from being exploited at the hands of the upper caste people. He opened a number of schools and orphanages for the children and women belonging to all castes.

Phule interpreted the 'Aryan' theory propounded by the orientalists to impact people's thinking. He suggested that since the upper caste leaders boasted of belonging to the Aryan race, this pointed to the fact that they were not the original inhabitants of India. This also meant that the caste system was a foreign import. Phule projected the Aryans as invaders and late settlers in India who subdued the indigenous population and destroy the native civilization. He recognized that the ancestors of the lower castes were the natives who were the original inhabitants of the land. According to this interpretation, the fair-skinned Brahmins were the descendants of the invaders, while the warrior clan of the Kshatriyas was the actual ruling class. According to Phule, it was Brahmin domination and their monopoly over power and opportunities that lay at the root of the predicament of the Shudra and Ati-Shudra castes. The Brahmins under the pretext of religion tyrannized other castes and turned them into slaves. Therefore, the balance now needed to be redressed and for achieving that, a social revolution was indispensable. He attempted to unite both the non-Brahmin peasant castes as well as the Dalit groups in a common movement.

In 1875, Phule became interested in the Arya Samaj, but he never joined the movement because he was distrustful of the upper caste leaders whom he saw as hypocrites. Undoubtedly, these leaders opposed the atrocities that the social system gave rise to, but they operated within the same set of societal rules. He maintained a

suitable distance from the Congress, which he saw as a purely Brahmin Movement. The Congress leaders, he argued, had neglected the interests of the weaker sections. Nationalism, in his view, was a mirage that the upper caste perpetrated so as to manipulate and hide the grim realities of the Indian social life.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Phule focussed more on mobilizing the Kunbi peasantry. This shift of focus on the Kunbi peasants also led to the privileging of the Maratha identity, and an assertion of their Kshatriyahood. In other words, while this Kshatriya identity was constructed to contest the Brahminical discourse that ascribed to them an inferior caste status, it separated them from the Dalit groups. Therefore, Satyashodak Samaj failed to serve as a common platform that could unite all non-Brahmin groups (on account of having a pan non-Aryan identity) mainly due to the focus of the Marathas on their separatist identity as warriors. They were not ready to absorb the lower caste people among them and adhered keenly to the Sanskritization process.

Eventually, the Satyashodak Samaj came to be recognized with the Marathas, even though it had maintained distance with the Congress earlier. Later, it went on to become one with the Congress which comprised a majority of Brahmins. By the 1930s, the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra was gradually drawn into the Gandhian Congress. The power of nationalism and the growing willingness of the Congress to accommodate non-Brahmin aspirations resulted in the 1938 merger at Vidarbha. The non-Brahmin movement of the Bombay Presidency formally decided to merge into the Congress, providing it with a broad mass base.

1.4.2 Radical Movements in Southern India

In Madras Presidency, the non-Brahmin movement was associated with the Vellalas and Dravidian identity. Again, British orientalism played a major role in affecting this development. An orientalist, Reverend Caldwell (1819–1891), had proposed in the nineteenth century that originally, it was the Dravidians who inhabited the subcontinent in the southern part, while Sanskrit was brought to the land by the Aryan Brahmin invaders. In the late nineteenth century context, the Brahmins constituting less than three per cent of the population had monopolized 42 per cent of government jobs. Advanced in their English education, they valorized Sanskrit as the language of a classical past, and showed a public disdain for Tamil, the language of the ordinary people. This motivated the Vellala elite to advocate for their Dravidian identity.

The non-Brahmin elite appropriated some of the ideas of the British orientalists and began to assert their Tamil language, literature and culture. The caste system according to them was not indigenous to the Tamil culture, and therefore, the Vellalas and other non-Brahmins could not be described as Shudras, as this was a status imposed upon them by the Brahmin colonists trying to thrust on them their idolatrous religion. The non-Brahmin South Indian associations began to deliberately adopt the suffix 'Adi,' referring to 'initial' or 'primordial' in their titles. This movement to construct a non-Brahmin identity began like its western Indian counterpart with the inversion of the Aryan theory of Indian civilization.

On the political front, the Justice Party was established in 1917 arising from a number of non-Brahmin conferences and meetings. Initially, the Party petitioned the imperial administrative authorities and British politicians, and asked for increased representation for non-Brahmins in administrative and governmental bodies. It opposed the Congress as a Brahmin dominated organization, and claimed separate communal

representation for the non-Brahmins as had been granted to the Muslims in the Morley-Minto reforms. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms resulted in a joint or diarchal administrative system. It was then that the Justice Party participated in presidential governance. It was allocated twenty-eight reserved seats of the non-Brahmins in the Madras Legislative Council. Opposed to the Congress and to its programme of non-cooperation, the Justice Party had no qualms in contesting the election in 1920, in which the Congress had given a call for boycott. As a result, it succeeded in forming the government by winning the first direct elections in the presidency in 1920. In the period between 1920 and 1937, it filled four out of the five administrative departments. It remained in power for thirteen out of the seventeen years. It turned out to be the chief political substitute of the nationalist Indian National Congress in the presidency.

The 1920s was the high point in the career of the Justice Party, and also the beginning of its decline. It was patronized mainly by richer landowning and urban middle class non-Brahmins, like the Vellalas in the Tamil districts, the Reddis or Kapus and Kammas in the Telugu districts, the Nairs in Malabar, scattered all over South India. These elite members of the Justice Party became engrossed in their newly gained power, gave up their reformist agenda and became less interested in the plight of the untouchables. The decline in popular base which thus began, ultimately culminated in their electoral defeat in 1926 at the hands of the Swarajists. Many non-Brahmins thereafter left the party and joined the Congress, which regained its power. This was reflected in the success of the Civil Disobedience Campaign in 1929–30, the Quit India Movement of 1942, in the election of 1946, where the Justice Party did not even field a candidate.

Under the auspices of Periyar E.V. Ramaswamy, a significant proponent of the Self-Respect Movement, the party was turned into social organization called Dravidar Kazhagam in 1944. It also disengaged itself from electoral politics. Once an enthusiastic campaigner for the non-cooperation programme, he left the Congress in 1925, and he was disappointed with Gandhi's pro-Brahmin and pro-varnashrama remarks. He severely criticized Aryanism, Brahmanism and Hinduism, which he thought led to the subjugation of the Shudras, Adi-Dravidas (untouchables) and women. Therefore, he claimed that what was needed before self-rule, was self-respect. The movement mounted scathing attacks on the Sanskrit language and literature, seen as the cultural symbols of Aryan colonization of the south. The story of the Ramayana was inverted to make Ravana an ideal Dravidian and Rama an evil Aryan. The Self-Respect Movement gave importance to the earlier writings of the Adi-Dravida intellectuals like Iyothee Thass and M. Masilamani. Both were publishing numerous articles against the caste system, Brahmin domination and Indian nationalism since the first decade of the twentieth century. During the 1930s, the non-Brahmin movement became more radical, and laid more emphasis on the boycott of Brahmin priests. There were more incidents of public burning of Manusmriti and attempts to enter temples, which denied access to low caste people.

1.4.3 Position of Gandhi and Ambedkar on the Question of Caste

Gandhiji regarded untouchability as a blot on Hinduism. In 1920, he wrote '… Without the removal of the taint (of untouchability), "Swaraj" is a meaningless term.' He advocated positive means for the upliftment of Harijans. He addressed various public meetings reposing doctrines of Harijan welfare. He started two journals, Harijan and Young India through which he advocated his ideas. He started an ashram where people of all castes and creeds could come and stay without any differences. Gandhiji served

the Harijan Sevak Sangha started by the social reformer Takkar Bapa in the year 1932 for working out the religious and social welfare of the Harijans. The organization opened schools and dispensaries in various places and arranged for free educational facilities and scholar-ships for the Harijan children. From 1920 onwards under the leadership of Gandhiji, the Indian National Congress became committed to attain independence on the one hand and affect the removal of untouchability on the other. In 1920 itself, he declared that 'Untouchability cannot be given a secondary place in the programme' of Congress.

Gandhi condemned untouchability as an aberration in the Hindu society, but until the 1940s, he upheld varnashrama or caste system as an ideal non-competitive economic system of social division of labour as opposed to the class system of the West. The Gandhian approach, in other words, failed to satisfy the Dalit leaders like Ambedkar who preferred a political solution through guaranteed access to education, employment and political representation. Ambedkar later charged Gandhi and the Congress for ignoring the real issue and the demand for a separate political identity for the Dalits became a major issue in the relationship between the Dalit political groups and the Congress.

B.R. Ambedkar was born to poor Mahar parents. He belonged to the Mahar community which was regarded as an untouchable caste. He is known for campaigning resolutely against social discrimination on the basis of caste, colour or creed and against the Chaturvarna system which segregated the Hindu society into four varnas. Ambedkar worked towards the upliftment of the 'untouchables,' and focussed on the need to educate them. He assembled like-minded people and organized the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, in an attempt to espouse education and social and economic development of the depressed classes. In the late 1920s, Ambedkar actively launched several movements to condemn untouchability. He organized public protests and marches and demanded the opening up of public drinking water resources to the depressed classes. He also organized a protest for these classes to be allowed to enter Hindu temples. He stood at the helm of a satyagraha in Mahad organized by the depressed classes to exercise their right to the town water body. He participated in a protest event where copies of the Manusmriti were burned. As for its political philosophy, in his address, Ambedkar took a very clear anti-Congress and a mildly anti-British position, thus setting the tone for the future course of history.

Ambedkar demanded separate electorate as the only means to secure adequate representation for the Dalits. Following this, on 19 May 1931, an All India Depressed Classes Leaders' Conference in Bombay formally resolved that the depressed classes must be guaranteed 'their right as a minority to separate electorate'. Gandhi never agreed to enforce a separate electorate for the untouchables, arguing that this would segregate the Hindu society forever. The British were in favour of awarding a separate electorate to the depressed classes. Ambedkar convinced the British and they announced communal award of a separate electorate in 1932. However, Gandhiji opposed such a move and fasted even though he was imprisoned in the Yerwada Central Jail of Poona. Gandhiji was very much against the British policy of 'divide and rule'. He condemned the British policy of separating the Harijans from the rest of the Hindus. Hence, he protested against the proposal of creating separate electorate for the Harijans. He said to Ambedkar who was in favour of the proposal, that 'the political separation of the untouchables from the Hindus would be suicidal to the nation'.

Gandhiji declared at the Minorities Committee of the Second Round Table Conference in London (1932) that 'we do not want the untouchables to be classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain such in perpetuity, so may Muslims and Christians. Will the untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would rather feel that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. I will resist it with my life.' Gandhiji's fast led to civil unrest across the country and especially among the conservative Hindu leaders. This resulted in the Congress politicians and activists such as Madan Mohan Malaviya and Palwankar Baloo seeking to discuss the matter with Ambedkar and his followers at Yerwada. Ambedkar feared that the events could take an ugly turn in the form of communal frenzy, and withdrew his support for a separate electorate. He was forced by circumstances to agree with Gandhiji. This agreement led Gandhiji to break his fast and Ambedkar to withdraw his demand for a separate electorate, and came to be known as the Poona Pact, which provided for 151 reserved seats for the Scheduled Castes in joint electorate.

In the Karachi Session of the Congress in 1931 at the request of Gandhiji, a resolution was adopted. It declared, 'all the citizens are equal before law irrespective of caste, creed or sex'. In 1932, the Harijan Sevak Sangh was formed and its Conference at Bombay pledged that the right to use the public roads, wells, etc. would be given statutory recognition when the Swaraj Parliament met. This pledge was stressed upon by Gandhiji in 1932 when he said, 'There could be no rest … until untouchability becomes a thing of the past.'

The Harijan movement gained strength throughout the country. Gandhiji went on an all-India tour to collect huge sums of money for this programme. There was also cooperation between Gandhi and Ambedkar in relation to the activities of the newly founded Harijan Sevak Sangh. The provisions of the pact were later incorporated into the Government of India Act of 1935. In 1938, the Removal of the Civil Disabilities Act was passed by the Madras Legislature which provided that no Harijan shall be disabled from any social or public amenity. In the same year, it also passed the Malabar Temple Entry Act which threw open the temple gates in Malabar. In 1939, the temple of Madurai was opened to the Harijans. Thus, Gandhiji's fast and his Harijan movement released tremendous forces throughout the country, which led to the removal of some of the disabilities of the Harijans.

Gandhi prevented a split in India's social-political fabric and offered a 'nationalist' solution to the problem of untouchability. But disunity reappeared very soon, and the relations between Congress leaders and Ambedkar began to come under strain again. While Gandhi's Harijan Sevak Sangh was involved in social issues, the other Congress leaders had little interest in his undertaking. They needed a political front to mobilize the Dalit voters to win the reserved seats in the coming elections. For this purpose, they founded the All India Depressed Classes League, with Jagjivan Ram, a nationalist Dalit leader from Bihar, as the president in March, 1935. But still in the election of 1937, the Congress won only 73 out of 151 reserved seats all over India.

In 1936, Ambedkar founded his Independent Labour Party. He tried to mobilize and forge an alliance between the poor and the untouchables on a broader basis than caste alone. His party participated in the 1937 Bombay election to the Central Legislative Assembly for the thirteen reserved and four general seats, and got elected to eleven and three seats respectively. The Ambedkarites also did well in the Central Provinces and Berar. Ambedkar worked in the Defence Advisory Committee and the Viceroy's Executive Council as minister for labour. However, Ambedkar gradually

moved towards the more exclusive constituency of the Dalits. He also became a bitter critic of the Congress leaders like Nehru and their secular approach that neglected the caste as a political problem, which estranged the Dalit leadership. Ambedkar's book The Annihilation of Caste was published in 1937. It condemned the conservative Hindu religious leaders and censured the existing caste system. Through one of his other texts titled *Who Were the Shudras*?, Ambedkar tried to elucidate the origins of untouchables. He differentiated between the Shudras, who were at the bottom rungs of the Hindu social order, and the untouchables. Ambedkar monitored the metamorphosis of his political party into the Scheduled Castes Federation, but it did not perform well in the 1946 elections for the Constituent Assembly of India. He wrote a sequel to Who Were the Shudras?, in 1948 titled *The Untouchables: A Thesis on the Origins of Untouchability.* In this book, he claimed that the Hindu civilization sought to confine certain segments to an existence of slavery. 'What else can be said of a civilization which has produced a mass of people ... who are treated as an entity beyond human intercourse and whose mere touch is enough to cause pollution?'

There emerged two versions of nationalism; the Congress was anxious with the transfer of power and independence, and the Dalits were more concerned with their future and their conditions in a nation state dominated by high caste Hindus. Ambedkar was prepared to join the struggle for Swaraj, if he could get any guarantee that the rights of Dalits will be restored in the new nation state. The Congress leaders made no promises and Ambedkar abandoned the Congress Movement for freedom struggle. At a conference from 18 to 20 July 1942 in Nagpur, he started his All India Scheduled Caste Federation, with its constitution claiming the Dalits to be 'distinct and separate from the Hindus'. This statement of Dalit opposition and their claim of a separate identity came just a few days before the beginning of the Quit India Movement (8-9 August), which the Muslims had also decided to stay away from. But unlike Muslim breakaway politics, Dalit self-assertion did not go very far, and their politics was soon appropriated by the Congress in the late 1940s. The Congress had gained a lot of popularity generated by the Quit India Movement and later the anti-INA trial agitation. The Dalits were not united and not all of them believed in Ambedkar politics, particularly at a period when Gandhian mass nationalism had acquired an unparalleled public recognition. The Scheduled Caste Federation did not have adequate resources to build up a mass organization that could match that of the Congress. The Gandhian reformist agenda, and later the revolutionary programme of the communists, were constantly eating away its support base. Finally, the urgent transfer of power process left very little room for the Dalit leadership to assert themselves, compelling them to join hands with the Congress.

1.5   SUMMING UP

- The emergence of new social classes in India was the direct consequences of the establishment a new social economy, a new transport system, a new type of state system and state administrative machinery and the spread of new education during the British rule.

- Largely due to the efforts of social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati and many others, the British introduced some social and religious reforms.

- The credit of setting up the first railway line in India goes to Lord Dalhousie. The first railway line connecting Bombay to Thane was opened in 1853. The

Check Your Progress

9. Who initiated the
   non-Brahmin
   movement in
   Maharashtra?

10. What was
    Gandhiji's view on
    untouchability?

following year Calcutta was linked to the coalfields in Raniganj and Bombay was connected with Kalyan. In 1856, another line was opened to join Madras with Arakonam.

- The most important outcome, which the British could not prevent, was the coming together of people from all parts of the country, which helped to promote integration. When the people of various castes and religions travelled together it helped to break caste barriers.

- The second half of the 19th century witnessed the growth of plantation and machine industries. The demand for tea, coffee and indigo attracted many Europeans to the plantation industry in India.

- With the growth of industries, two new classes emerged in the Indian society—the capitalists and the industrial workers. There was also the middle class or the intellectual class, which grew with the expansion of the administrative machinery, trade and industry.

- The Company government took its first step towards education with the Charter Act of 1813. The Company was asked to set aside a sum of rupees one lakh on education. For two decades thereafter this money lay untouched as no consensus could be reached on the medium of instruction and on whether it should be western education or traditional learning.

- The British rule affected Indian artisans negatively. As soon as the British rule was established in India, the art scene changed drastically. All farmers, artisans, craftsmen and factory labourers became impoverished because of the fiscal policies of the British Government in India.

- The noted Indian sociologist M.N. Srinivas had made a sincere effort to analyse the process of social change in Indian society through his significant work, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India* (1952).

- Srinivas further maintained that Sanskritization is usually accompanied by and often results in upward mobility for the concerned caste. However, the mobility associated with Sanskritization is only positional change in the system of caste hierarchy and does not lead to any structural change.

- Westernization means a process whereby societies increasingly adopt western culture, life-styles, technology, food pattern, language, alphabet, religion, ideas, philosophies and value systems. Srinivas used the term 'Westernization' particularly to indicate the change that took place in Indian society during British rule in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

- Srinivas wrote that British rule produced radical and lasting changes in Indian society and culture. It was unlike any previous period in Indian history as the British brought with them new technology, institutions, knowledge, beliefs and values.

- Westernization resulted not only in the introduction of new institutions like press, newspapers, journals, elections, and so on, but also in fundamental changes in the old institutions.

- Primary westernization means changes induced by the influence of the west on Indian traditions.

- Secularization is another important process of social change in the modern Indian context. It refers to the transformation of a society identified with religious values, ideas and institutions towards non-religious ideas, values and institutions.

- A zamindar was given the charge of management and collection of revenue, on a condition of payment of a fixed amount of the revenue to the British regime. The farmers were transformed into tenants of the land they worked on.

- The term commercialization of agriculture is generally used for the process of production of crops for market to be sold for cash rather than for family use. This process of commercialization of Indian agriculture started in the beginning of the 19th century and gained momentum in the latter half of the 19th century.

- The British rule in India also resulted in the growth of the agricultural labour. There are several economic and social causes of the growth of agricultural labour. The chief one is the British rule. It has been found that the British also contributed to the growth of the agricultural labour through its policy of commercialization of agriculture, demanding revenue in cash, and making land transferable, etc.

- The new social classes came into existence due to the basic economic transformation brought about by the different acts of the British Government, for example, new type of land relations, commercial penetrations of Indian society from the outside capitalist world, and the establishment of modern industries in India.

- Srinivas also refers to the building of roads all over India, the introduction of postage, telegraph, cheap paper and printing — especially in regional languages— enabled castes to organize as they had never done before.

- Caste has never been static. The caste system has been changing continuously and has always undergone adaptive changes. Though the pace of change might have been slow earlier, in the post-independence period the changes have occurred rapidly.

- In many ways, the colonial rule redefined the caste system. On the one hand, it created opportunities that led to caste emancipation, but on the other, it entrenched caste system in the society by making it less flexible and more rigid. Colonial knowledge often worked against colonial institutions and policies. The orientalist scholars immersed themselves in understanding the ancient past.

- Various movements emerged that questioned the fundamentals of this caste based social organization, the most notable of them being the non-Brahmin movements in western India. The non-Brahmin movement started in Maharashtra under the leadership of the great activist, thinker, writer, philosopher and social reformer, Jyotirao Phule, of the mali (gardener) caste.

- In Madras Presidency, the non-Brahmin movement was associated with the Vellalas and Dravidian identity. Again, British orientalism played a major role in affecting this development. An orientalist, Reverend Caldwell (1819–1891), had proposed in the nineteenth century that originally, it was the Dravidians who inhabited the subcontinent in the southern part, while Sanskrit was brought to the land by the Aryan Brahmin invaders.

- Gandhi condemned untouchability as an aberration in the Hindu society, but until the 1940s, he upheld varnashrama or caste system as an ideal non-competitive economic system of social division of labour as opposed to the class system of the West.

1.6   KEY TERMS

- **Sanskritization:** The process by which a low Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently 'twice-born' caste.

- **Westernization:** It is a process whereby societies come under or adopt Western culture in such matters as industry, technology, law, politics, economics, lifestyle, diet, language, alphabet, religion, philosophy and/or values.

1.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The term Sanskritization was coined by Srinivas.

2. M.N. Srinivas defined Sanskritization as 'The process by which a low Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently "twice-born" caste.'

3. Secularization refers to the transformation of a society identified with religious values, ideas and institutions towards non-religious ideas, values and institutions.

4. Westernization means a process whereby societies increasingly adopt western culture, life-styles, technology, food pattern, language, alphabet, religion, ideas, philosophies and value systems.

5. One of the earliest social movements that emerged during this time was the Young Bengal movement.

6. The production of commercial agriculture crops for market rather than for consumption purpose was encouraged by colonial rulers. The commercialization of agriculture disrupted the traditional structure of Indian village economy.

7. Professional classes comprising modern lawyers, doctors, teachers, professors, managers, clerks, engineers, chemists, technologies, and journalists were the middle class.

8. Zamindari system was put in place to make sure that the revenue is directed to the British colonial power. A zamindar was given the charge of management and collection of revenue, on a condition of payment of a fixed amount of revenue to the British regime.

9. Jyotirao Phule initiated the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra.

10. Gandhiji regarded untouchability as a blot on Hinduism.

1.8   QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What structural changes have taken place in the caste system of India?

2. How was agriculture responsible for the emergence of new social classes?

3. What is westernization?

4. Define sanskritization.

5. Who were the tenant kisans?

6. What is secularization?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the process of sanskritization propounded by Srinivas.

2. Explain the concept of westernization in Indian context.

3. Discuss the major factors responsible for the changes in the caste system.

4. Distinguish between primary and secondary westernization.

5. Write a short note on Bengal Renaissance.

6. Discuss in detail how the caste system has changed over the years.

7. Explain secularization and its theories.

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UNIT 2 IMPACT OF MODERN EDUCATION AND THE NEW INTELLIGENTSIA

Structure

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Initially, the East India Company did not think that it was its duty to impart education to Indians. It allowed the old system of education to continue. Pathshalas, which were open to all, imparted a special type of education geared towards meeting the requirements of the rural society. Muslims attended Madrasas. Higher education was confined primarily to upper castes. This system of education was eventually changed by the British. The need for low-ranking English-knowing Indian clerks was one of the main reasons that prompted the government to take steps to spread Western education.

Western education, however, influenced Indian society in a way that the British could never have imagined. Theories of philosophers like John Locke, Jeremy Bentham, Adam Smith and Voltaire instilled in the Indian minds notions of freedom, liberty, equality and democracy. As a result of the exposure to such ideas, Indians began to recognize the need for change.

The demand for social and religious reform that manifested itself in the early decades of the 19th century partly arose as a response to western education and culture. India's contact with the West made educated Indians realize that socio-religious reform was a prerequisite for the all-round development of the country.

Educated Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar worked systematically to eradicate social evils. A period of social reforms began in India during the time of Governor General Lord William Bentinck.

In this unit, you will learn more about the impact of modern education on Indian society and how a new intelligentsia emerged as a consequence of modern western education.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the impact of modern education on Indian society
- Explain the role of modern education in the emergence of new intelligentsia
- Discuss the contribution of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Phule and Phukan as social reformists

2.2 EDUCATION IN THE PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL SETUP

In ancient India, the educational system embodied the method of oral teaching and learning texts by heart. This system prescribed the ancient learning through the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation, before it was stored up in the form of manuscripts. The gurukul system which necessitated the stay of the student away from his home at the house of a teacher or in a boarding house of established reputation was one of the most important features of the ancient Indian education. The Hindu *Shastras* recommended that the student should begin to live under the supervision of his teacher after his initiation ceremony. Direct, personal and continuous contact with a teacher of noble character naturally produced great effect on the scholar during the pliable period of childhood and adolescence. Texts of a spiritual bent were studied at these centres of learning. After invasion by the Mughals, Persians and the Turks, the culture and teaching of these denominations had a tremendous influence on the Indian form of learning. The Muslims established madrasas to disseminate theological learning among the Muslim children. There were two main schools of education in pre-colonial India:

- Vedic form of education
- Education in the madrasas

  Education in Colonial Setup

Since in the initial stage, the East India Company's position in India was precarious and unsettled, the Company took a pragmatic stand and there was a continuation of existing systems. The early policy of the East India Company was that of non-intervention in the Indian social matters. In the last two decades of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth, Company officials pursued a policy of conciliation towards the native culture of its new dominion.

However, since the time the East India Company started ruling in Bengal, the officials took a lot of interest in the issue of educating Indians. Therefore, the three goals that the policy sought to pursue were as follows:

- Sponsoring Indians in their own culture
- Advancing knowledge of India
- Employing their knowledge in the government

2.2.1 Orientalism

One also discerns in the earlier British administrators a respect for traditional Indian culture that expressed itself in Warren Hastings's policy of orientalism. Orientalism was facilitated by a number of academics who were attracted to the Indian civilization. Scholars were drawn to the service of the Company due to the promotion of knowledge of Asia. As mentioned earlier, the Asiatic Society was founded in Calcutta by William Jones, a judge in the newly established

Supreme Court of Bengal. Soon, Jones advanced his famous thesis on the common origin of Indo-European languages. Some Company officials argued that the Company should try to win over its subjects by surpassing the region's previous rulers in support of indigenous learning. This resulted in the establishment of Benares Sanskrit College, which was founded in Varanasi in 1791 during the administration of Lord Cornwallis. Warren Hastings envisaged the Company as the successor of a great Empire, and saw the support of vernacular learning as the appropriate role befitting the empire. There was an attempt to learn about the Indian culture through a study of scriptures in Sanskrit and Persian languages, and to use that knowledge in the matters of governance.

In 1781, Hastings founded the Madrasa Aliya, an institution in Calcutta for the study of Arabic and Persian languages, and Islamic Law. Some Company officials endeavoured to become efficient administrators, and they realized that knowledge of Indian languages and cultures facilitated this endeavour. It led to the founding of the College of Fort William in Calcutta in 1800 by Lord Wellesley, the then Governor-General. The college later played an important role both in the development of modern Indian languages and in the Bengal Renaissance. Knowledge about the subject population, their social customs, manners and codes were regarded as an essential precondition for developing permanent institutions of rule in India. Many important Company officials, such as Thomas Munro and Montstuart Elphinstone, were influenced by orientalism. They supported the view that the Company's government in India should be responsive to Indian expectations. The orientalist philosophy prevailed in the education policy well into the 1820s, and was echoed in the founding of the Poona Sanskrit College in Pune in 1821 and the Calcutta Sanskrit College in 1824. Hastings' policy to govern the conquered in their own ways and resist Anglicization thus revealed both the ideological preferences of the early administrators and also their political practicality.

2.2.2 Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism is a Protestant Christian movement of England of the 18th century. This movement in contrast to the Orthodox Church emphasized on personal experiences, individual reading of gospel rather than the traditions of the established church. While some Christian missionaries attempted to reform the 'degenerate Indian society' quietly, the evangelists were openly hostile to 'Indian barbarism' and desired to 'civilize India'.

The influential members of the Evangelicalism were Wilberforce, the confidant of Pitt, Charles Grant, chairman of the directors and his son who was a cabinet minister.

They advocated bringing Christian West to the East and "India will reform herself as a flower to the Sun". Charles Grant propagated the policy of assimilation of India into the great civilizing mission of Britain. This attitude coincides with the liberalism advocated by Macaulay.

The British East India Company too agreed upon this philosophy of civilizing India as by doing so they could have markets for their finished products in India. Charles Grant too supported this idea as civilizing process would lead to material prosperity. Thus, in the late 18th and the early 19th centuries the idea of 'improvement' became a part of the civilizing process. The then Governor General Cornwallis introduced permanent settlement in Bengal as a part of his vision of improvement as the magic touch of property would create capital and market in land.

When Wiliam Bentink became the Governor General of India by the Charter Act of 1833, liberal minded Macaulay suggested that Indians should be civilized through the Western education system. There arose a debate between the orientalists who insisted that the old system of education be continued and the Anglicists who supported the move of Macaulay. Finally, the Western education system was introduced with the cooperation of the reformer, Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

2.2.3 Utilitarianism

From the middle of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, utilitarianism as a school of thought dominated English political thinking. Francis Hutcheson, Hume, Helvetius, Priestly, William Paley and Beccaria were some of the early propagators of utilitarianism. However, it was Bentham who systematically laid down the theory and made it popular on the basis of his innumerable proposals for reform. The great philosopher of the twentieth century Bertrand Russell rightly pointed out that Bentham's merit consisted not in the doctrine but in his vigorous application of it to various practical problems.

Bentham's close friend James Mill introduced him to the two of the greatest economists of the time, Malthus and David Ricardo from whom Bentham was able to learn various concepts of classical economics. These thinkers called themselves 'Philosophic Radicals'. Their aim was to transform England into a modern, liberal, democratic, constitutional, secular and market state. The term 'Utilitarianism' was used interchangeably with philosophic radicalism, individualism, laissez faire and administrative nihilism. The principal assumptions of utilitarianism were that human beings, as a rule, sought happiness, that pleasure alone was good, and that the only right action was that which produced the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The utilitarian thinkers reiterated the ideas of the Greek thinker, *Epicures*. Bentham provided a scientific approach to the pleasure–pain theory and applied to the policies of the state, welfare measures and the administrative, penal and legislative reforms. He provided a psychological perspective on human nature.

In his book, *Introduction to the Principles of Moral and Legislation*, Bentham elucidates his theory of utility. The keynote of his principle is that the state is useful only so long as it caters to the *'Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number'*. Bentham aspired to create a complete utilitarian code of law, which he named 'Pannomion'. He proposed several legal and social reforms. He set forth a fundamental moral tenet on which the code of law should be based. He stressed that the right act or policy was that which would cause 'the greatest good for the greatest number of people,' (i.e. the greatest happiness principle or the principle of utility). He proposed the Hedonistic or felicific calculus, which is a procedure for estimating the moral status of any action. His

utilitarian philosophy was revised and expanded by his student John Stuart Mill. Mill converted 'Benthamism' into a principal element in the liberal conception of state policy objectives. Bentham classified 12 pains and 14 pleasures. He proposed a 'felicific Calculus' to test the 'happiness factor' of any action. Using these measurements, he puts forward his views on the concept of punishment and its utilization—whether it would generate more pleasure or more pain for a society. He calls for legislators to assess whether punishment becomes a reason for an even more evil offense. Bentham argues that the unnecessary laws and punishments might ultimately give rise to new and more dangerous offences.

Bentham advocated that, 'nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign master, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On one hand, the standard of right and wrong, on the other, the chain of cause and effect, are fasten to heir thorn. The achievement of pleasure and avoidance of pain are not only the motivating forces of human behaviour; they also set the standards of values in life'. According to Bentham, what applies to an individual's morals, applies with equal force. For the state, he pointed out that the action of the state is good, which increases pleasure and decreases the pain of the largest number of the individuals comprising it. All action must be judged by this criterion. According to him, if the state promotes the greatest good of the greatest number it is good, otherwise it is bad. For Bentham, only the greatest happiness of the greatest number can be the measure of right and wrong. Hence, Bentham's utilitarianism is based on individualism as well as democracy.

The utilitarians also believed in the vision of civilizing and improving India like the evangelicalism. They were radicals and humanists and had a strong faith in reason. The book, *History of India,* written by James Mill in 1817, was extensively read and referred to by the employees of East India Company. This book caused immense harm to the Indian society by laying the seeds of communalist approach to the study of Indian history and civilization. The utilitarian philosophy also influenced the views of Dalhousie in creating all-India departments with single heads. The utilitarians advocated moral worth of an education that was good for the society and promoted instruction in 'useful knowledge'. Such useful instruction to Indians had the added advantage of making them more suitable for the Company's growing bureaucracy.

According to Mill, the more the Asian people would be enlightened, the happier they would be. For Mill, European manners, arts, and institutions are far from perfect when assessed from the utilitarian perspective. From Mill's perspective, only when the moral and the political ideals and practices of the utilitarian liberal doctrine were implemented in Europe and all over the world could the maximization of global happiness be foreseeable.

Given his concern for India, Mill's immediate objective was to bring European enlightenment to India even before taking up the administrative job in the East India Company in 1819. As early as in 1813, Mill denounced in a review article the claim that Indians could not be enlightened; 'Why everything is unchangeable so long as nothing occurs which is calculated to produce a change'. Mill thought that if the Indians had extensive interaction with the Europeans, they would inevitably receive substantial positive impact on their social progress from the Europeans. Mill believed that the extent of progress which the Indians might attain through interacting with the Europeans would be no less than what the Mughals had brought them: 'an intercourse with Europeans is not likely to produce effects less considerable, than intercourse with a people so nearly on the same level of civilization with themselves, as the Mahomedans'. For Mill, before the

Moghuls ruled India, the individual progress and the societal progress of the Hindu Indians had been retarded because of their superstitions in Hinduism.

Mill fervently believed that the enlightenment of India would bring the European civilization close to the 'doors' of other Asian people who needed as much enlightenment from the Europeans as India. According to Mill, it was desirable for people at higher level of progress to help those at a relatively lower level of progress.

Mill believed that it was to the benefit of the Indians in the independent states if they were governed by the British but objected to imposing British institutions over them by offensive war.

2.2.4 Anglicists and Orientalists

English education was introduced in India in the eighteenth century through the charity schools run in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay for the education of the European and Anglo-Indian children. The Company supported these schools in various ways, but it did not take any direct responsibility for the education of the indigenous population until 1813. The missionaries worked for the dissemination of western education. They considered the native languages and indigenous knowledge as backward. The missionaries believed that western education would lead to proselytization. The Serampore missionaries, in particular, were very eager to spread western education; their settlement near Calcutta became the sanctuary of three Baptist missionaries—Dr William Carey, Ward and Joshua Marshman. They ran schools for both boys and girls and also started running a printing press and translating the Bible into local languages. The number of such missionary activities before 1813 was, however, very small.

Indians who were well-versed in the classical and vernacular languages were initially required by the East India Company for administrative needs. In the judicial department, Indians conversant with Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian were required to sit as assessors with English judges and expound Hindu or Muslim law from Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic books. The knowledge of Persian and vernaculars was also valued in the political department for correspondence with the rulers of Indian states. These lower rungs of clerical staffs in the revenue and commercial departments were also important, as they had direct contacts with the uneducated masses due to their knowledge of vernaculars. However, there was a gradual shift in the Company's policies and for higher grade of staff in the Company's services, the knowledge of English as well as that of vernaculars was later considered as indispensable. The Court of Directors made a modest beginning towards the development of education in India in 1813 when the **Charter Act (1813)** provided for an annual expenditure of ₹1,00,000 'for the revival and promotion of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories'. But this decision did not immediately decide the nature of education to be provided for the Indians. In official thinking in India, the orientalist thoughts were still powerful, having received strong support in a then recent Minute of Lord Minto, the Governor General between 1806 and 1813. The new General Committee of Public Instruction was dominated by the orientalists, who interpreted the clause to mean the advancement of Indian classical literature and sciences of the land. The programme they initiated was for the establishment of a Sanskrit College in Calcutta, and two more Oriental Colleges at Agra and Delhi.

The main factor which tilted the scale in favour of the English language and western literature was the Company's education policy finding support from the newly

emerged Indian intelligentsia. These intellectuals were a product of western education, who believed that the modernization of India would be enabled through English education. Also, these Indians wanted a system of education which could help them to earn their livelihood. Raja Ram Mohan Roy protested against the government's proposal to strengthen the Calcutta, the Madras and the Benares Sanskrit College. He wrote to Lord Amherst in 1823 that Sanskrit education could 'only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of life which are of little or no practical use to their possessors or to society. The students will therefore acquire what was known two thousand years ago, with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since then produced by speculative men.' Advocating the importance of modern scientific learning, he wrote, 'The Sanskrit system of education would be best calculated to keep the country in darkness, if such had been the policy of British Government. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy with other useful sciences.' As a result of this, the government agreed to promote the study of English as well as oriental languages.

A grant was sanctioned for the Calcutta Hindu College that was set up in 1817 by the Bengali intelligentsia, which imparted instruction mainly in English language and emphasized the study of Western humanities and sciences. The government also set up three Sanskrit colleges one each at Calcutta, Delhi and Agra. In addition, funds were set apart for the translation of European scientific works into oriental languages.

There were two opposing groups who argued on the education policy in India. The orientalists led by H.T. Prinsep advocated the policy of providing encouragement to oriental literature, whereas the anglicists favoured the adoption of English as a medium of instruction. Bentinck, a utilitarian reformist, took over as the Governor General in 1828 and British historian and politician, Thomas Babington Macaulay was appointed the law member in his council in 1834. The latter was immediately appointed as the President of the General Committee of Public Instruction. On 2 February 1835, he issued his famous '**Minute on Indian Education**'. Macaulay favoured the viewpoint of the anglicists, which also included the utilitarians, led by James Mill, who had begun to play a significant role in shaping the Company's policies.

Full of contempt for oriental learning, **Macaulay's Minute** asserted that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'. He advocated for the Indians an education in European literature and sciences, inculcated through the medium of English language. Such an education, he argued, would create 'a class of persons between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect'. Bentinck immediately endorsed Macaulay's proposals in an executive order of 7 March 1835. Regarding the importance of English language, Macaulay wrote: 'Whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and handed in the course of ninety generations... In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East.' Macaulay cited the examples of European Renaissance and the case of Russia. He dilated upon 'the great impulse given to the mind of a whole society—of prejudice overthrown, of knowledge diffused, of task purified, of arts and sciences planted in countries which had recently been ignorant and barbarous'. In other words, he sought

the production of 'brown Englishmen' to fill the lower cadres in the Company's administration.

The Government of Lord William Bentinck in the Resolution of 7 March 1835 accepted the viewpoint of Macaulay that, in future, the object of the Company's government should be the promotion of European literature and sciences; through the medium of English language and in future all funds were to be spent for that purpose. Bentinck supported the replacement of Persian by English as the official language, the use of English as the medium of instruction, and the training of English-speaking Indians as teachers. He was inspired by utilitarian ideas and called for 'useful learning'. Under Macaulay, thousands of elementary and secondary schools were opened though they usually had an all male student body. The universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were established in 1857, just before the Rebellion. By 1890, some 60,000 Indians had matriculated, chiefly in the liberal arts or law. About a third entered public administration, and another one-third became lawyers. The result was a very well educated professional state bureaucracy. By the early 1830s, the anglicists had the control in devising education policy in India. Many utilitarian ideas were employed in Thomas Babbington Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education' of 1835. The Minute was to influence education policy in India well into the next century. However, later it provoked great controversy.

2.2.5 Commissions and Bills Promoting Education

One of the important aspects of English education policy was the theory of 'downward filtration' i.e., education was not meant for the masses, but for the learned, the rich and the powerful. This elite group would pass on the elementary education, which would percolate downward through regional languages at much less public expenditure. So, it was thought that the indigenous society would benefit from the morally superior western knowledge.

1. Wood's Despatch

The 1854 Charles Wood's Education Despatch signifies a shift away from the downward filtration policy. The Despatch outlined a broad plan of state-sponsored education for India. It recommended the extension of vernacular elementary education, which was endorsed by Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor-General of India's administration. The Despatch came to be considered as the Magna Carta of English education in India. Its main recommendations were as follows:

- As to the medium of instruction, it declared that for higher education English language was the most perfect medium of education. It also emphasized the importance of the vernacular languages, for it was through the medium of the vernacular languages that European knowledge could filter to the masses. However, it proposed the setting up of vernacular primary schools in the villages at the lowest stage, followed by Anglo-vernacular high schools and an affiliated college at the district level.

- It recommended a system of grants-in-aid to encourage and foster private enterprise in the field of education. This grants in-aid was conditional on the institutions employing qualified teachers and maintaining proper standards of teaching.

- Universities on the model of the London University were proposed for Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The constitution of the University provided for a Senate, a

Chancellor, a Vice Chancellor and Fellows–all to be nominated by the Government. The universities were to hold examinations and confer degrees. A university might set up professorships in various branches of learning.

Almost all the proposals in the Wood's Despatch were implemented. The Department of Public Instruction was organized in 1855, and it replaced the earlier Committee of Public Instruction and Council of Education. The three universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay came into existence in 1857. Mostly due to Bethune's efforts, girls' schools were set up on modern footing and brought under the government's grant-in-aid and inspection system.

2. Hunter Commission

In 1882, the government appointed a Commission under the chairmanship of W.W. Hunter to review the progress of education in the country since the Wood's Despatch of 1854. To ensure general literacy it recommended 'special funds' to be set apart particularly for the education of backward communities.

Backward groups such as the vast community of Dalits or the untouchables, continued to be excluded from state schools, as their presence would drive away the higher caste pupils, who were meant to be the main target population of the colonial education system. The principal objective of the enquiry of the Commission was the condition of elementary education across the Indian Empire and the means for improving and extending them. The Commission was not to investigate the general working of the Indian universities. Therefore, the Commission limited its work and opinions to secondary and primary education alone. Its main recommendations were as follows:

- It laid emphasis on the state's special care to extend and improve primary education. Although private education was welcome, according to the Commission, primary education was to be provided irrespective of local cooperation. The Commission recommended transferring the control of primary education to the newly set up District and Municipal Boards. The local boards were given the power to levy cess for educational purposes.

- For secondary education, the commission established the principle of two divisions: one, a literary education that led to the Entrance Examination of the University and a more practical education that prepared students for commercial and vocational careers.

- The Commission recommended efforts to encourage private education.

- The Commission recommended the extension and liberalization of the grants-in-aid system, recognition of aided schools as equal to government institutions in matters of status and privileges, etc.

Education policies in the 19th century were full of controversies that caused political unrest. According to the official view, educational expansion had not proceeded in the right direction. It was claimed that the quality of education had deteriorated, and there was a lot of indiscipline in schools and colleges.

Educational institutions were accused of becoming factories for the production of political revolutionaries. Curzon sought to reconstruct education in India; however, his motives were mainly political and only partly educational. Curzon justified the increase of official control over education in the name of quality and efficiency, but actually sought to restrict education and discipline educated minds towards loyalty to the

government. The nationalists saw in the policies of the administrators an attempt to strengthen colonialism and constrain the development of nationalist feelings.

3. University's Act

In September 1901, Curzon established a Commission under the leadership of Sir Thomas to enquire into the condition and prospects of universities in India and to propose ways of improvement in their constitution and working. In lieu of the recommendations of the Commission, the Indian Universities Act was passed in 1904. The main changes proposed were as follows:

- The universities were asked to make provisions for research, appoint professors and set up university laboratories and libraries.

- The Indian Universities Act laid down that the number of Fellows of a university should not be less than fifty or more than a hundred. It also stated that a Fellow should normally hold office for a period of six years instead of for life.

- Most of the university Fellows was to be nominated by the government. The elective element at the University of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay was to be twenty each and in case of other universities, it was to be fifteen only.

- The governor was given the power to overrule any measure passed by the Senate of the University. The government could also alter the rules and regulations of the University on its own without the consent of the University Senate.

- The Act laid strict controls on private universities by allowing periodic inspection by the Syndicate. Private colleges also required to keep a proper standard of efficiency. Government approval was necessary for the grant of affiliation or disaffiliation of colleges.

- The Governor-General-in-Council was empowered to define the territorial limits of a university or decide the affiliation of colleges to universities. Indian freedom fighters totally opposed the recommendations of the Commission. The nationalist leader *Gopal Krishna Gokhale* described the Indian Universities Act 'a retrograde measure,' which throws unjust suspicion on the educated classes of the country and was designed to perpetuate 'the narrow, bigoted and inexpensive rule of experts'. On the other hand, British imperialists argued that the Act made 'the Indian universities among the most completely governmental universities in the world'. Indian opinion, however, argued that Curzon sought to reduce the universities to the position of departments of the state and sabotage the development of private enterprise in the field of education.

4. Sadler Commission

However, an important outcome of Curzon's policy was the sanction in 1902 of a grant of ₹5 lakhs per annum for five years for the improvement of higher education and universities.

While the Hunter Commission had reported on the problems of secondary education and the University Commission of 1902 had reported mainly on the different aspects of university education, the Sadler Commission in 1917 reviewed the entire field from school education to university education. According to the Sadler Commission, the improvement of secondary education was a necessary condition for the improvement of university education. The Commission reported that an effectual

combination between college and university was necessary. Although the Commission reported on the conditions of Calcutta University, its recommendations and remarks were more or less applicable to other Indian universities also.

The following were its main recommendations:

- A twelve-year school course was recommended. After the assessment of the intermediate examination instead of the matriculation exam, the students entered a university. The government was urged to create a new type of institution called intermediate colleges. These colleges could function as independent institutions or could be attached to certain selected high schools.

- For the administration and control of secondary education, the Commission recommended the setting up of a Board of Secondary and Intermediate Education. The idea behind these recommendations was, on the one hand, to prepare students for the universities, and to relieve the latter of a large number of students quite below any university standard and, on the other hand, to offer a sound collegiate education to students who did not propose, and who should not be encouraged to proceed to universities.

- The duration of the degree course after the intermediate state should be limited to three years. For the needs of abler students, provision was to be made for Honours courses as distinct from the Pass courses.

- The Commission recommended less rigidity in framing the regulations of universities.

- The old type of Indian university, with its large number of affiliated and widely scattered colleges should be replaced by centralized unitary residential-teaching autonomous bodies. A unitary teaching university was recommended for Dacca to lessen the rush of numbers at the colleges of Calcutta University. Further, colleges should be so developed as to make it possible to encourage the growth of new university.

- It stressed the need for the extension of facilities for female education and recommended the establishment of a special Board of Women Education in the Calcutta University.

- The necessity of providing substantial facilities for the training of teachers was emphasized and so was the desirability of setting up the Departments of Education at the University of Calcutta and Dacca.

- The University was desired to provide courses in applied science and technology and also to recognize their systematic and practical study by the award of degrees and diplomas. The universities were also to provide facilities for the training of personnel for professional and vocational colleges.

5. Hartog Committee

There was considerable dissatisfaction with the educational system. The Indian Statutory Commission appointed a report on the development of education. The main findings of the Hartog Committee were as follows:

- It emphasized the national importance of primary education, but condemned the policy of hasty expansion or attempt to introduce compulsion in education. The Commission recommended the policy of consolidation and improvement.

- For secondary education, the Commission reported that the system was dominated by the matriculation examination and many undeserving students considered it the path to university education. It recommended a selective system for admission and urged the retention of most of the boys intended for rural pursuits at the middle vernacular school stage.

- After the middle stage, students should be diverted to diversified courses leading to industrial and commercial careers.

- The Commission pointed out the weaknesses of university education and criticized the policy of indiscriminate admission which led to the lowering of standards. It recommended that 'all efforts should be concentrated in improving university work, in confining the university to its proper function of giving advanced education to students who are fit to receive it and, in fact making the university a more fruitful and less disappointing agency in the life of a community.'

In 1937, Mahatma Gandhi published a series of articles in his paper *The Harijan*, and proposed a scheme of education called basic education, better known as the Wardha Scheme. The main principle of basic education is 'learning through activity'. The Zakir Husain Committee worked out the details of the scheme and prepared detailed syllabi for a number of crafts and made suggestions concerning the training of teachers, supervision, examination and administration. The scheme centred on 'manual productive work' which might cover the remuneration of the teachers. It envisaged a seven year course through the mother tongue of the students. The outbreak of the war in 1939 led to the postponement of the scheme. It was left to the National Government to take up the work after 1947.

6. Sargent Plan

In 1944, the Central Advisory Board of Education drew up a national scheme of education, generally known as the Sargent Plan (Sir John Sargent was the Educational Advisor to the Government of India). This plan envisaged the establishment of elementary schools and high schools (junior and senior basic schools) and the introduction of universal free and compulsory education for children between the ages of six and eleven years. A school course of six years was to be provided for children between the ages of eleven and seventeen years.

The high schools were to be of two types:

- Academic
- Technical and vocational school with different curricula

The plan also recommended the abolition of the intermediate course and the addition of an extra year each at the high school and the college stage.

It was with various motives that English education was introduced in India; for missionaries, it was supposed to unlock the way for proselytisation of the Indians. For utilitarians, it was the ultimate fulfillment of Britain's imperial mission, i.e. to impart education to the natives as a moral duty, a way of reducing the 'white man's burden'. On the other hand, the East India Company from the beginning of the nineteenth century was trying to cut the cost of governing India by Indianizing the subordinate positions in the administrative structure, particularly in the judicial and revenue branches. The administration which was exclusively manned by Englishmen was no longer financially feasible, nor was it politically expedient. A proper education in English was, therefore, a means to train Indians for such subordinate public services.

The government, often working with local philanthropists, opened 186 universities and colleges of higher education by 1911, which enrolled 36,000 students. By 1939, the number of institutions had doubled and enrollment had reached 1,45,000. The curriculum followed classical British standards of the sort set by Oxford and Cambridge and stressed upon the study of English literature and European history. Nevertheless by the 1920s, the student bodies had become the breeding ground of Indian nationalism. This academic venture of colonialism was to inculcate a spirit of loyalty among its Indian subjects who would believe in its civilizing mission. But as an ethical study, the education policies did not function effectively in India because the educated Indians selectively adopted this awareness and deployed it to question colonial rule itself.

For most of them, education was a means of survival in the difficult times, a tool for achieving economic prosperity and getting power, rather than just a means to satisfy intellectual curiosity. Their knowledge also contributed to the Indian nationalists' struggle; it was the English acquired knowledge which became their best weapon for confronting a dictatorial colonial state.

Clearly, the nineteenth century bore witness to the formation of the new Indian elite, slowly establishing its hegemony. This is an important development to keep in mind when explaining the encounter of colonialism and any western ideas with the Indian intelligentsia. In the case of western ideas, we have seen how they were absorbed by/engaged with by the emerging elite, depending on the compatibility of these ideas with the elite's gradually developing hegemony.

We must not either forget that western ideas were engaged within the much larger context of colonialism which actually laid the conditions for this engagement in the first place.

2.2.6 Growth of Press

The growth of journalism in 19th century India was influenced by many social currents. Modern English education brought with it new ideas from the West. It resulted in the emergence of a new section of educated middle class in the society and the press developed as a representative of these educated sections. The press was run and owned by the educated class and was majorly influenced by the socio-religious reform movements as the educated class was also involved in reform activities. Moreover, the intense missionary propaganda and its criticism of indigenous religious practices motivated the Indians to counteract the criticism through the columns in various papers. Above all, the healthy growth of Bengali vernacular journalism had its influence over other parts of the country.

All these influences had a direct bearing on the growth of the press. The early journals established by the educated sections of the Indian society in the three Presidencies of British India reflect this. These early efforts in the field of journalism reflected two significant trends broadly.

- First, in the light of new Western knowledge and liberal values the early journals initiated a discussion on Hindu society, its religious practices, age old traditions and the evils inherent in them. Some journals also suggested the reform of the old traditional values. These new ideas invited protest from the orthodox section of the society and they began to counter the reform efforts initiated by the emerging middle classes who were influenced by the liberal values of the west. However, the vigorous reform campaign attracted more attention from the press.

- Secondly, the uncontrolled missionary activities and their criticism of Hindu traditions deeply hurt the feelings of the common people. This religious controversy and theological tussle between the two groups found an expression in the columns of the press.

These two broad strands influenced the growth of press in Madras Presidency also. The beginning of English press owned by Indians was witnessed as early as 1844. The initiation of the Indian-owned English press was due to unhindered missionary criticism of the Hindu religious practices in the journals published by Christian missionaries. The journals tried to build up public opinion against the colonial rule and generate an anti-British feeling by criticizing missionary activities.

The vernacular press made its beginnings around the same time. When compared to the Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati press, the development of Telugu press was rather slow. Ram Mohan Roy published two papers, *Sambad-Kaumudi* in Bengali and *Miratul Akbar* in Persian, which was propagating the case for social reform. Dada Bhai Naoroji edited *Rast Goftar* and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar started *Shome Prakash* in 1890. In 1851 Gujarati fortnightly Rust Goftar was started by Dadabhai Naroji. English weekly, the *Indian Social Reformer*, was started in Bombay to propagate social reforms. The Times of India started in 1861; The Pioneer in 1865; The Madras Mail in 1865, The Statesman in 1875. These papers usually supported the policies of the British government.

The other papers were the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* started in Bengal in 1868 and the Hindu started in Madras in 1878. By the end of the 19th Century, about 500 newspapers and journals in Indian languages and English were started in different parts of the country.

Growth of English Newspaper

The advent of the first newspaper in India occurred in the capital city of West Bengal, Calcutta. James Augustus Hickey is considered the 'father of Indian press' as he started the first Indian English newspaper from Kolkata, the *Bengal Gazette* or *Calcutta General Advertise* in January, 1780.

This first printed newspaper was a weekly publication. In 1789, the first newspaper from Bombay (now Mumbai), the *Bombay Herald* appeared, followed by the *Bombay Courier* in 1791. Later, in the year 1792, *Bombay Gazette* merged with Bombay Herald. These newspapers carried news of the areas under the British rule.

The three earliest English journals in the Presidency viz., The Native Circulator (1844), Crescent (1844) and The Rising Sun (1857) were owned by Telugus in the Presidential capital of Madras.

To fight the missionaries, Lakshminarasu bought the *Native Circulator*, a newspaper founded by one Narayanaswamy Naidu and renamed it *The Crescent*. This paper took on The Record, which was the missionary media vehicle. The first editor of *The Crescent* was Mr. Harley, an ex-army man. The first copy of the journal was brought out on 2 October 1844. The paper faced difficulties from its inception as the Government denied it privileges granted to other newspapers. *The Crescent* was published from Lakshminarasu's Hindu Press on Armenian Street. Initially, it was a bi-weekly-published on Wednesdays and Saturdays, in addition to a special half-sheet edition every Monday evening. Leading people of the time such as Madhava Rao, Sadasiva Pillai, Seshayya Sastri and Rama Iyengar were regular contributors.

In 1785 *Madras Courier Weekly* was started. In 1840 *Hindu Patriot* was started by Harishchandra Mukherjee. In 1862 *Indian Mirror* was started. Initially the editor was Devendranath Tagore followed by Keshavchandra Sen and Narendranath Sen. On 28 September 1861, *Bombay Times*, *Bombay Standard*, *Bombay Courier* and *The Telegraph* merged together to form *The Times of India*. Its editor was Robert Knight. Initially it was monthly but latter changed to weekly. In 1875 Statesman was started by Robert Knight. In 1890 *Statesman* and *Friend of India* merged to become *Statesman*. In 1865 *Pioneer* was started from Allahabad. On 20 September 1878, *Hindu* was started from Madras by G. Subramanium Aiyar as a weekly but later it was made triweekly in 1883 when Kusturiangar became its editor. In 1889 it was made a daily. Some of the English newspapers were as follows:

1. Times of India

The Times of India was called *The Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, and was published every Saturday and Wednesday. J.E. Brennan was the editor and the owners included a British syndicate of 11 firms. It was launched as a semi-weekly edition by R.N.D. Velkar, a reformist leader. It became a daily in 1850, and was renamed *The Times of India* after a merger with other papers.

The merger was carried out by Robert Knight, 'one of the most inspiring figures in Indian journalism during the 19th century', according to Dileep Padgaonkar, renowned journalist and an editor of the Times of India during 1988-94 said—'Through his (Knight's) sharply-worded editorials, Knight campaigned for a sound system of popular rights in India and sought massive investments to extend the rail network, improve Bombay's water supply, construct roads and set up irrigation facilities,' Padgaonkar (*Outlook* magazine in November 2012). 'He continued to upbraid British officials for the perks they enjoyed, for their nastiness towards Indians and for doing precious little to eradicate India's abysmal poverty. Moreover, unlike the rest of the Anglo-Indian press, he sympathized with the Great Uprising of 1857 even while he deplored the large-scale destruction of lives and property.'

In the 19th century, the TOI had around 800 employees and was circulated in India and Europe. In 1892, its editor, T.J. Bennett, entered into a partnership with F.M. Coleman, resulting in the formation of the joint stock company, Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd. (BCCL).

2. The Statesman

The Statesman is a direct descendant of two newspapers, *The Englishman* and *The Friend of India*, both published in Calcutta (now Kolkata). *The Englishman* was started in 1811 by Robert Knight, who was previously the principal founder and editor of The Times of India. Knight founded *The Statesman* and *New Friend of India* on 15 January 1875, which later adopted the current name.

3. National Herald

The National Herald was established in Lucknow on 9 September 1938 by Jawaharlal Nehru. The paper carried on its masthead the words 'Freedom is in Peril, Defend it with All Your Might' taken from a cartoon by Gabriel from Brentford. Jawaharlal Nehru was an early editor of the newspaper and until his appointment as Prime Minister was the Chairman of the Herald's Board of Directors. In 1938, K. Rama Rao was appointed the paper's first editor. Following the Quit India Resolution of August 1942,

the British Raj clamped down on the Indian press and the paper was shut between 1942 and 1945.

4. Pioneer

The Pioneer was founded in Allahabad in 1865 by George Allen, an Englishman. It was brought out three times a week from 1865 to 1869 and daily thereafter. In 1866, a supplement, the *Pioneer Mail*, consisting of '48 quarto-size pages,' mostly of advertisements, was added to the publication. In 1872, Alfred Sinnett became the editor of the newspaper. He oversaw the transformation of the newspaper to one of exercising great influence in British India. In 1874, the weekly *Pioneer Mail* became the *Pioneer Mail and India Weekly News* and began to feature short stories and travel writings. Author Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), in his early 20s, worked at the newspaper office in Allahabad as an assistant editor from November 1887 to March 1889. In July 1933, *The Pioneer* was sold to a syndicate and moved from Allahabad to Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, at which time the *Pioneer Mail and India Weekly News* ceased publication.

5. Hindu

Hindu, a monthly, was started by six people in 1878. In 1883 Hindu was published as Tri-weekly (Monday, Wednesday and Friday evening). The Hindu supported the government activities and gave wide coverage to INC sessions. From1889, Hindu started getting published daily.

Consequences of Growth of Press

The press and literature played a very important role in moulding and shaping the national consciousness of the Indians. Newspapers in those days were started with the objective of public service by patriots. The newspapers were published with the sole objective of arousing political consciousness, to inculcate nationalism, to expose colonial rule and to preach disloyalty to the masses by opposing the unjust and harmful policies of the government.

In particular, the role of the newspapers like *The Indian Mirror*, The *Bombay Samachar*, and *The Hindu Patriot*, *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Hindu*, *The Kesari*, *The Bengalee*, *The Huriara. The Bengali Public Opinion*, *The Reis* and *Rayet*, *The Samprokash*, *The Sulabh Samachar*, *The Hitavadi*, *The Induprakash*, *The Swadeshimitran*, *The Advocate* of Lucknow, *The Herald* of Bihar are really noteworthy. By 1875, there was phenomenal growth of newspapers in India which rose to 475 in number. These newspapers created awareness among the masses of India about the need to be united and to act with one voice to achieve their goal of freedom from foreign yoke.

Bipan Chandra observes that in the period from 1870 to 1918, powerful newspapers emerged under distinguished and fearless nationalists. The influence of the press extended far beyond its literate subscribers. Their influence was not limited to cities and large towns only. All these changes were an expression of the national awakening of India and contributed to its further development. The Indian press helped shape and form public opinion regarding colonial rule. It was also helpful in the organization of political protests and promotion of nationalist struggle. Newspapers published in English as well as vernaculars aimed at exposing the deceitfulness of the British administrators, while at the same time making the ideas of liberty, equality and democracy widely popular among the masses. It gave a new colour to the idea of

achieving independence. This resulted in an unprecedented growth of the press in India, and by 1875, approximately 478 newspapers were published in the nation. There was not a single province in India which did not produce a journal or newspaper to uphold the cause of the freedom struggle.

National literature such as poems, novels, songs and pamphlets engendered nationalist sentiments. Some of the prominent nationalist writers of the period were: Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali; Lakshminath Bezbarua in Assamese; Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar in Marathi; Subramanya Bharathi in Tamil; Bharatendu Harish Chandra and Prem Chand in Hindi and Altaf Husain Hali, Mohammed Shibli Nomani and Mohammed Iqbal in Urdu. All of them stressed upon the humanistic character, equality and freedom of all individuals.

The newspapers and journals gave opportunities to share ideas and problems. Similarly, novel, drama, short story, poetry, song, dance, theatre, art and cinema were used to spread views and express resistance to colonial rule. They spoke the language of the people, showcasing their everyday lives, joys and sorrows. Along with newspapers and journals, they promoted the feelings of self-confidence, self-respect, awareness and patriotism, thereby developing a feeling of national consciousness. Of these writers, the most important are Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra, M.G. Ranade, and many more by their literary works fostered the spirit of patriotism and national consciousness among the masses.

The Indian Press played a notable role in mobilizing public opinion, organizing political movements, fighting out public opinions and promoting nationalism. In 1916, Home Rule League established by Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, used print media as a propaganda vehicle. She started 'Madras Standard' and renamed it as 'New India'. New India came with full page editorial with news on the nation and freedom struggle.

Due to the First World War there was a setback in the newspaper industry, hence printing cost increased which increased the cost of the newspaper and as a result there was decrease in subscribers.

In 1915, after Gandhi returned from South Africa he started a chain of newspaper called 'Young India' and 'Navegiean' in Gujarati. As his writing style was simple and clear, it helped him to spread the notion of unity and liberty among the Indians. Gandhi's disciples started the same newspapers in other languages in India to help spread the awareness that Gandhi was trying to convey on such as poverty, women rights, ending untouchability and so on.

In 1919 the British government introduced Rowlatt Act which Annie Besant fought through her writing in the newspaper. In 1920, Annie started National University and introduced journalism as a diploma course and then gave students internship in New India. Thus she is known as 'Torch Bearer of Indian Liberty' and 'Pioneer of Journalism'.

In 1930, Dandi Salt March was given wide publicity by the newspapers. In 1938, the National Herald newspaper was started by Indian National Congress (INC) which fully supported the INC activities. In 1941, 'Dina Thandi' a Tamil newspaper daily, was founded by Aditanar, with its first edition from Madurai.

The Indian Press grew and played an important role in rousing the national consciousness of the people. The bi-weekly *Kesari* and *Maratha* were started by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The British Government passed many Acts to impose censorship over the growing Indian Press from time to time. In spite of the suppression, the Press played

the role of awakening the people to the need for reform and became one of the instruments in the growth of nationalism. Some of the acts passed by the British government to curb the press were as follows:

- **Censor Act 1799 by Lord Wellesley**

  Every newspaper should print the names of printer, editor and proprietor. Before printing any material it should be submitted to the secretary of Censorship. This Act was abolished by Hastings.

- **Licensing Regulation Act 1823 by John Adam**

  Every publisher should get a license from the government, defaulters would be fined ₹400 and the press would be ceased by the government. Government has right to cancel the license. Charles Metcalf abolished the Act.

- **Vernacular Press Act IX 1878**

  Vernacular press criticized British rule. Therefore British Government came down heavily on vernacular press. Magistrates were authorized to ask any publisher of newspaper to give assurance of not publishing anything threatening peace and security. The magistrate's decision was final in any dispute. This law was not applicable to English Press. It was repealed by Lord Ripon in 1882.

- **Newspaper Act 1908**

  Magistrate had the power to confiscate the assets of the press. Against this confiscation one could appeal to High Court within 15 days. Under this Act as many as 7 presses were forfeited.

- **Press Regulating Act 1942**

  Registration of journalists was made mandatory. Limitations were imposed on the messages regarding civil disturbances. Prohibition of news was imposed regarding acts of sabotage. Limitations on headlines and space given to news on disturbances. Limitations on headlines and space given to news on disturbances. Government had the authority on arbitrary censorship.

2.3 EMERGENCE OF THE NEW INTELLIGENTSIA AND ITS COMPOSITION

The 19th century witnessed a cultural–ideological struggle against the backward elements of traditional culture, on the one hand, and the fast hegemonizing colonial culture and ideology on the other. Many term this phase as the Renaissance Age of India, just like what Europe had experienced. It was a phase which saw changes and transformation in many areas of India's social and cultural fabric. In many ways the British colonization of India had a lot to do with this. Even though the presence of the British caused some destruction of wealth and culture of the country, yet it was also responsible for growth in many other myriad areas, the most evident changes being in the field of education, language and social structures. The introduction of English language had a lot do with this revival and growth.

The main influences that led to this period of Renaissance were:

- Influence of Christian missionaries
- English language
- Western thoughts and ways of living

The influence of western thoughts and philosophies had a huge role to play in awakening the already dormant potential of India's creativity as a nation and people. India with its rich heritage of spirituality and culture had decayed a bit due to other foreign invasion over hundreds of years. The Renaissance period saw a revival of the oppressed Indian spirit and soul, if one were to put it that way. Each individual has a creative spirit which due to various social conditioning becomes dormant or repressed, the same when taken collectively as a nation or culture can wake up when a severe blow is received from the outside. In case of India this is exactly what happened. The British rule became both a bane and a boon in being a catalyst to a great revival of India's creative talents. The reasons that led to the Indian Renaissance of nineteenth century were as follows:

- There was an influx of ideas from the western world in the political, economic, social and cultural fields due to British rule.

- Indian and European scholars and intellectuals like Max Muller, Sir William Jones, Raja Rammohan Roy, Bhagwan Lal Indraji, R.G. Bhandarkar and M.G. Ranade fuelled the potential of India's cultural and spiritual growth.

- Great modern literature from scholars and writers such as Bankim Chandra, Keshav Chandra Sen, Madhusudan Dutt led to new ways of looking at India's tradition and history as a nation with great creativity and spirit. This led to a huge awakening of the human consciousness in India.

The zealous Christian missionaries in their mission to spread Christianity helped translate a lot of European literature and religious writings into regional languages like Bengali, Marathi, Tamil and Telugu. This made people of India, especially those belonging to the weaker sections of the society, aware of their plight. The missionaries were hugely responsible for spreading the message of equality of all human kind irrespective of caste and class. They also attacked the other social evils that plagued the Indian society.

2.3.1 Emergence of the Reformists, Revivalists, Nationalists and Educated Middle Class

The Indian society saw a sea change during the 19th century due to the impact of English education and ideology. The new intelligentsia were in the form of reformers, revivalists, nationalists and the educated middle class.

1. Emergence of the Reformists

Reformists are people who advocate gradual reform rather than abolition or revolution. They support or advance gradual reform. In India, the British conquest and the consequent dissemination of colonial culture and ideology had led to an inevitable introspection about the strengths and weaknesses of indigenous culture and institutions of India. The response, indeed, was varied but the need to reform social and religious life was a commonly shared conviction. The social base of this quest which has generally, but not altogether appropriately been called the renaissance, was the newly emerging middle class and the traditional as well as western educated intellectuals.

The British brought to India new ideas such as liberty, equality, freedom and human rights from the Renaissance, the Reformation Movement and the various revolutions that took place in Europe. These ideas appealed to some sections of our society and led to several reform movements in different parts of the country. At the

forefront of these movements were reformists such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Aruna Asaf Ali and Pandita Ramabai.

The impact of the efforts made by these numerous individuals, reform societies, and religious organizations was felt all over and was most evident in the national movement. Women started getting better education opportunities and took up professions and public employment outside their homes. The role of women like Captain Laxmi Sehgal of Indian National Army (INA), Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, Aruna Asaf Ali and many others were extremely important in the freedom struggle.

English language and western ideas also had some positive impact on the society. Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, and Swami Vivekananda absorbed western ideas of liberalism and democracy and used it to reform some of the non-humanitarian social and religious practices of the time. Social and economic equality took root through political parties, discussions and debates on public platform and the press.

The spirit of reform embraced almost the whole of India which began with the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal which led to the formation of the Brahmo Samaj in 1828. Apart from the Brahmo Samaj, the Paramahansa Mandali and the Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra and the Arya Samaj in Punjab and North India were some of the prominent movements among the Hindus. Some regional and caste movements like the Kayasth Sabha in Uttar Pradesh and the Sarin Sabba in Punjab also existed. The backward castes also started the work of reformation with the Satya Sodhak Samaj in Maharashtra and the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sabha in Kerala. The Ahmadiya and Aligarh movements, the Singh Sabha and the Rehnumai Mazdeyasan Sabha represented the spirit of reform among the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Parsi respectively.

Although religious reformation was the major criteria for these movements, none of them were exclusively religious in character. Strongly inspired by humanism, the idea of otherworldliness and salvation were not a part of the agenda of the reformists; instead their attention was focused on worldly existence. Akshay Kumar Dutt and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar refused to be drawn into any discussion on supernatural questions. When asked about the existence of God, Vidyasagar had responded by saying that he had no time to think about God as there was much to be done on earth. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Vivekananda emphasized the secular use of religion.

2. Emergence of Revivalists

Revivalist is a person who promotes or holds religious revivals. In other words, revivalists are those who revive former customs, methods, etc. During the colonial administration, India faced the challenge of the intrusion of colonial culture and ideology. Therefore, there was an attempt to reinvigorate traditional institutions developed during the nineteenth century. The initial struggle against colonial domination was in the realm of culture. Intrusions into the cultural aspect of the society was felt intensely. Therefore, a defence of indigenous culture developed almost simultaneously with the colonial conquest. Those who championed this idea were known as revivalists.

This concern embraced the entire cultural existence, the way of life and all signifying practices like language, religion, art and philosophy. The two main features that highlighted this concern were—the creation of an alternate cultural-ideological system and the regeneration of traditional institutions. Some of the concerns were in the relm of vernacular languages, creation of an alternate education system, regeneration

of Indian art and literature, emphasis on Indian ethnic dressing, food, religion and revitalizations of the Indian system of medicine.

3. Nationalists of the Colonial Period

Nationalism is a belief, creed or political ideology that involves an individual identifying with, or becoming attached to, one's nation. It involves national identity. A nationalist is one who tries to obtain political independence for his or her country.

By 1900, the Congress had emerged as an all-India political organization in India. It failed to attract Muslims, who felt that their representation in government service was inadequate. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan launched a movement for Muslim regeneration that culminated in the founding of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1875 (renamed Aligarh Muslim University in 1920), with the objective to educate wealthy students by emphasizing the compatibility of Islam with modern western knowledge.

The nationalistic sentiments among Congress members led to the movement to be represented in the bodies of government so as to have a say in the administration of India. Congressmen considered themselves loyalists but wanted an active role in governing their own country on behalf of the British empire. This trend was personified by Dadabhai Naoroji, who went as far as contesting, successfully, an election to the British House of Commons, becoming its first Indian member.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the first Indian nationalist to embrace *Swaraj* as the destiny of the nation. Tilak deeply opposed the then British education system that ignored and defamed India's culture, history and values. He fought against the British for the lack of any voice or role for ordinary Indians in the affairs of their nation. For these reasons, he considered Swaraj as the natural and only solution. His popular sentence 'Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it' became the source of inspiration for Indians.

4. Emergence of the Educated Middle Class

The educated middle-class has been a source of imagining and articulating India as a modern and democratic nation and hence they have been a part of the historical and sociological category in modern India. This took place in the later years of the colonial rule of the British over the Indian subcontinent. After the end of the British rule in India, the Indian nationalist movement and the middle-class leadership of this movement helped in the provision of foundational values to the newly independent country.

The junction of colonialism, the democratic state and the capitalist economic development helped in the germination of the seeds of the educated middle class in India. The very first instance of the development of the middle class can be located in the colonial period. The momentum for this came from the rule of the British colony in India. The British rule brought with it a lot of changes like the introduction of modern industrial economy, secular education and many other administrative changes, over a time period of two centuries. Schools and colleges were initiated in different parts of the country especially in the colonial cities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

A new class emerged in India over the years. There were those who were employed in the administrative department of the British government and apart from these were other professionals like doctors, teachers, lawyers and journalists. These professionals usually came from privileged upper-caste backgrounds and from families

who were financially strong but not rich enough to not have a means of earning. This is the one of the factors that set them apart from the richest strata of the society such as the large hereditary landlords or the heirs of an indigenous aristocratic family. Similarly, it also put them right above the vast majority of the poor people of India.

Ideas of liberalism and democracy had a huge impact on the nascent educated middle class who had acquired these ideas through modern education in India and also abroad. The French Revolution brought with it the ideas of liberalism and democracy and hence they became popular in the West after the Revolution. The educated middle classes initiated 'social reform movement' in their particular communities and urged Indians to fight for their freedom from the colonial rule. However, even when these middle classes were 'modern', they participated in movements related to identity and helped in the strengthening of boundaries between and across religions and communities.

2.3.2 Nature and Limitations of the Nineteenth Century Renaissance

During this period, reform movements were largely swayed by two important intellectual principles—rationalism and religious universalism. A rational secular outlook was replacing blind faith that had crept into tradition and custom. Universalism was not purely philosophy. It affected political and social outlook till religious particularism took root in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The main objectives of this movement were liberal ideas, national unity, and progress. These could be achieved by removing the backward elements in traditional culture as well as the repressive elements in colonial culture and ideology. Jettisoning casteism and idolatry had to be done alongside an emphasis on reviving the vernacular languages. The plan included restoring the indigenous education system by restoring the ancient arts and medicine and reconstructing traditional Indian knowledge. The socio-religious movements were an essential part of the growing nationalist consciousness. At this point it was important to make Indians feel proud of being Indian i.e. proud of their culture and heritage.

This movement succeeded in doing that. The colonial cultural hegemonization process was stopped in its tracks. The early reform movements talked about transformations that were required in both social and religious arenas. The reason for this is not hard to find. As is well known; social customs and traditions of India are closely linked to religious injunctions. Indian reformers recognized this close connection between the social and religious spheres of thought and activity. These early social reform movements mainly aimed at general social welfare, and not at improving the conditions of a particular community or caste.

The eighteenth and nineteenth century reform movements show major trends. Some reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar were of the view that reforms should be initiated from within the society. Others wanted these changes to be backed by legislative intervention.

This meant that only state-supported reform movements could be effective. This notion was supported by such reformers as Keshub Chandra Sen and M.G. Ranade. The Young Bengal Movement represented reform initiated through symbols of transformation. It represented a radical trend in reform activity, and did not rely on the cultural traditions of India for reform. Reformers such as Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda amongst others chose reform through social work.

2.3.3 Women as the Focus of Social Reform

The status of Indian women in the pre-British Period was rooted in the social, religious, economic and political structure of that period. Regrettably, even Hindu religious literature such as the *Puranas, Smritis, Ramayana* and *Mahabharat* was in many ways responsible for propagating prejudices against women. Social evils against women were rampant in society. The horrific practices of sati, child marriage, polygamy, female infanticide, deprivation of education and other basic human rights, denying a widow the right to remarry as well as of the right to inherit property, were only some of the common evils prevalent in almost every part of India.

While it is true that British rule ruined Indian economy, it is also true that British officials did make the effort to lift women out of their substandard living conditions in this country. The British introduced in India a capitalist economy and a legal and political regime which was based on the principles of equality and freedom of the individual. Based on this, there were no inequalities based on birth, sex, caste or community. For the Indian women it was Western education, Western liberal thought, social reform movement, modern institutions, and modern means of transportation and communication that collectively played a positive role in their emancipation.

Significantly, the first protagonists for women's emancipation movement were not women but men (the liberal men). Women entered the movement for their own emancipation much later in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when they were themselves thinking about their status, and were speaking up and coming forward to espouse their cause. In fact during this period i.e. nineteenth and the twentieth century, social reformers were taking up the issue of women emancipation. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was one of the earliest Indians to have started a movement against the horrific practice of Sati. It was his persistence that paid off and the Anti-Sati Resolution was passed in 1829.

Another social evil that dogged Hindu society was that of child marriage and Indian women suffered in silence for centuries. Two prominent reformers, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and B.M. Malabari, a Parsi rigorously opposed early marriage. It was the diligent efforts of Vidyasagar that paved the way for passing of the Act of 1860. With this Act, the age of consent for married and unmarried girls was raised to ten years. B.M. Malabari took it upon himself to raise awareness of this evil through his journal *Indian Spectator*. He further explained how child marriage was leading to the ruin of the Hindu race. It was largely with his unrelenting efforts that the Age of Consent Act was passed in 1891. With this Act the age of consummation of marriage was raised from ten to twelve years.

In 1929, the Child Marriage Restraint Act (popularly known as the Sarda Act) was passed, with which the marriageable age for girls became fourteen years and eighteen years for boys. Naturally, these developments came as a breath of fresh air for women by improving their social condition. It also made them aware that everything in life can be achieved if only one fights for it.

Widows lived a pitiable life. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in Bengal and Malabari, Narmad, Justice Ranade and K. Natrajan in Bombay spoke strongly for their cause and insisted that they be allowed to remarry and live a respectable life. Their efforts did not go to naught and in 1856 Lord Dalhousie passed The Widow Remarriage Act. Going against what the Shastras and ancient Hindu literature professed Hindu widows could now remarry. Another social ill that ailed our society was that of temple prostitution

(*devdasi*). Even as it was followed in different parts of India, this social evil was especially rampant in South India, where a certain kind of opulence was associated with the temples. *Devdasis* became a hereditary caste for these women who gave themselves up in early childhood to temple service. They danced and sang in the temples but were also forced into prostitution in these sacred places. Muthulakshmi Reddi, a social reformer, pioneered a movement against this shocking practice. In 1925 the government passed a law that prohibited the trafficking of minors.

It seemed like there was no end to the cruelties that could be afflicted against women. Another such issue was that of polygamy or 'multiple marriages'. Clearly, it was not a matter that was restricted to a certain community. Sadly, it had crept into almost all communities and few could escape it. Social activists strongly opposed it and wanted a stringent law that would protect women. Some such activists were Keshub Chandra Sen and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan. The Native Marriage Act was passed in 1872, which forbade polygamy (and also polyandry—union of one woman with many males) for Hindus. It gave a boost to the idea of widow remarriage and allowed inter caste marriage for those who did not belong to any recognized school or religious faith.

The significance and far reaching effects of education cannot be underestimated. Indian social reformers of the time recognized this and emphasized education rights for women. They believed that education would make women both self-confident and knowledgeable. Pioneering work in this direction was done by some social organizations such as Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Rama Krishna Mission, the Aligarh movement, and by the Christian missionaries of Holland (the Netherlands), America, Germany and England. It was in May 1849 that Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar with the help of Bethune established and brought into being the first school for girls, 'Hindu Balika Vidyalaya'. Even though it was meant only for girls who belonged to high caste families it went a long way in removing prejudices against female education. Vidyasagar succeeded in ensuring that people recognized the importance of educating women. However there were many obstacles in the way of providing education to women. One of them was the curse of abysmal poverty which afflicted legions of Indian population. In spite of this, there was a growth in women's education and this can be seen from certain statistical figures: number of girls attending schools rose from 1,230,000 in 1917 to 2,890,000 in 1937. Even though the Wood's Despatch of 1854 and the Hunter Commission of 1882 sought to push women's education, it must be emphasized that it was the efforts of the social reformers and the Christian missionaries that were more effective. They were successful in opening and running schools for girls. It is significant that social reformer and educationist Professor Karve started the first Indian Women University in Pune in 1916.

The nationalist movement gave a different path to the process of social reform for women, especially when women started to take part in it. The Gandhian movement was one such organization where women participated. Thousands of them thronged the political mass movement and did not hesitate to picket liquor shops, march in demonstrations, court jails, and face lathi charges and even bullets. Later, many women worked as ministers, as under-secretaries and Deputy Speakers of provincial legislatures in Congress governments which were formed in 1937. Indian women also became members of local boards and municipalities. Women in India had come a long way. A new awakening had taken place. They were ready to find their place in the world and script their own destiny.

2.4 RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born on 22 May 1772, in Radhanagore, Bengal, into the Rarhi Brahmin caste. His family background displayed religious diversity; his father Ramkanto Roy was a Vaishnavite, while his mother Tarinidevi was from a Shaivite family. This was unusual for Vaishnavites did not commonly marry Shaivites at that time. Thus, one parent wanted him to be a scholar, a *sastrin*, while the other wanted him to have a career dedicated to the *laukik*, which was secular public administration.

Fig. 2.1 *Raja Ram Mohan Roy*

Political and Religious Career of Roy

Ram Mohan Roy's impact on modern Indian history concerned a revival of the ethics and principles of the Vedanta school of philosophy as found in the Upanishads. He preached about the unity of God, made early translations of Vedic scriptures into English, co-founded the Calcutta Unitarian Society, founded the Brahmo Samaj, and campaigned against *sati*. He sought to integrate Western culture with features of his own country's traditions. He established schools to modernize the education system in India.

During these overlapping periods, Ram Mohan Roy acted as a political agitator and agent, whilst being employed by the East India Company and simultaneously pursuing his vocation as a *Pandit*. In 1792, the British Baptist shoemaker William Carey published his missionary tract '*An Enquiry of the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of Heathens*'. In the following year, William Carey landed in India. His objective was to translate, publish and distribute the Bible in Indian languages and propagate Christianity in India. He learned the Buddhist and Jain religious works as a means to improve his argument in the promotion of Christianity. In 1795, Carey made contact with a Sanskrit scholar, the tantric Hariharananda Vidyavagish, who later introduced him to Ram Mohan Roy as Roy who wished to learn English. Between 1796 and 1797 the trio of Carey, Vidyavagish and Roy fabricated a spurious religious work known as the *Maha Nirvana Tantra* (or *Book of the Great Liberation*) and attempted to portray it as an ancient religious text on 'The One True God', which was actually the Holy Spirit of Christianity

masquerading as Brahma. The document's judicial sections were used in the law courts of the English Settlement in Bengal as Hindu Law for adjudicating upon property disputes of the *zamindari*. However, British magistrates and collectors began to suspect it as a forgery; its usage, as well as the reliance on *pandits* as sources of Hindu Law, was quickly deprecated. Vidyavagish had a brief falling out with Carey and separated from the group but maintained ties with Ram Mohan Roy.

From 1803 till 1815, Ram Mohan served the East India Company's 'Writing Service', commencing as private clerk or '*munshi*' to Thomas Woodforde, Registrar of the Appellate Court at Murshidabad. Woodforde's distant nephew, also a Magistrate, later made a living off the spurious *Maha Nirvana Tantra* under the pseudonym Arthur Avalon. In 1815, Raja Ram Mohan Roy formed *Atmiya Sabhan* and spent many years at Rangpur and elsewhere with Digby, where he renewed his contacts with Hariharananda. William Carey had, by this time, settled at Serampore and the trio renewed their association with one another. William Carey was also aligned with the English Company, then headquartered at Fort William, and his religious and political ambitions were increasingly intertwined.

The East India Company was taking money from India at a rate of three million pounds a year in 1838. Ram Mohan Roy estimated how much money was being driven out of India. He predicted that around half of the total revenue collected in India was sent out to England, leaving India to fill taxes with the remaining money.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Muslims, although considerably decreased after the battles of Plassey and Buxar, still posed a political threat to the Company. Ram Mohan was now chosen by Carey to be the agitator amongst them.

Under Carey's secret tutelage in the next two decades, Ram Mohan launched his attack against the bastions of Hinduism of Bengal, namely his own Kulin Brahmin priestly clan (then in control of the many temples of Bengal) and their priestly excesses. The social and theological issues Carey chose for Ram Mohan was calculated to weaken the hold of the dominant Kulin class.

He focussed especially on their younger disinherited sons forced into service that constituted the mobile gentry or '*bhadralok*' of Bengal, from the Mughal *zamindari* system and wanted to align them to their new overlords of the Company. The Kulin excesses targeted included child marriage and dowry. In fact, Carey tried to convert Roy to Christianity and appointed a religious priest to try to convert Roy, although the priest later accepted Hinduism.

2.5   ISHWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was born to Thakurdas Bandyopadhyay and Bhagavati Devi at the village of Birsingha, in the subdivision of Midnapore District, on 26 September 1820.

At the age of six he went to Calcutta and stayed with Bhagabat Charan. Bhagabat's youngest daughter Raimoni's motherly and affectionate feelings towards Ishwar touched him deeply and influenced him later in his revolutionary work towards the upliftment of women in India.

Fig. 2.2 *Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar*

His quest for knowledge was so intense that he used to study under a street light as it was not possible for him to afford a gas lamp at home. He was rewarded with a number of scholarships for his academic performance. Ishwar Chandra took up a part-time job of teaching to support himself and his family. Ishwar Chandra studied for twelve long years in the Sanskrit College, Calcutta qualifying in Sanskrit Grammar, Literature, Rhetoric, Vedanta, Smruti and Astronomy.

In 1841, at the age of twenty one, Ishwar Chandra joined Fort William College as head of the Sanskrit department. After five years, Vidyasagar joined Sanskrit College as Assistant Secretary. In the first year of service, Ishwar Chandra recommended many changes in the education system. This resulted in a serious altercation between Ishwar Chandra and College Secretary Rasomoy Dutta. In 1851, Ishwar Chandra became the principal of Sanskrit College. In 1855, he was given additional responsibility of special inspector of schools. Due his differences with Rasomoy Dutta, Vidyasagar resigned from Sanskrit College and joined Fort William College as a head clerk.

Widow Remarriage

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar championed for the upliftment of women in India, particularly in Bengal. Unlike some other reformers who sought to set up alternative societies or systems, he sought, however, to transform orthodox Hindu society from within. With valuable moral support from people Vidyasagar introduced the practice of widow remarriage to mainstream Hindu society. Many widows had to shave their heads and don a white sari, supposedly to discourage attention from men. He took the initiative in proposing and pushing the Widow Remarriage Act XV of 1856 (26 July) in India. He also demonstrated that the system of polygamy without restriction was not sanctioned by the ancient Hindu Shastras.

Contribution of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, along with many other active reformers opened schools for girls as for him, educational reform was more important than any other reform. He believed that the status of women and all types of injustice and inequalities that they face could be changed only through education.

- Vidyasagar worked relentlessly to provide equal education to all men and women irrespective of their caste, religion and gender. He allowed people from lower castes to study in his Sanskrit College that was apparently meant only for upper caste men.

- Vidyasagar worked for the upliftment of women in India especially in his native Bengal. He introduced the practice of widow remarriage and worked against polygamy.

- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar had written many books and thus enriched the Bengali education system to a great extent. Books written by him are read by all till date.

2.6 MAHATMA JYOTIBA GOVINDRAO PHULE

Jyotiba Govindrao Phule, also known as Mahatma Phule, was an activist, thinker, social reformer, writer, philosopher, theologist, scholar, editor and revolutionary. Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savitribai were the pioneers of women's education in India. Phule's thoughts and actions have influenced the fields of education, agriculture, caste system, women and widow upliftment and elimination of untouchability. He is most known, however, for his efforts to educate women, mostly those from the lower castes.

In September 1873, Jyotiba, along with his followers, formed the Satya Shodhak Samaj (Society of Seekers of Truth) with the objective of liberating the lower-most castes of India—the Bahujans, Shudras and Ati-Shudras—and preventing the exploitations and atrocities inflicted on them. His fight to win equal rights for peasants and the lower castes and his contribution to the field of education has earned him a place among the leading social reformers of Maharashtra.

Early Life of Phule

Jyotiba Govindrao Phule was born in the Satara district of Maharastra, in a family belonging to the Mali caste—a caste perceived to be inferior by certain sections of the society on 11 April 1827. His father Govindrao was a vegetable vendor. His mother had died when he was nine months' old. Jyotiba had to leave school after his primary education to help his father on the family's farm. However, his intelligence was recognized by a Muslim and a Christian neighbour, who persuaded his father to allow him to attend the local Scottish Mission's school, from where he completed his schooling in 1847.

The turning point in Jyotiba's life came in the year 1848. His friend, a Brahmin, invited him to his marriage. When Jyotiba joined the wedding procession, the bridegroom's family members insulted Jyotiba since he belonged to a 'low' caste. This was Jyotiba's first direct encounter with the highly divisive caste system. Influenced by Thomas Paine's book *Rights of Man* (1791), Phule developed a keen sense of social justice, becoming passionately critical of the Indian caste system. He argued that education of women and the lower castes was a priority in addressing social inequalities.

- **Religious beliefs**

Jyotiba Phule was a Hindu who believed in and followed the Bhakti tradition. His idol was Chhatrapati Shivaji. He called Shivaji 'destroyer of the Muslims', a community Phule believed was as degenerative a force as the Brahmins.

- **Attack on the sanctity of Vedas**

Jyotirao Phule's critique of the caste system began with an attack on the Vedas, the most fundamental text of forward-caste Hindus. Phule considered the Vedas 'idle fantasies', 'palpably absurd legends' and a 'form of false consciousness.' Phule maintained that the root of all social problems was the belief that religious books were created or inspired by god. All established religious and priestly classes found this faith useful for maintaining their supremacy and therefore, tried their best to defend it.

Phule questioned, 'If there is only one God who created the whole mankind, why did He write the Vedas only in Sanskrit language, despite His anxiety for the welfare of the whole of mankind? What about the welfare of those who do not understand this language?' Phule concluded that it was untenable to say that the Vedas, or any other religious texts, were God-created. To believe so was ignorance and prejudice. All religions and religious texts are manmade and they represent the interests of the classes which are trying to pursue and protect their own selfish ends by constructing such books. Phule was the only sociologist and humanist of his time to put forth such bold ideas. In his view, every religious book is a product of its time and the truths it contains have no permanent and universal validity. These texts can never be free from the prejudices and the selfishness of the authors of such books.

- **Fight against blind faith, ritualism and superstitions**

Jyotiba firmly believed that a new social system based on freedom, equality, brotherhood, human dignity, economic justice and free of exploitation could be created only by overthrowing the existing unequal and exploitative social and religious systems and the values on which they were based. He busted many misleading myths held by women and the lower castes. Yielding to fate, astrology, rituals, and godmen, etc.,were deemed by him as irrational and absurd.

Phule also led campaigns to remove the economic and social handicaps that bred blind faith among women, the Shudras and the Ati-shudras. He subjected religious texts and faiths to the tests of rationalism. He characterized blind faith as outwardly religious but in essence politically-motivated movements.

He accused these movements of blindly upholding the teachings of religion without rationally analysing them. Phule believed in overthrowing the social system in which sections of society have been deliberately made illiterate, ignorant and poor with a view to exploiting them. To him eradication of blind faith formed part of a broad socioeconomic transformation. Mere advice, education and alternative ways of living were not enough unless the economic framework of exploitation came to an end.

- **Phule's concept of God and religion**

Phule was a monotheist (belief in one god). To him, god was the creator of this entire universe and therefore all humans were his children. Phule did not believe that a man/woman needed an intermediary, i.e. a priest, to reach god. He also did not believe that man needed to practise elaborate rituals or asceticism to reach god.

Phule was particularly critical of mythology and religious books. According to him, Hinduism since its inception had been based on the exploitation of the Shudras and domination of the Brahmins. The entire caste system had been devised to this end by the upper castes.

Phule's idea of the perfect religion was the one based on the principles of liberty and equality. He called it Sarvajanik Satya Dharma in which a true devotee sought the truth but without the aid of a Guru or a text. Phule also did not support the belief that the members of a family must practise the same religion, thus becoming one of the earliest advocates of the concept of religious freedom.

Phule believed that there was some truth in all the religious texts and scriptures though none of them could claim to reveal the ultimate and whole truth.

Social Activism

Phule, along with his wife Savitribai, played an important role in fighting for social reform and women's rights in India during the British Rule. The two worked towards tackling some of the major social problems of the times, including women's liberation, widow remarriages and removal of untouchability.

Social Equality

Phule criticized Indian society for being based on inequality and on the exploitation of the ignorant masses by the Brahmins. Phule was a firm upholder of social equality, believing that god created all men and women equal and free and capable of enjoying their rights, so that no man or group of men should suppress another man or group. He advocated that all men and women be free to enjoy all the things that god has created.

He also pointed out that the peasant and other low-caste people's poverty, exploitation and lack of self-reliance wad due to lack of education. He attacked the colonial government for spending state revenue on the education of the higher classes, but keeping it out of the reach of the poor and the downtrodden.

According to him, this policy resulted in the virtual monopoly of all the high offices under the government by the Brahmins.

Phule also attacked the traditional Indian system of education that restricted its access to the higher castes, especially the Brahmins, who prevented others from gaining knowledge and thus influence.

One of his most famous quotes is: 'Lack of education leads to lack of wisdom, which leads to lack of morals, which leads to lack of progress, which leads to lack of money, which leads to the oppression of the lower classes. See what state of the society one lack of education can cause!'

Women's Education

Phule always held women to be equal to men. He pointed out that just as the Shudras were denied education by the Brahmins and thus exploited, similarly, the men prohibited women from gaining knowledge in order to retain male domination in society. He attacked the problem at the root by opening a school for girls and untouchables. However, the orthodox opponents of Phule started a vicious campaign against him. Since no teacher dared to work in a school in which untouchables were admitted as students, Phule asked his wife Savitribai to teach the girls in his school. Savitribai thus became the first Indian woman to work in a school. He opened an exclusive girl's school in 1851 with just eight students. But the number of students increased steadily and two more girls' schools were established during 1851–52. Their efforts in the field of education came to the notice of the British government, which felicitated them in 1852 for their work in Vishrambag Wada.

Child Marriage and Widow Remarriage

Besides education, Phule's other deep concern was the marriage system prevalent in those days. He attacked practices such as child marriage, polygamy, the state of Hindu widows, and so on. In his speeches and writings, he told his followers not to marry more than once and not conduct the wedding of their children when they were still children. Another deplorable practice common during those days was marriage between young girls and old men. The men often died due to old age or some sickness and the girls were left widows. These widows were not expected have any desires or experience even simple pleasures like wearing new clothes or take part in festivities. Their heads were shaved and theywere compelled by society to lead an ascetic life.

Moved by the plight of such widows, Jyotiba and Savitribai organized a strike of barbers and persuaded them not to shave the heads of widows. They initiated widow-remarriage and started a home for widows in 1854. They also opened an orphanage for abandoned children, especially girls.

Many women commit suicide by men who had exploited them to satisfy their lust and then deserted them. Therefore, Savitribai and Jyotiba made 'Delivery Home' for women on whom pregnancy had been forced. The delivery home was called Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha. It is no wonder that some of India's first modern feminists were closely associated with Phule, including his wife Savitribai Phule, Pandita Ramabai, a Brahmin woman who made waves in the area of liberal reformism; Tarabai Shinde, the non-Brahmin author of a fiery tract on gender inequality which was largely ignored at the time but has recently become well-known; and Muktabai, a fourteen-year-old pupil in Phule's school, whose essay on the social oppression of the Mang and Mahar castes is now justly famous.

Political Leanings

Phule approved of the British rule as it had ended the despotism of the Peshwa rulers and established the rule of equality before law. Unlike the Peshwas, the colonial rulers opened education for all castes through missionary schools and colleges. Phule believed that the Western idea of equality and liberty would inspire the colonial rulers to liberate the lower castes from the stranglehold of the Brahmins. He also believed in the benevolence of the colonial masters and hoped that they would work for the welfare of the peasants and the Shudras.

He sent several proposals to the British—laws to grant equal status to women, the post of village head be filled on the basis of merit and not caste, appoint able lower-caste people to the bureaucracy. On the other hand, Phule regarded the national movement and the Indian National Congress (INC) not national in the true sense but as a movement of the elites, since they were dominated by educated Brahmin leaders.

Though Phule trusted the British more than the INC, he was critical of some of the former's policies, especially those related to education. He repeatedly pointed out that though it were the peasants and the labourers who earned the government its revenue, most of it was being spent on the education of the higher castes rather than on spreading basic education among the masses.

He criticized the government-run primary schools for providing education that was neither practical nor did it help the students gain employment. The scholarship system too, he noted, favoured the higher castes rather than the lower-caste children.

Founding of Satya Shodhak Samaj

On 24 September 1873, Jyotiba formed the Satya Shodhak Samaj (Society of Seekers of Truth) with himself as its first president and treasurer. The main objectives of the organization were to liberate the lower caste, especially the Shudras and Ati Shudras, and to prevent their exploitation by the upper-castes.

The Satya Shodhak Samaj refused to regard the Vedas as sacrosanct. It opposed idolatry and denounced the *Chaturvarnya* (four-tiered caste) system. The Samaj propounded the spread of rational thinking and rejected the need for a Brahmin priestly class as the educational and religious leader.

Despite these revolutionary ideas, Phule and his organization remained Hindu by religion. Phule was against those Brahmins who used religion and blind faith of the masses for their own gains. He had many Brahmin friends. He even adopted a Brahmin boy and willed his property to him.

When Phule established the Satya Shodhak Samaj, his wife Savitribai became the head of the women's section which included ninety members. Savitribai worked tirelessly as a school teacher, teaching girls. *Deenbandhu*, the mouthpiece of the Satya Shodhak Samaj, played an important role in Phule's movement.

After Phule's demise, Savitribai took over the responsibility of Satya Shodhak Samaj. She presided over meetings and guided workers. In 1868 she welcomed untouchables to take water from her well. Phule's spirited followers spread the movement to the remotest parts of Maharashtra. Shahu Maharaj, the ruler of the princely state of Kolhapur, gave financial and moral support to the Satya Shodhak Samaj. The organization worked to remove superstitions and blind beliefs of people. But many times it degenerated into hate against Brahmins as a caste.

Legacy

Both Jyotiba and Savitribai opposed idolatry and championed the cause of peasants and workers. Both faced social isolation and vicious attacks from the people whom they questioned. Savitribai's letters give us a good idea about the experiences of women during this social movement. Her poems and other writings are still an inspiration to others.

2.7 ANADARAM DHEKIAL PHUKAN

Anadaram Dhekial Phukan was one of the pioneers of Assamese literature who joined the literary revolution initiated by missionaries wholeheartedly. He is remembered for his efforts for the upliftment of Assamese language. He had a major role in replacing Bengali language by Assamese language as the official language of Assam. He is also known as 'Father of Assamese prose' for his contribution towards Assamese literature.

Early Life and Education

Phukan was born in 1829 at Guwahati in the 'Dhekial Phukan' family. His father wrote and published *Asom Buronji* and *Kamakhya Yatrapaddhati* in Bengali and distributed them freely. He also contributed in the Bengali magazine *Samachar Chandrika*.

Anandaram started his school life in Guwahati but was sponsored by the then commissioner Jenkins to go to Calcutta and study in Hindu College. After studying for

three years in hindu College he came back to Guwahati and took lessons in English. He also took lessons in Sanskrit and Urdu. Anandaram got married in 1846 and joined a government job in the following year. He served as Dewan of the king of Bijani, as Munsif, and Junior Assistance Commissioner.

Literary Life

Anadaram Dhekial Phukan started his literary life at the age of 17. His sole aim in life was to work for the development of his land and its people without caring for his own health. This was the reason why Col. Hopkins compared him to the great Raja Rammohan Roy.

In 1847, Anandaram published *Englandor Biwaran* (Description of England) in Orunodoi. In 1849, he published *Asomiya Lorar Mitra* (Assamese children's friend) in two volumes containing almost 400 pages which is considered as a milestone in the history of Assamese literature.

In 1853, when Moffat Mills came to Assam to review the economic condition, Anadaram Dhekial Phukan made a presentation in English describing the political and administrative scenario of Assam, an indepth analysis of problems faced by Assamese language and the education system, and the reasons and solution to the poor economic condition of Assamese people. He published another book titled *A Few Remarks on Assamese Language* in English in 1855, in which he discussed the independent criteria of the language and the grievous outcome of imposing Bengali as the official language in Assam. He also started working on two dictionaries (Assamese to English, English to Assamese) fate of which is still unknown. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan died at the age of 30 in June 1859.

2.8   SUMMING UP

- The education of Indians had become a major topic of interest among the East India Company officials from the outset of the Company's rule in Bengal.

- Orientalism was facilitated by a number of academics who were attracted to the Indian civilization. The promotion of knowledge of Asia had attracted scholars as well to the Company's service.

- There was an attempt to learn about Indian culture through a study of scriptures in Sanskrit and Persian languages, and to use that knowledge in the matters of governance.

- The missionaries worked for the dissemination of western education. They considered the native languages and indigenous knowledge as backward. The missionaries believed that western education would lead to proselytization.

- The main factor which tilted the scale in favour of English language and western literature was the Company's education policy finding support from the newly emerged Indian intelligentsia. These intellectuals were a product of western education, who believed that the modernization of India would be enabled through English education.

- In the General Committee of Public Instruction, there were two opposing groups who argued on the education policy in India. The orientalist led by H.T. Prinsep advocated the policy of providing encouragement to oriental literature, whereas the anglicists favoured the adoption of English as a medium of instruction.

Check Your Progress

9. Who was Jyotiba Govindrao Phule?

10. What according to Phule was the root cause of social problems?

11. Who was Anadaram Dhekial Phukan and what is he known for?

- On 2 February 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay issued his famous 'Minute on Indian Education'. Macaulay favoured the viewpoint of the anglicists, which also included the utilitarians, led by James Mill, who had begun to play a significant role in shaping the Company's policies.

- Many utilitarian ideas were employed in Thomas Babbington Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education' of 1835. The Minute was to influence education policy in India well into the next century.

- The 1854 Charles Wood's Education Despatch signifies a shift away from the downward filtration policy. It recommended the extension of vernacular elementary education, which was endorsed by Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor-General of India's administration.

- Almost all the proposals in the Wood's Despatch were implemented. The Department of Public Instruction was organized in 1855, and it replaced the earlier Committee of Public Instruction and Council of Education.

- The principal object of the enquiry of the 1882 Commission was the state of elementary education throughout the Indian Empire and the means by which this could be extended and improved.

- The influence of western thoughts and philosophies had a huge role to play in awakening the already dormant potential of India's creativity as a nation and people.

- Great modern literature from scholars and writers such as Bankim Chandra, Keshav Chandra Sen, Madhusudan Dutt led to new ways of looking at India's tradition and history as a nation with great creativity and spirit. This led to a huge awakening of the human consciousness in India.

- During this period, reform movements were largely swayed by two important intellectual principles — rationalism and religious universalism.

- The British introduced in India a capitalist economy and a legal and political regime which was based on the principles of equality and freedom of the individual. Based on this, there were no inequalities based on birth, sex, caste or community. For the Indian women it was Western education, Western liberal thought, social reform movement, modern institutions, and modern means of transportation and communication that collectively played a positive role in their emancipation.

- Another social evil that dogged Hindu society was that of child marriage and Indian women suffered in silence for centuries. Two prominent reformers, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and B.M. Malabari, a Parsi rigorously opposed early marriage. It was the diligent efforts of Vidyasagar that paved the way for passing of the Act of 1860.

- Widows lived a pitiable life. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in Bengal and Malabari, Narmad, Justice Ranade and K. Natrajan in Bombay spoke strongly for their cause and insisted that they be allowed to remarry and live a respectable life.

- The significance and far reaching effects of education cannot be underestimated. Indian social reformers of the time recognized this and emphasized education rights for women. They believed that education would make women both self-confident and knowledgeable.

- The growth of journalism in 19th century India was influenced by many social currents. Modern English education brought with it new ideas from the West. It resulted in the emergence of a new section of educated middle classes in the society and the press developed as a representative of these educated sections.

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born on 22 May 1772, in Radhanagore, Bengal, into the Rarhi Brahmin caste.

- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was born to Thakurdas Bandyopadhyay and Bhagavati Devi at the village of Birsingha, in the subdivision of Midnapore District, on 26 September 1820.

- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar championed for the upliftment of women in India, particularly in Bengal. Unlike some other reformers who sought to set up alternative societies or systems, he sought, however, to transform orthodox Hindu society from within.

- Jyotiba Govindrao Phule, also known as Mahatma Phule, was an activist, thinker, social reformer, writer, philosopher, theologist, scholar, editor and revolutionary.

- Jyotiba Phule was a Hindu who believed in and followed the Bhakti tradition. His idol was Chhatrapati Shivaji. He called Shivaji 'destroyer of the Muslims', a community Phule believed was as degenerative a force as the Brahmins.

- Jyotiba firmly believed that a new social system based on freedom, equality, brotherhood, human dignity, economic justice and free of exploitation could be created only by overthrowing the existing unequal and exploitative social and religious systems and the values on which they were based.

- Phule, along with his wife Savitribai, played an important role in fighting for social reform and women's rights in India during the British Rule. The two worked towards tackling some of the major social problems of the times, including women's liberation, widow remarriages and removal of untouchability.

- Anadaram Dhekial Phukan was one of the pioneers of Assamese literature who joined the literary revolution initiated by missionaries wholeheartedly. He is remembered for his efforts for the upliftment of Assamese language.

2.9 KEY TERMS

- **Occident:** Western lands or regions
- **Anglicization:** English in appearance
- **Grants-in-aid:** Giving of funds to an institution or a person in order to subsidize a project or programme

2.10 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. In ancient India, the educational system embodied the method of oral teaching and learning texts by heart.

2. There were two main schools of education in pre-colonial India:
   - Vedic form of education
   - Education in the madrasas

3. The beginning of English press owned by Indians was witnessed as early as 1844.

4. The main reasons were:
   - There was an influx of ideas from the western world in the political, economic, social and cultural fields due to British rule.
   - Indian and European scholars and intellectuals like Max Muller, Sir William Jones, Raja Rammohan Roy, Bhagwan Lal Indraji, R.G. Bhandarkar and M.G. Ranade fuelled the potential of India's cultural and spiritual growth.
   - Great modern literature from scholars and writers such as Bankim Chandra, Keshav Chandra Sen, Madhusudan Dutt led to new ways of looking at India's tradition and history as a nation with great creativity and spirit. This led to a huge awakening of the human consciousness in India.

5. The Native Marriage Act was passed in 1872, which forbade polygamy (and also polyandry—union of one woman with many males) for Hindus. It gave a boost to the idea of widow remarriage and allowed inter caste marriage for those who did not belong to any recognized school or religious faith.

6. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born on May 22, 1772 in Radhanagore, Bengal, into the Rarhi Brahmin caste.

7. He preached about the unity of God, made early translations of Vedic scriptures into English, co-founded the Calcutta Unitarian Society, founded the Brahmo Samaj, and campaigned against *sati*. He sought to integrate western culture with features of his own country's traditions. He established schools to modernize the education system in India.

8. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar championed for the upliftment of women in India, particularly in Bengal.

9. Jyotiba Govindrao Phule, also known as Mahatma Phule, was an activist, thinker, social reformer, writer, philosopher, theologist, scholar, editor and revolutionary.

10. Phule maintained that the root of all social problems was the belief that religious books were created or inspired by god. All established religious and priestly classes found this faith useful for maintaining their supremacy and therefore, tried their best to defend it.

11. Anadaram Dhekial Phukan was one of the pioneers of Assamese literature who joined the literary revolution initiated by missionaries wholeheartedly. He is remembered for his efforts for the upliftment of Assamese language. He had a major role in replacing Bengali language by Assamese language as the official language of Assam.

2.11 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What effect did modern education have on the Indian society?

2. Write short notes on the following personalities:
   - Raja Ram Mohan Roy
   - Phule
   - Vidyasagar

3. Who started Brahmo Samaj and in which year?

4. What role did Vidyasagar play to eradicate social evils?

5. Reiterate the reasons for the growth of press in India during the colonial period.

6. Write a short note on the impact of the press on society during the British rule in India.

Long-Answer Questions

1. How did indigenous learning consolidate the position of the East India Company in the colonial setup?

2. Bring out the main points of debate on the controversy that took place between the anglicists and the orientalists.

3. Explain the role of Brahmo Samaj

4. Discuss the impact of colonial education policies on the Indian society.

5. Discuss the contribution of Phukan in the field of Assamese language.

6. Discuss utilitarianism and evangelicalism.

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UNIT 3 SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REVIVALIST/REFORM MOVEMENTS

Structure

3.0   INTRODUCTION

A 'social movement' represents a social phenomenon that assumes great importance in the study of not only collective behaviour but also of social change. Sociologists study with great interest the role of social movements not only in bringing about changes in the society, but also in resisting them. A social movement is, in fact, a generator of social change.

Social movements have played an important role in human history by throwing light on the dynamic aspect of the human society and behaviour. Members of society are not always content in playing a passive role to social forces. They attempt to influence the course of human events by collective action. But that does not mean that all social movements become successful in achieving their objectives. Social movements represent a powerful instrument of social change. Some movements have brought about many social changes. Social movements may last for years or even decades.

Various social movements have been taking place in most of the societies of the modern world. We hear of various types of social movements launched for one purpose or the other. There are movements to demand more reservation for the SCs and STs and other backward classes, and there are counter movements demanding its cancellation or at least the *status quo*. There are different types of movements such as Fascist, Communist, Naxalite, Tribal, Peasants, Women's, Youth, Labour, Civil Rights, and so on.

In this unit, we will discuss the various socio-religious reform movements that took place in India.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the concept of social movements
- Describe the various socio-religious reform movements in India

3.2 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

According to Rudolf Heberle, a German-American sociologist, 'a social movement is a collective effort to transform established relations within a particular society'. Turner and Killian, the first sociologists to back their theoretical propositions with visual evidence in the form of photographs and motion pictures of collective behaviour in action, opined that, 'a social movement is a collective acting with some continuity to promote or resist change in the society or group of which it is a part'. According to Neil J. Smelser, an emeritus professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, 'social movement is an organized group effort to generate or resist social change'.

The characteristics of a social movement are discussed below:

- **Collective action:** Collective action takes the form of a movement only when it is sustained for a long time. This collective action may not be formally organized. It could also be an informal attempt. But it should be able to create an interest and awakening in relatively a large number of people.

- **Oriented towards social change:** This change may either be partial or total. Though the movement is aimed at bringing about a change in the values, norms, and ideologies of the existing system, efforts are also made by some other forces to resist the changes and to maintain the *status quo*. The counter attempts are normally defensive and restorative rather than innovative. They are normally the organized efforts of an already established order to maintain itself.

- **Ideology behind the movement:** An important component of the social movement that differentiates it from the general category of collective mobilization is the presence of an ideology. For example, a student strike involves collective mobilization and is oriented towards bringing about a change. But in the absence of an ideology, the student strike becomes an isolated event and not a movement. However, if the strike is committed to an ideology, it may last for longer period and assume the form of a movement.

- **Organizational framework:** A social movement requires a minimum organizational framework to achieve success or at least to maintain the tempo of the movement. This framework is necessary to make the distinction clear between the leaders and the followers, to make clear the purposes of the movement, to persuade people to take part in it or support it, to adopt different techniques to achieve the goals.

- **Techniques and results:** A social movement may follow peaceful or conflicting, violent or non-violent, compulsive or persuasive, democratic or undemocratic methods to reach its goal. A social movement may become successful or may fail; it may become partial success or at least create a general 'awakening' within the public regarding an issue. The result of a movement has a close bearing on the ideology and the organizational framework.

In a nutshell, the following features of the social movement are noted:

- It is an effort by a group.
- It's aim is to bring or resist a change in society.
- It may be organized or unorganized.
- It may be peaceful or violent.
- It's life is not certain; it may continue for a long period or it may die out soon.

3.2.1 Causes of Social Movements

It is social unrest which gives rise to a social movement. This may be caused by the following factors:

- **Cultural drifts:** The society is undergoing constant changes. The values and behaviour are changing in civilized societies. In the course of cultural drift, most of the people develop new ideas. To get these ideas operative in society, they organize a movement. The development of a democratic society, emancipation of women, spread of mass education, removal of untouchability, equality of opportunity for both the sexes, growth of secularism are some examples of cultural drift.

- **Social disorganization:** A changing society is to some extent disorganized because changes in different parts of the society do not take place simultaneously. One part changes more rapidly than the other, producing numerous lags. Industrialization has brought urbanization which has in its turn led to many social problems. Social disorganization brings confusion and uncertainty because the old traditions no longer form a dependable guide to behaviour. Individuals tend to become rootless. They feel isolated from the society. A feeling develops that the community leaders are indifferent to their needs. The individuals feel insecure, confused and frustrated. Confusion and frustration produce social movements.

- **Social injustice:** When a group of people feel that injustice has been done to them, they become frustrated and alienated. Such feeling of injustice provides fertile soil for social movements. The feeling of social injustice is not just limited to the poor. Any group, belonging to any status, may become the victim of social injustice. A wealthy class may feel a sense of injustice when faced with Urban Property Ceiling Act or high taxes imposed on them. Social injustice is a subjective value judgment. A social system is unjust when it is so perceived by its members.

Thus, social movements arise wherever social conditions are not favourable. It may be noted that in a stable and well-integrated society, there are few social movements. In such a society, there are very few social tensions or alienated groups. The people are contented. But in a changing and continuously disorganized society, the people suffer from tensions. They are not fully contented. In such a society, they perceive social injustice and become dissatisfied. It is the dissatisfied people who build social movements. The modern society is more afflicted by social movements.

The people, who are more susceptible to social movements, are those who are:

- Mobile and have little chance to become integrated into the life of the community
- Not fully accepted and integrated into the group i.e., they are marginal

- Isolated from the community

- Threatened by economic insecurity and loss of social status

- Free from family responsibilities or are estranged from their families

- Maladjusted

The sequence pattern of social movement can be summed up as follows:

- There is unrest and discontent in some part of the population. A small group of individuals becomes conscious of the need for a change, voices its feelings and opinions, and sets out to influence the opinions and emotions of others and prepare them for starting a movement.

- There is a period of growth in a preliminary organization, and the programme is restated in more popular and appealing terms.

- A more systematic effort to gain supporters. There is a formal campaign.

- Backed by the enlarged following and increased propaganda, the leaders eventually exert pressure on those in authority. The programme is either accepted or rejected, or partly accepted and partly rejected. If accepted, necessary institutional changes are made; if rejected the movement either collapses or reorganizes for a new trial of strength at a later date.

Thus, most completed movements pass through the four stages of unrest, excitement, formalization and institutionalization.

3.2.2 Types of Social Movements

Sociologists have classified social movements into the following types on the basis of their objectives:

- **Reform movements:** Reform movements are satisfied with the existing social order but believe that certain reforms are necessary in some specific areas. The reformers endeavour to change elements of the system as it currently stands. Some examples of reform movements are Civil Rights movement, Women's Liberation movement, Arya Samaj, and Brahmo Samaj.

- **Revolutionary movements:** These movements deny that the existing system will even work. These movements are deeply dissatisfied with the social order and work for bringing about radical changes. They advocate replacing the entire existing structure. Their objective is the reorganization of society in accordance with their own ideological blueprint. These movements generally prefer not to use violence although some of them do resort to violence. Some examples of revolutionary movements are Protestant Reformation movement, Socialist movement, Communist Revolution in Russia and China, Indian National Freedom movement among others.

- **Reactionary/Revivalist movements:** These movements aim at putting the clock back. Their members view certain social changes with suspicion and distaste and try to reverse the current trends. They highlight the importance and greatness of traditional values, ideologies and institutional arrangements. Some of the reactionary/revivalist movements are Catholic Counter reformation, Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Sarvodaya movement, Khadi and Gramodyog movement of Gandhi.

- **Resistance movements:** These movements are formed to resist a change that is already taking place in society. The social and cultural changes of recent decades

have been greatly disturbing to many of the Indians who feel that their national virtues, traditional values, and cultural greatness are being eroded. Various contemporary resistance movements express their dismay at the directions in which India has been moving. Some of the resistance movements that took place in India are anti-abortion movement, anti-Hindi movement, anti-reservation movement, movement towards economic liberalization.

- **Utopian movements:** These are attempts to take the society or at least a section of it towards a state of perfection. These are loosely structured collectivities that envision a radically changed and blissful state, either on a large scale at some time in the future or on a smaller scale in the present. The Utopian ideals and its means are often vague, but many Utopian movements have quite specific programmes for social change.

3.3 SOCIAL REFORM AND REVIVALIST MOVEMENTS

During the 19th century, India witnessed socio-religious awakening. The Hindu mind that had been moulded for centuries by a fixed set of religious ideas and social conventions was exposed to new ideas and new ways of thinking. It was the result of the Western impact on India. As a result, the rigid rituals blindly followed in religion and traditional beliefs started losing their influence on the masses. The contact with the West opened the Hindu mind to the social evils and set in motion a number of social reform movements. Several traditional beliefs and practices were discarded and new customs, practices, institutions and values were adopted.

Indians who came under the influence of Western ideas and culture became aware of the existing social evils like child marriage, taboos against widow remarriage and inter-caste marriage, inter-caste dining, seclusion of women, and untouchability. This awareness led to a revolt against traditional beliefs and that was the first step towards reforms in social, religious and political spheres of life. This led to the launching of a series of social reform movements right from Raja Ram Mohan Roy down to Mahatma Gandhi. Ram Mohan Roy's Brahmo Samaj, Dayananda Saraswati's Arya Samaj, Vivekananda's Ramakrishna Mission, Annie Besant's Theosophical Society, Gandhi's Sarvodaya Movement and crusade against Untouchability, and many other movements, not only served to eradicate the social evils but also enlighten people regarding modern values.

3.3.1 Brahmo Samaj

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a religious, social, and educational reformer who challenged the traditional Hindu culture and indicated the lines of progress for Indian society under British rule. He is rightfully called the 'Father of Modern India'. He, along with Dwarkanath Tagore founded the Brahmo Sabha in 1828, which engendered the Brahmo Samaj, an influential Indian socio-religious reform movement during the Bengal Renaissance. His influence was apparent in the fields of religion, politics, public administration, as well as education. He is known for his efforts to abolish the practice of *Sati*, the Hindu funeral practice in which the widow immolated herself on her husband's funeral pyre.

Roy was born in Radhanagore, Bengal, into the Rarhi Brahmin caste. His family background displayed religious diversity; his father Ramkanto Roy was a Vaishnavite,

Check Your Progress

1. List the features of a social movement.
2. Name the different types of social movements.
3. What are reform movements?
4. Define utopian movements.
5. What are revolutionary movements?

while his mother Tarinidevi was from a Shaivite family. This was unusual, for Vaishanavites did not commonly marry Shaivites at that time. Thus, one parent wanted him to be a scholar, a *sastrin*, while the other wanted him to have a career dedicated to the *laukik*, which was secular public administration.

Ram Mohan Roy's impact on modern Indian history concerned a revival of the ethics and principles of the Vedanta school of philosophy as found in the Upanishads. He preached about the unity of God, made early translations of Vedic scriptures into English, co-founded the Calcutta Unitarian Society, founded the Brahmo Samaj, and campaigned against Sati. He sought to integrate Western culture within Indian traditions. He established schools to modernize the system of education in India.

The Brahmo Samaj is the societal component of the Brahmo religion which is mainly practiced today as the *Adi Dharm*, after its eclipse in Bengal, consequent to the exit of the Tattwabodini Sabha from its ranks in 1859. It was one of the most influential religious movements responsible for the making of modern India. It was conceived in Kolkata in 1830 by Ram Mohan Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore as a reformation of the prevailing Brahminism of the time (specifically Kulin practices) and began the Bengal Renaissance in the nineteenth century, pioneering all religious, social and educational advancement of the Hindu community. From the Brahmo Samaj springs Brahmoism, the most recent of India's faiths recognized by law as a distinct religion in Bangladesh, reflecting its non-syncretic 'foundation of Ram Mohan Roy's reformed spiritual Hinduism (contained in the 1830 Banian deed) and inclusion of root Hebraic-Islamic creed and practice'. After the publication of Hemendranath Tagore's *Brahmo Anusthan* (code of practice) in 1860 which formally divorced Brahmoism from Hinduism, the first Brahmo Samaj was founded in 1861 at Lahore by Pandit Nobin Chandra Roy.

Doctrines of the Brahmo Samaj

The following doctrines are common to all varieties and offshoots of the Brahmo Samaj:

- No faith in any scripture as an authority
- No faith in *Avatars*
- Denounce polytheism and idol-worship
- Against caste restrictions
- No faith in the doctrines of *karma* and rebirth

Principles of Brahmo Samaj

The following principles are accepted by the vast majority of Brahmos today:

- **On God:** There is always Infinite Singularity—immanent and transcendent, singular author and preserver of existence. He who is manifested everywhere and in everything, in fire and in water, in the smallest plant to the mightiest oak.
- **On Being:** Being is created from Singularity. Being is renewed to Singularity. Being exists to be one (again) with Loving Singularity.
- **On Intelligent Existence:** Righteous actions alone rule Existence against chaos. Knowledge of pure conscience (light within) is the One (Supreme) ruler of Existence with no symbol or intermediary.

- **On Love:** Respect all creations and beings but never venerate (worship) them for only Singularity can be adored.

Divisions of the Brahmo Samaj

After the death of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, serious differences regarding creed, rituals and the attitude of the Brahmos to the social problems, had arisen between Debendranath Tagore and Keshub Chandra Sen (who joined the Samaj in 1857). Tagore and Sen possessed radically different temperaments. As a result, in 1866, the Brahmo Samaj soon split up into two groups—the old conservatives rallying round Debendranath and the young reformists led by the Keshub Chandra. The two rival bodies—the Adi Brahmo Samaj (led by Debendranath) and the Brahmo Samaj of India (inspired and led by Keshub Chandra)—came into existence. The Brahmo Samaj of India started to carry out its spiritual and social reforms and achieved remarkable success within a short span of time. The Samaj now adopted a more radical and comprehensive scheme of social reforms. It placed greater stress on female emancipation, female education and a total abolition of caste distinctions. Its two important achievements were the formation of the Indian Reform Association in 1870 and the enactment of the Indian Marriage Act of 1872. The latter authenticated the inter-caste marriages. The blend of bhakti (intense devotional fervour) and Brahmoism rendered it more soothing, emotional and attractive to the common people.

Despite the vibrant progress of the Brahmo movement under Keshub, the Samaj underwent a second schism in May, 1878 when a group of Keshub Chandra Sen's followers deserted him to establish the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. The founders of this new outfit demanded the introduction of a democratic constitution in the church, which was not conceded by Keshub Chandra and his followers. The two other factors responsible for division in the ranks of the Brahmo Samaj of India were Keshub's doctrine of *adesha* (Divine Command) and the marriage of Keshub's daughter with the prince of Cooch Bihar allegedly in violation of the provision of the Indian Marriage Act of 1872. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, led by the veteran Derozian Shib Chandra Dev, consisted of some of the most talented youth of the time, such as Sivnath Shastri, Ananda Mohan Bose and Dwarkanath Ganguli. They were all great supporters of democracy and promptly framed a full-fledged democratic constitution based on universal adult franchise for their new organization. A number of them took active part in the activities of the Indian League (1878), the Indian Association (1878) and the nascent Indian National Congress.

Socio-religious Reforms by Raja Ram Mohan Roy

In 1830, Ram Mohan Roy travelled to the United Kingdom from the Khejuri Port, which was then the sea port of Bengal. At the time, Roy was an ambassador of the Mughal emperor Akbar II, who conferred on him the title of 'Raja' to convince the British government to provide for the welfare of India and to ensure that Lord Bentick's regulation banning the practice of Sati was not overturned. Roy also visited France. Roy demanded property inheritance rights for women.

Roy's political background influenced his social and religious reforms of Hinduism. He wrote: 'The present system of Hindoos is not well calculated to promote their political interests. It is necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort.' Ram Mohan Roy's experience working with the British government taught him that Hindu

traditions were often not respected or thought as credible by Western standards; this affected his religious reforms. He wanted to legitimize Hindu traditions to his European acquaintances by proving that 'superstitious practices which deform the Hindoo religion have nothing to do with the pure spirit of its dictates'. The superstitious practices Ram Mohan Roy objected to include Sati, caste rigidity, polygamy and child marriage. These practices were often the reasons British officials claimed moral superiority over India. Ram Mohan Roy's ideas of religion sought to create a fair and just society by implementing humanitarian practices similar to Christian ideals and thus, legitimizing Hinduism in the modern world.

Roy died at Stapleton, which was then a village to the northeast of Bristol on 27 September 1833.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy: The Educationist

Roy believed that education was imperative for social reforms. In 1817, in collaboration with David Hare, he set up the Hindu College at Calcutta. In 1822, Roy founded the Anglo-Hindu school, followed by the Vedanta College four years later, where he insisted that his teachings of monotheistic doctrines be incorporated with 'modern, western curriculum'; Vedanta College offered courses as a synthesis of Western and Indian learning. In 1830, he helped Alexander Duff in establishing the General Assembly's institution, by providing him the venue vacated by Brahmo Sabha and getting the first batch of students. Ram Mohan also expressed himself strongly in favour of introducing a modern educational system in the country. Roy supported the induction of western learning into Indian education. He opposed the views of those who contended that the indigenous and Sanskrit system of education should be continued in India. In his view, the Sanskrit system of education would keep the country in darkness. He advocated the study of english, science, western medicine and technology.

Roy published magazines in English, Hindi, Persian, and Bengali. He published the *Brahmonical Magazine* in English in 1821. One notable magazine of his was the *Sambad Kaumudi*, published in 1821. In 1822, Ram Mohan published *Mirat-ul-Akbar* in the Persian language.

The *Brahmonical Magazine* ceased to exist after the publication of few issues. *Sambad Kaumudi*, a weekly magazine, covered topics such as freedom of press, induction of Indians into high ranks of service and separation of the judiciary from the executive. *Sambad Kaumudi* became bi-weekly in January 1830 and continued for thirty-three years.

He published the newspaper to register his protest against the introduction of Press Ordinance of 1823. The ordinance stated that a license from the Governor General in council would be mandatory to publish any newspaper. When the English Company censored the press, Ram Mohan composed two memorials against this in 1829 and 1830 respectively.

Ram Mohan vehemently opposed the practice of Sati. But he was somewhat reluctant to have the practice abolished through legislation enacted by a foreign political authority. His method was to have the inhuman practice wiped out through educating and rousing public opinion against it. Roy wrote and argued ceaselessly against it towards attaining the objective. He knew that legislation by a foreign authority would drive the practice underground, which it actually did, in Bengal as elsewhere, for quite

some time. But if a strong, knowledgeable public opinion could be created against the practice, it could be wiped out entirely.

Ram Mohan called upon his countrymen to discard idolatry and worship one true God. He did not believe in transmigration of souls and the incarnation of God appearing on earth. Ram Mohan questioned the religious sanction for the practice of Sati. He opposed child marriage, stood for the remarriage of widows, and for the equal rights of man and woman. While championing these causes, he maintained that neither Hindu religion nor the ancient history of the country justified the continuation of these social evils. Ram Mohan also opposed the system of hereditary priesthood. Under his guidance, the Brahmo Samaj spread these views and its members tried to practise them.

Ram Mohan translated some of the source literature of Hinduism into Bengali. Since then, the sacred books of the Hindus have ceased to be a secret preserve of the priestly class. He was, vigorously criticized by Hindu pundits.

3.3.2 Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's Reform Movement

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar introduced a new technique of learning Sanskrit easily, and was responsible for a series of Sanskrit primers. He contributed immensely to the development of Bengali language and literature. Vidyasagar was also an educational and social reformer. It was he who had thrown the open the Sanskrit college to non-Brahmins and made English education accessible to the classical scholars. As the Government Inspector of schools, he founded as many as 35 schools for girls and 20 model schools during the British rule. He was an advocate of higher education for women.

Although never a Brahmo himself, Iswar Chandra resumed the best traditions of Ram Mohan's crusade against social evils and upliftment of the socially oppressed. Vidyasagar raised his voice against child marriage and polygamy, but his most memorable stand was his bold advocacy of widow remarriage in the teeth of strong conservative opposition. Although the *Bengal Spectator*, the mouthpiece of the Young Bengal, had advocated widow remarriage, it was Vidyasagar's bold advocacy of the cause that brought the issue into prominence. Although the government at first, preferred not to initiate any legislation in this regard, but Vidyasagar successfully persuaded it to pass the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856.

3.3.3 Arya Samaj: A Revivalist Movement

The Arya Samaj movement was an outcome of the reaction to Western influences. It was revivalist in form but not in content. The founder of the movement, Swami Dayanand, rejected Western ideas and sought to revive the ancient religion of the Aryans.

Dayanand's idea was to unite India religiously, socially and nationally—Aryan religion to be the common religion of all, a classless and casteless society, and an India free from foreign rule. He considered the Vedas as India's 'Rock of Ages', the true original seed of Hinduism. His motto was 'Go back to the Vedas'. He gave his own interpretation of the Vedas. He disregarded the authority of the later Hindu scriptures like the *Puranas* and described them as the work of lesser men and responsible for the evil practices of idol worship and other superstitious beliefs in Hindu religion. Dayanand condemned idol worship and preached unity of Godhead. He decried untouchability and casteism as not sanctioned by the Vedas. He advocated widow

remarriage and a high status for woman in society. His views were published in his famous work *Satyartha Prakash* (The True Exposition). While the Brahmo Samaj and the Theosophical Society appealed to the English educated elite only, Dayanand's message was for the masses of India. The movement was popular in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Arya Samaj's Programmes

- **Education:** Dayananda wanted to revive the knowledge of Sanskrit literature. He made it the responsibility of Arya Samaj to run Gurkulas where the Indian young minds can be educated in terms of Indian culture and civilization. He wanted that these young men should be taught the value of high moral character. They should be nourished, brought up and developed in an atmosphere where patriotism was above everything else. Gurukuls should be centres of Vedic study and research. The Arya Samaj should rise against social evils.

- **Social reforms:** Dayanand felt that orthodoxy was bound to oppose such regeneration in Hindu society. He made it obligatory on the part of Arya Samajists to stand for widow re-marriage and oppose child marriage or caste system and other evils or similar institutions vehemently which had corrupted the Hindu society. Keeping in view the trend of the time, Dayanand asked the Arya Samajists to expose what was unwanted in the religious doctrines and books of other religions so that missionaries were demoralized, and they hesitated from condemning and criticizing Hindu religious teachings and philosophy. Dayanand propagated *shuddhi* by which he meant that those who wanted to willingly re-embrace Hindu religion should not be forbidden to do so.

- **Democratic constitution:** Dayananand introduced elective system in the constitution of Arya Samaj which was then unknown to the religious institutions of those days. He laid down that Arya Samaj should be organized on democratic lines. Arya Samajists were obliged to see that their office-bearers were elected by their members and that there were no hereditary or nominated members.

- **Political reforms:** In the political field, Dayanand made the Arya Samajists aware that it was obligatory for them to preach and propagate the use of Swadeshi and also demand self-government. There should be decentralization of authority and a desire on the part of government to place individual above everything else.

Arya Samaj was responsible for political, social and economic resurgence in India. It had deep influence on many contemporaries. Most of the national leaders closely studied the doctrines of Arya Samaj. The influence of Arya Samaj is evident from the fact that among those who were influenced by it were persons like Lala Har Dayal, Har Krishan Lal, Krishan Lal, Krishan Verma, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindra Nath Tagore. In the north-west India, the influence of Arya Samaj was felt even in the very early stages of its development.

It was due to the work and contribution of Arya Samaj that ancient Indian glory was revived and a network of Gurukuls set up for educating young men and women of India. Arya Samaj acted as a check against the influence of Christianity on Hindu society.

3.3.4 Ramakrishna Mission

This movement was started by Sri Ramakrishna Paramhamsa in Bengal. Sri Ramakrishna was a simple village priest. Yet the entire middle class, Western-educated Bengali community made him their national hero. Men like Keshav Chandra Sen, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (novelist), and Girish Chandra Ghosh (dramatist), regarded him as a saint. Ramakrishna, whose early upbringing had been among people untouched by English ideas, had stood as an inspiration to a whole generation.

The national awakening of the Indian people also found expression in the movement inspired by Ramakrishna. He sought religious salvation in the traditional ways of reincarnation, meditation and devotion (*bhakti*), in his search for religious truth or realization of God. He lived with mystics of other faiths, including Muslims and Christians. He emphasized that there were many roads to God and salvation and that service to mankind was service to God, for man was the embodiment of God.

It was his great disciple, **Swami Vivekananda**, who after the death of the saint founded the Ramakrishna Mission (1897) to propagate his teachings. The mission aimed at protecting Indians from materialistic influences of the western civilization. It idealized Hinduism, including its practice of idol worship and polytheism. It aimed at spiritual conquest of the world through revived Hinduism.

The Mission had many branches in different parts of the country and carried on social services by opening schools, hospitals and dispensaries, orphanages, and libraries. The movement did not stress on personal salvation but on social good or social service.

Vivekananda intended to make the Mission an institution devoted entirely to the cause of national service. He established homes of social service and religious discipline in different parts of the country. These were used by the monks who were made to go through a period of training and discipline before they were permitted to be initiated into the order. *Sewa ashramas* had grown all over the country. The Ramakrishna Mission differed from other social and religious movements in the respect that it laid emphasis on that aspect of *Vedanta* which encouraged universalism in its religious conception. Vivekananda in his interpretation of Hindu religion raised it to a universal status.

Vivekananda's intrepid patriotism gave a new colour to the nationalist movement throughout India. Annie Besant described him as a 'warrior-monk', and he was clearly deeply influenced by the political thinking of his time. Vivekananda contributed immensely to the new awakening of India.

3.3.5 Theosophical Movement

Theosophy (from Greek *theosophia* [*theos* meaning divine + *sophia* meaning wisdom]; literally 'divine wisdom') can be defined as a system that speculates or investigates direct knowledge related to the mysteries of living beings and the nature, specifically focusing on the character of divinity. Theosophy is also regarded as a fragment of the larger discipline of esotericism, which refers to concealed knowledge or wisdom which can enlighten an individual and provide salvation. A theosophist seeks to learn about the mysteries of the universe and the factors that bond the universe with human beings and the celestial world. Theosophy aims to explore the source of eternity and humanity (theogony and anthropogony), which includes, end of the world, life and humanity

(eschatology). This study leads to a rational discovery about the purpose and source of the universe (cosmogony). The hieroglyphs of nature are investigated into, by a theosophist (insights, or poetic interpretations, in flowers, rainbows). Theosophy makes use of a technique of interpretation, which is based upon a particular myth or revelation. This revelation applies dynamic thinking to extract symbolic significances and to pursue knowledge until these mysteries are completely understood.

The Theosophical Society was established as an organization in 1875, for developing spiritual tenets and seeking the truth. This process is called Theosophy. The original organization underwent many divisions and alterations and resulted in (as of 2011) many successors. Today, theosophy is a dynamic school of philosophy, which has promoted other mystical, philosophical and religious schools of thoughts after undergoing various divisions.

History of the Theosophical Society

The idea of forming the Theosophical Society was first proposed in New York City on 8 September 1875. However, this society was brought into official existence in November 1875, by Helena Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, William Quan Judge and others. The fundamental goal of this Society was 'study and elucidation of Occultism, the Cabala'. A few years later, Olcott and Blavatsky came to India and set up its international headquarters at Adyar, in Madras (Chennai). The study of religions of the East also interested them, so they included them in the schema of the Society. Many exercises were undertaken to develop the objectives of the Society. The objectives that were developed are as follows:

- Forming of a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without discrimination on the basis of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour
- Encouraging learning of comparative religion, philosophy and science
- Investigating the unexplained laws of nature and hidden strength of man
- The Society was structured like a non-sectarian body. The constitution and rules of the Theosophical Society were as follows:
- The Theosophical Society is perfectly non-sectarian and requires no obligatory belief, faith or creed to qualify as its member.
- However, anyone who applies for membership, or becomes its member should sympathize with the efforts directed at creating a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. This view of the Society was formulated again in a resolution that the General Council of the Theosophical Society passed on 23 December 1924.

One of the main tenets of philosophy that the Society promoted was a complicated doctrine of The Intelligent Evolution of All Existence, which occurred on a cosmic scale. This comprised both, physical and non-physical features of both, the known and unknown aspects of the universe. All its constituent parts were affected, irrespective of their size or significance. The Secret Doctrine of the work of art of Helena Blavatsky propagated this concept in 1888. This view stated that the evolution of humanity on the Earth (and beyond) was part of the larger cosmic evolution. A hidden spiritual hierarchy administers this evolution. This hierarchy is also referred to as the Masters of Ancient Wisdom. Advanced spiritual beings top this hierarchy. The Theosophical Society was represented by Blavatsky, as one of the many attempts by this hidden hierarchy to guide humanity. Humanity is guided towards its final and

incontrovertible goal of evolution, which is achievement of excellence and conscious and willing partaking in the process of evolution. An earthly infrastructure is required for these attempts to succeed (such as the Theosophical Society). Finally, it was agreed that a number of Mahatmas, who were members of the hierarchy were inspiring the Society.

Divisions in the Theosophical Society

In 1891, after Helena Blavatsky died, the leaders of the Society initially seemed to work in unison. However, this harmony was short-lived. Judge broke off with Olcott and Annie Besant in 1895, after charging both of them with forgery of letters from the Mahatmas. The larger American section of the society was taken by him. The original organization, whose leaders were Olcott and Besant, is still intact in India under the title, the Theosophical Society—Adyar. Judge's organization further split into two factions, one was led by Katherine Tingley and the other was headed by Judge's secretary, Ernest Temple Hargrove. Hargrove's faction does not exist now. However, Tingley's faction is now referred to as 'the Theosophical Society-International Headquarters, Pasadena, California'. In 1909, another faction had broken away from Tingley's faction and formed the United Lodge of Theosophists or ULT.

In 1902, The German/Austrian division of the Theosophical Society appointed Rudolf Steiner as its General Secretary. He was more inclined towards the West, making the organization very different from its Adyar headquarters. The German division came into existence after serious philosophical conflicts with Annie Besant and other members of the International leadership. These conflicts were regarding the spiritual importance of Jesus. Most of the German and Austrian members disassociated themselves from the original Society in 1913 and set up the Anthroposophical Society. The branches of the latter are still operational in many countries around the world today, including the US and Canada.

The 'World Teacher'

In 1889, Blavatsky added another objective to those that already existed. She made a public declaration that the Society was also set up to create a 'World Teacher' for humanity. She said that human beings should be receptive towards this World Teacher. The Theosophical doctrine of the 'World Teacher' was a manifested aspect of a sophisticated spiritual entity (the *Maitreya*) that periodically appeared on the Earth, to direct the evolution of mankind. The mission of this spiritual entity was to simplify the knowledge that could help humanity evolve in a better way, for modern human beings to understand. When Besant took over as president of the Society in 1907, she believed that the World Teacher would emerge sooner than Blavatsky had predicted (last quarter of the 20th century).

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Charles Webster Leadbeater was one of the people who expected that Lord *Maitreya* would imminently appear as the 'World Teacher'. Leadbeater, was an influential theosophist and occultist. In 1909, he came across Jiddu Krishnamurti, an adolescent Indian boy, who according to Leadbeater, was a prospective contender for the vehicle of the 'World Teacher'. Some months earlier, Krishnamurti's family had moved to the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India. After he came to limelight, the Society took Krishnamurti under it and he underwent extensive grooming to prepare him for his mission. However, by 1925, Krishnamurti had started to deviate from the

course assigned to him by the leaders of the Theosophical Society in Adyar and several other Theosophists. In 1929, the Order of the Star was destroyed by him in public. The Order of the Star was a global society that was established by the leadership of the Theosophical Society to prepare the world for the advent of the *Maitreya.* He also discarded the role of the 'vehicle' played by him, for the 'World Teacher'. Finally, he resigned from the Theosophical Society, though individual members of the Society were still his friends. The remaining part of his life was spent by him in travelling across the world as an independent speaker. He became well-known for the originality of his thoughts on subjects like spirituality, philosophy and psychology.

Controversy and Racial Beliefs

According to Helena Blavatsky, the evolution of humanity comprised of a range of stages known as Root Races. Aryans belonged to the Fifth Root Race (out of seven). However, Root Races are not the same as ethnicities. Evolutionary stages of the whole humanity are represented by them. Every successive Root Race is more developed than the previous one. Blavatsky's teachings pointed out that the Atlantis was the centre for the earlier stage of evolution, in the period of the Fourth Root-Race. At that time, the Aryan Root Race had progressed only one more step in the evolutionary progression. Finally, the more spiritual Sixth Root Race superseded it.

Anthropology, sociology and other faculties have defined race in a more comparative and limited way. No person or group was considered as superior by Blavatsky. The idea of common origin and destiny for every human being and the principle of universal brotherhood, as the First Object of the Theosophical Society, were promoted by Blavatsky. Religious tolerance and inclusiveness were also asserted by her. She said, 'Theosophists, collectively respect the Bible as much as they do the sacred scriptures of other people, finding in it the same eternal truths as in the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta, the Tripitakas, etc.' Additionally, Austrian/German ultra-nationalist, Guido von List and his followers, later selected parts of Blavatsky's occult philosophy and blended them with ideas of nationalism and fascism. This system of thinking was referred to as Ariosophy. A few of the researchers, who traced the connection of Ariosophy with Theosophy, stated that the latter primarily depends on 'intellectual expositions of racial evolution'. Nevertheless, Blavatsky said in *The Key to Theosophy*, 'The Society is a philanthropic and scientific body for the propagation of the idea of brotherhood on practical instead of theoretical lines.'

Related Individuals and Organizations

Other organizations that have been associated with the original Theosophical Society, its philosophy, leaders, branches, or descendant organizations, at some or the other point of time are as follows:

- Agni Yoga
- Ananda College
- Anthroposophy
- Alice Bailey
- The Bridge to Freedom
- Church Universal and Triumphant
- James Cousins
- Halcyon, California

- Hugh Dowding
- 'I AM' Activity
- Anna Kingsford
- Liberal Catholic Church
- Order of the Temple of the Rosy Cross
- Elizabeth Clare Prophet
- Nilakanta Sri Ram
- Jorge Ángel Livraga Rizzi
- Schola Philosophicae Initiationis
- Share International
- Theosophical Society of the Arya Samaj
- Brother XII (Edward Arthur Wilson)

Miscellaneous Reform Movements

Young Bengal Movement: It was started by an Anglo-Indian, Henry Vivian Derozio, considered to be the first nationalist poet of India. He became a teacher at Hindu College (Calcutta) in 1826. His followers were known as Derozians. Unlike the Brahmo Samajists, the Derozians were radical in their approach.

Rahnumai Muzdyayan: An Association for the socio-religion reform among the Parsis was founded in 1851 at Bombay by Dadabhai Naoroji, Furdunji Naoroji, K.R. Cama and S.S. Bengales. They opposed social practices such as child marriage, dependence on astrology and orthodoxy in the Parsi society in India. *Rust Goftar* (Truth Teller), published in Gujrati, was issued by Dadabhai Naoroji. It was the mouthpiece of this association.

Singh Sabha: It was founded in 1873 at Amritsar by Thakur Singh Sandhwalia and Giani Gian Singh. It had the following objectives:

- To introduce western education within the Sikh Community
- To counter the proselytizing activities of the Christian missionaries as well as Hindu revivalists
- To open Khalsa schools and colleges throughout Punjab. The Akali Movement was an off-shoot of the Singh Sabha.

3.3.6 Prarthana Samaj

The Prarthana Samaj critically examined the relations between contemporary social and cultural systems and religious beliefs and gave priority to social reforms as compared to the political changes already initiated by the British government. Their comprehensive reform movement has led many impressive projects of cultural change and social reform in Western India, such as the improvement of women and depressed classes, an end to the caste system, abolition of child marriage and infanticide, educational opportunities for women and remarriage of widows. Its success was guided by Sir Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, a noted Sanskrit scholar, Atmaram Pandurang, Narayan Chandavarkar, and Justice Mahadev Govinda Ranade. Ranade emphasized that 'the reformer must attempt to deal with the whole man and not to carry out reform on one side only'. 'The social organism in India,' according to Ranade, 'shows a growth which should not be

ignored and cannot be forcibly suppressed'. Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde championed the complete eradication of caste and untouchability. He founded the first depressed classes mission.

By comparison with the parallel Brahmo Samaj of Bengal and the ideals of rational or theistic belief and social reform, the Prarthana Samaj(ists) were followers of the great religious tradition of the Maratha saints like Namdev, Tukaram and Ramdas (the guru of Shivaji). The Brahmo Samaj founders examined many world religions, including ancient Vedic texts, which subsequently were not accepted to be infallible or divine. Although the adherents of Prarthana Samaj were devoted theists, they also did not regard the Vedas as divine or infallible. They drew their inspiration from the Hindu scriptures and used the hymns of the old Marathi 'poet-saints' in their prayers. Their ideas trace back to the devotional poems of the *Vitthalasas* part of the *Vaishnava bhakti* devotional movements of the thirteenth century in southern Maharashtra. The Marathi poets had inspired the movement of resistance against the Mughals, but, beyond religious concerns, the primary focus of the Prarthana Samaj was on social and cultural reforms.

Doctrines of Prarthana Samaj

The Prarthana Samaj was started in Bombay. It was inspired by the Brahmo Samaj but was milder and less radical in its principles. Theistic worship comes first, followed closely by social reforms— abandonment of caste, widow remarriage, female education and the abolition of child marriage. Many members hold the view that definite beliefs and theological thought are not necessary for a free theistic movement. Others have produced theological and devotional books. Though their theism is based on ancient Hindu texts, they have practically given up the inspiration of the Vedas and belief in transmigration. The Samaj defines its faith as follows:

- God is the creator of this universe. He is the only true God; there is no other God beside him. He is eternal, spiritual, infinite, the store of all good, all joy, without parts, without form, one without a second, the ruler of all, all-pervading, omniscient, almighty, merciful, all-holy and the saviour of sinners.

- His worship alone leads to happiness in this world and the next.

- Love and reverence for him, an exclusive faith in him, praying and singing to him spiritually with these feelings and doing the things pleasing to him constitute His true worship.

- To worship and pray to images and other created objects is not a true mode of divine adoration.

- God does not incarnate himself and there is no one book which has been directly revealed by God or is wholly infallible.

- All men are His children; therefore they should behave towards each other as brethren without distinction.

This doctrine was very similar to the Brahmo Samaj but with one significant difference. The Prarthana Samaj bases its worship on the devotional poems of the *Vitthalas*, especially those of Tukaram.

History of Prarthana Samaj

Two secret societies preceded the Prarthana Samaj. We know very little about the Gupta Sabha. This was followed in 1849 by the Paramahamsa Sabha established by

Ram Balkrishna Jaykar and others. Members had to eat bread baked by a Christian and drink water brought by a Muslim. The Samaj had about a thousand members in Poona, Ahmedabad, Ratnagiri and elsewhere in western India. Orthodox opposition resulted in the documents being stolen in 1860 and the names of the members being made public. This led to widespread panic. Some members converted to Christianity, while others held steadfast to their convictions. The ones who held on to their religious convictions went on to establish the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay in 1867. These founder members were educated Indians and their leader was Dr Atmaram Pandurang (1823-1898), a personal friend of Dr Wilson, who founded the Wilson College in 1835. The Brahmo Samaj made an important impression on these men. In 1864, Keshub Chander Sen visited Bombay, and again in 1868. In 1872, Pratap Chandra, another great Brahmo, visited at the invitation of the Prarthana Samaj. During his visit, a plan was made for the Prarthana Samaj to become a branch of the Brahmo Samaj. This was prevented by Mahadeo Ranade by pointing out the splits among the Brahmos of Bengal which could be echoed in Bombay, while Dr Bhandarkar did not approve of the extremism and Christian bias of Keshub Chandra Sen. Similarly, when Dayananda Saraswati came to Bombay in 1874, there was great interest in his lectures and the next year he founded the Arya Samaj in Bombay. However, his ideas on the Vedas stopped the Prarthana Samaj from joining him. Hence, the Prarthana Samaj continued as an independent reform movement. In Bombay, this was the most important and well-organized movement of the time as it was sponsored by leading personalities.

The mildness of the Prarthana Samaj has meant that there have never been groups of missionaries as in the Brahmo Samaj. With only one or two missionaries, the movement did not spread extensively. However, the mildness of the Samaj has been appreciated in South India, particularly in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, where the Prarthana Samaj was the most popular of all such institutions.

The Samaj ran the Young Theists Union, the Postal Mission to send religious literature, the *Subodh Patrika*, night schools, and a ladies association. It is also associated with The Students Brotherhood, an Orphanage and Foundling Asylum in Pandharpur and the organization of the Social Reform Movement and the Depressed Classes Mission. Every year an All-India Theistic

Conference is attended by both the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj.

Though the Prarthana Samaj is opposed to image worship, in practice, members follow the ceremonies of Hinduism though regarding them as of no religious importance. Thus, Samaj members can still practice image worship in their homes and be part of the caste system. It is said that the Prarthana Samaj paid allegiance to Hinduism with a protest. There are no official figures for the number of adherents within the movement. They are mainly to be found in west and south India.

3.3.7 Muslim Reform Movements

Some of the Muslim reform movements are discussed below:

1. Aligarh Movement

The Aligarh Movement was a prominent Muslim socio-religious movement in India and was led by Sayyid Ahmad Khan. Sayyid Ahmad Khan was born into a prestigious family of Delhi and spent his childhood in and out of the Mughal court. He studied Arabic and Persian according to the older pattern and also studied the work of Shah Wali Ullah. Though he did not receive any religious education, he demonstrated a personality more

akin to a courtier or government official than to an Ulama. Sayyid Ahmad Khan believed that the future of Islam rested with the fortunes of Muslims, particularly those residing in northern India. He started to attract others with his writings and soon founded a variety of public forums for spreading his ideas. He soon emerged as a prominent leader of the Muslim community.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan believed that the dilemma of the Muslims in India laid in an education that disseminated elements of English knowledge within the Islamic context. Aiming at solving this dilemma, he planned to open an educational institution that would educate the Muslims properly. He established the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh in June, 1875. It developed into the Aligarh Muslim University in 1890. The main objective of Sayyid Ahmad Khan behind founding the institution was to supply educated, honest, public-spirited leaders able to work with the English government and to protect the Muslim community.

The Aligarh Movement was actually an educational movement with a view to purify Islam and it marked a sharp break with previous attempts to purify Islam and return it to its past glory. The vision of the movement was to create an administrative elite class that would govern in cooperation with the British rather than focus its attention on the Ulama. Through the 1850s, Syed Ahmed Khan began developing a strong passion for education. While pursuing studies of different subjects including European jurisprudence, Sir Syed began to realize the advantages of Western-style education, which was offered at newly established colleges across India.

Despite being a devout Muslim, Sir Syed criticized the influence of traditional dogma and religious orthodoxy, which had made most Indian Muslims suspicious of British influences. He became increasingly concerned for the future of the Muslim communities. A scion of Mughal nobility, Sir Syed had been reared in the finest traditions of Muslim élite culture and was aware of the steady decline of Muslim political power across India. The animosity between the British and Muslims before and after the rebellion (Independence War) of 1857 threatened to marginalize Muslim communities across India for many generations. He intensified his work to promote cooperation with British authorities, promoting loyalty to the empire amongst Indian Muslims. Committed to working for the upliftment of Muslims, Sir Syed founded a modern *madrassa* in Muradabad in 1859; this was one of the first religious schools to impart scientific education.

The Aligarh Movement was successful in spreading western education among Muslims without weakening their commitment to Islam. The second task it undertook was to introduce social reforms in the Muslim society. The Aligarh Movement strived to evolve the Muslim community as a distinct social and cultural community, on the lines of modernism. The Aligarh Movement was based on the interpretation of the *Quran*. It tried to blend Islam and the modern liberal culture. Inspired by the Aligarh Movement, several progressive movements came up in Bombay, Punjab, Hyderabad and other places.

2. Wahabi Movement

It was started by Syed Ahmad of Rae Bareli (1786–1831). The Wahabi Movement was basically a revivalist movement, started in India under the influence of Abdul Wahab of Arabia and Shah Waliullah's teachings. The aim of this movement was the purification of Islam and conversion of Dar-ul-Harb into Dar-ul-Islam. The movement condemned all changes and innovations in Islam. The movement held that the return

to the true spirit of Islam was the only way to get rid of the socio-political oppression. Sithana in North-western border was its headquarter. In the revolt of 1857, the Wahabis played a notable role in spreading anti-British sentiments. The period between1863-65 witnessed a series of trials in which all the principal leaders of the Wahabi movement were arrested. One of the most respected leader of the Movement, Ibrahim Mandal of Islampur, was convicted for organizing movement at Raj Shahi in the Raj Mahal trial (1870) and was sentenced for life and was send off to the Andamans. However, he was released by Lord Lytton in 1878. Historians are of the opinion that though the Wahabis spread anti-British sentiments, they did not have exact participation in anti-British Military activities.

3.4 SUMMING UP

- An important component of the social movement that differentiates it from the general category of collective mobilization is the presence of an ideology.

- A social movement may follow peaceful or conflicting, violent or non-violent, compulsive or persuasive, democratic or undemocratic methods to reach its goal.

- Social movements can be classified into the following types on the basis of their objectives: reform, revolutionary, reactionary/revivalist, resistance and utopian.

- The contact with the West opened the Hindu mind to the social evils and set in motion a number of social reform movements. Several traditional beliefs and practices were discarded and new customs, practices, institutions and values were adopted.

- The awareness led to a revolt against traditional beliefs and that was the first step towards reforms in social, religious and political spheres of life.

- Raja Ram Mohan Roy along with Dwarkanath Tagore founded the Brahmo Sabha in 1828, which engendered the Brahmo Samaj, an influential Indian socio-religious reform movement during the Bengal Renaissance.

- In 1866, the Brahmo Samaj soon split up into two groups.

- Ram Mohan vehemently opposed the practice of Sati.

- Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's most memorable stand was his bold advocacy of widow remarriage in the teeth of strong conservative opposition.

- Vidyasagar successfully persuaded the colonial government to pass the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act in 1856.

- The Arya Samaj movement was an outcome of the reaction to Western influences. It was revivalist in form but not in content.

- The founder of the Arya Samaj movement, Swami Dayanand, rejected Western ideas and sought to revive the ancient religion of the Aryans.

- Arya Samaj was responsible for political, social and economic resurgence in India.

- Swami Vivekananda, who after the death of the Ramakrishna Paramhamsan, founded the Ramakrishna Mission (1897) to propagate his teachings.

Check Your Progress

6. In which year the Brahmo Samaj split into two groups?

7. Name one notable magazine published by Ram Mohan Roy.

8. When was the Widow Remarriage Act passed?

9. In which year was the Theosophical Society established?

10. When was Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College established?

- The Theosophical Society was established as an organization, in 1875, for developing spiritual tenets and seeking the truth.
- The Prarthana Samaj reform movement has led many impressive projects of cultural change and social reform in Western India, such as the improvement of women and depressed classes, an end to the caste system, abolition of child marriage and infanticide, educational opportunities for women and remarriage of widows.
- The Aligarh movement was a prominent Muslim socio-religious movement in India and was led by Sayyid Ahmad Khan.
- Sayyid Ahmad Khan established the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh in June, 1875which later developed into the Aligarh Muslim University in 1890.
- The Aligarh Movement was successful in spreading western education among Muslims without weakening their commitment to Islam. The second task it undertook was to introduce social reforms in the Muslim society.
- The Wahabi Movement was basically a revivalist movement, started in India under the influence of Abdul Wahab of Arabia and Shah Waliullah's teachings.
- The aim of the Wahabi movement was the purification of Islam and conversion of Dar-ul-Harb into Dar-ul-Islam.

3.5 KEY TERMS

- **Reform movements:** Reform movements endevour to introduce certain necessary reforms in some specific areas.
- **Revolutionary movements:** These movements advocate replacing the entire existing structure of the society in accordance with their own ideological blueprint.

3.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The features of a social movement are:
   - It is an effort by a group.
   - Its aim is to bring or resist a change in society.
   - It may be organized or unorganized.
   - It may be peaceful or violent.
   - Its life is not certain; it may continue for a long period or it may die out soon.

2. Social movements can be classified into the following types on the basis of their objectives:
   - Reform movements
   - Revolutionary movements
   - Reactionary/Revivalist movements
   - Resistance movements
   - Utopian movements

3. Reform movements are satisfied with the existing social order but believe that certain reforms are necessary in some specific areas.

4. Utopian movements are attempts to take the society or at least a section of it towards a state of perfection. These are loosely structured collectivities that envision a radically changed and blissful state, either on a large scale at some time in the future or on a smaller scale in the present.

5. Revolutionary movements are deeply dissatisfied with the social order and work for bringing about radical changes. They advocate replacing the entire existing structure. Their objective is the reorganization of society in accordance with their own ideological blueprint.

6. The Brahmo Samaj split up into two groups in 1866.

7. One notable magazine of Ram Mohan Roy was Sambad Kaumudi.

8. The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act was passed in 1856.

9. The Theosophical Society was established in 1875.

10. The Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College was established in June, 1875.

3.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Distinguish between revolutionary and reactionary/revivalist movements.

2. Write a short note on Ramkrishna Mission.

3. Write a short note on the following:
   - Young Bengal Movement
   - Rahnumai Muzdyayan
   - Singh Sabha

4. Trace the history of the Prarthana Samaj.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the characteristics of a social movement. Elucidate the causes of social movements.

2. Write an essay on the Brahmo and Arya Samaj movement.

3. Discuss the Theosophical society with reference to: (a) History of the Theosophical society and its philosophy (b) Divisions within the society (c) Concept of 'World Teacher'.

4. Describe the Muslim reform movements.

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NOTES

UNIT 4 CHANGING POSITION OF WOMEN IN INDIA

Structure

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In Pandit Nehru's words, 'You can tell the status of a nation by looking at the status of its women.'

The status of women in India has undergone many ups and downs. The 20th century has brought about many changes in the economic, social, and political arena. We have made remarkable progress in all aspects of living of which the most exemplary one would be in the social sphere. Women have been endowed with equal opportunities to compete with men and with one another. In the previous centuries and in the early 20th century, women were mostly confined to their homes, doing household work and taking care of the family. The 20th century has witnessed a great deal of independence and autonomy for many countries. Women have been equal fighters for freedom. They have demanded for and received equality in education. Education and the awareness that comes with it have enabled women to fight for their cause. They have taken positions along with men in becoming supplementary breadwinners. This has led to more work actually—for now they are 'Managers' of their home and family as well as a part of the workforce. They have penetrated almost all spheres of activity and figure prominently in all walks of life, be it education, health, politics, science, social work, or law.

The status of women in India is contradictory and complex. The ancient Indian texts of the Rig Veda and Upanishads tell stories of venerable women sages and seers like Gargi and Maitrei. We have had some great women such as Rani Laxmi Bai,

Meerabai, Mumtaz Mahal, Indira Gandhi, who have been acknowledged as leaders and thinkers of our society. Modern history of India speaks of powerful women such as Vijaya Lakshmi Nehru Pandit, the first woman to preside over the United Nations General Assembly (1953) and Indira Gandhi, who became the first female prime minister of India in 1966.

Throughout history, women have generally been restricted to the role of a home-maker, that of a mother and wife. Despite major changes that have occurred in the status of women in some parts of the world in recent decades, norms that restrict women to their homes are still powerful in India, defining activities that are deemed appropriate for women. They are, by and large, excluded from political life, which by its very nature takes place in a public forum.

In spite of India's reputation for respecting women, including treating them like Goddesses, history tells us that women were also ill-treated. There was no equality between men and women. This is true of ancient, medieval and early modern times barring some revolutionary movements such as that of Basaweshwara, the 12th century philosopher in Karnataka, who advocated equality, casteless society, status for women, and betterment of the downtrodden. Reform movements in the 19th and 20th centuries led by great social reformers provided boost to women's legal status in India.

In this unit, we will discuss the change in the position of women from the earlier times to the contemporary period. We will also discuss various women issues and organizations.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the historical perspective of women's position in India
- Describe the position of women in India in the contemporary scenario
- Explain the role of various women organizations
- Discuss various women issues related to legislations, property rights and their political participation

4.2 WOMEN'S POSITION IN INDIA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It is very important to study the status of women in India through a historical perspective. It is not easy to find answers to questions like when did women start losing their status or who was responsible for this situation. Women were never put on a high pedestal in the *Shastras*. The position that women occupied in the medieval and the colonial period is of utmost importance.

4.2.1 Ancient India

It cannot be clearly stated whether equal rights between men and women prevailed or not during the Vedic period. But available sources show that women in India reached one of their glorious stages during this time. Liberal attitudes and practices pertaining to women did exist. Although the father held supreme sway in the affairs of the family, the mother also enjoyed a high position, and exercised considerable authority in the

household affairs. The men in the Vedic age sought cooperation of their women in almost every walk of life and they were given full freedom for their development. The women enjoyed property rights and had access to the property of their fathers and husbands. They discussed political and social problems freely with men. They composed and chanted Vedic hymns at the holy sacrifices. Women were actively involved in social and religious spheres. Women enjoyed the freedom to choose their partners in marriage. Widow re-marriage existed. Women also enjoyed the privilege of adoption. The Vedic law did not discriminate between men and women.

As the Indian civilization progressed, social discrimination increased. Jainism and Buddhism emerged as potent religious reform movements. According to Buddha, women's spiritual capacities were equal to those of men. 'Buddhism began as a religion that treated women as equal to men in their capacity for personal spiritual development'. 'The universal prejudices against women, who are said to be weak minded, fickle, treacherous and impure are shared by the Jains and expressed in several passages of the canon and in the form of maxims.'

The high status that women enjoyed during the early Vedic period gradually started deteriorating in the late Vedic period. Lineage began to be traced in the male line and sons were considered to be the sole heirs to family property. Women became entirely dependent on men, and were subjected to the authority of their fathers, husbands, and sons in the different periods of their life as daughters, wives, and mothers. Their education, religious rights and privileges were curbed. Due to social, economic and political changes, women lost their position in the society. Subsequently, customs such as *purdah*, *sati*, child marriage, polygamy and enforced widowhood crept in. As the economic and social status of sons began to rise, the position of women saw a steep decline. Women subjugation was predominant in the patriarchal society. All the decisions were taken by the male members of the family and the female members were not consulted in those decisions. The position of women reached an all-time low during the period of the Dharmashastras. It is during this age that codes of conduct prescribing behavioural norms for women were evolved. This period saw the exclusion of women from both economic and religious spheres. During the period of Dharmashastra, child marriage was encouraged and widow marriage was looked down upon. The birth of a girl child was considered as an ill omen and female infanticide was practiced.

4.2.2 Medieval India

The best way to understand the spirit of a civilization, and to appreciate and realize its excellence and limitations is to study the history of its womenfolk, the development and change in their status, and their position from time to time.

The position of women was very bad during the Sultanate period. Though women held a position of respect in the society as a wife, daughter, mother and sister yet they were considered subordinate to men in all respects. Women had to live under their father's protection as a daughter, husband's protection as a wife and under eldest son's protection as a widowed mother. Their lives well under constant guidance and protection from the male members. Because of the social customs, traditions and a backward attitude, the social position of women was miserable from birth to death. They were thought to be an unwelcome guest at birth. After marriage they had to follow their husband's wishes. If they gave birth to a son, they were considered fortunate.

In Muslim society, the position of women was better in some respects and worse in others. She could remarry if she was a window or a divorcee but she often was a victim of polygamy and easy divorce. She had to follow 'Purdah' system strictly. No attention was paid to female education during this period. Only high classes paid some heed to it. A lady like Razia Sultana was an exception to this general situation. Among the Hindus, a widowed lady had to perform 'Sati'. Among the Rajputs, the practice of *Jauhar* was prevalent so as to save the honour women and children. Early marriage of girls was the general practice.

The position of the Indian women during the Mughal period resisted a further decline. Child marriage, polygamy, Sati and *Purda* continued, and personal respect for the sex went down. Even a liberal emperor like Akbar had to issue strict order that if a young woman was found on the streets and markets without a veil or allowed to be unveiled, she was made to go to the quarters of the prostitutes and take up the profession. Barbosa, an early 16th century traveller, has referred to the strict observation of the *Purda* by the women of Bengal. Eunuchs were freely employed as a means of communications between the male and female members of a royal family.

Hindu ladies could move out with little or no restrictions. Unlike Muslim women, they did not cover themselves from head to foot. The birth of daughter was considered inauspicious. A Rajput was often heard to say 'accursed be the day, when a women child is born to me'. A wife who unfortunately happened to give birth to girls in succession was despised and even sometimes divorced. Generally, polygamy was prevalent among the Muslims whereas Hindus practiced monogamy. Among the Hindus, the daughters were married at a very early age. Akbar tried to stop the evil of early marriage but was not successful. According the Abul Fazl, Akbar issued instructions that a boy of less than 21 years and a girl of less than 16 years could not be married. Among the Hindus, window remarriage was prohibited, except among the lower caste people. The custom of Sati was prevalent. Even betrothed girls had to commit Sati on the funeral pyres of their would be husbands. Those widows who would not burn themselves with the dead body of their husbands were harshly treated by the society. They were not allowed to wear ornaments or to braid their long hair. But the position of Muslim women was better in this aspect. Muslim women could remarry. As far as right over property was concerned, the position of Muslim women was much better as compared to their Hindu counterparts. They had equal share in their father's property. Generally, no attention was paid towards the education of the women in the lower and middle class. Only the women of a high class got education; that is why many ladies of a high class did remarkable work in the field of literature, politics, etc. For example, Humayun's sister Gulbadan Begum wrote, Humayunama and translated Tuzk-i-Bauri in Persian. Nur Jahan played a very active role in the Mughal court. Meera Bai became a popular poetess of that time. Similarly, Chand Bibi of Ahmednagar and Tara Bai of Maratha state played very active roles in politics. About Tara Bai, the well known historian J.N. Sarkar rightly observed, 'Her administrative genius and strength of character saved the nation in that awful crisis'. Thus, we reach the conclusion that women were not given equal opportunities in all fields; they could have played an important role in the society.

4.2.3 Modern India

At the time of the advent of the British rule in India, the status and position of Indian women was very low. The spread of Christianity among the Indians and the network of educational institutions in India established by the British resulted in a far-reaching

transformation. As a result, a new class of educated Indians came into existence. It was a section of this class that became the vanguard of all progressive movements in India. The spread of Western type of education enabled women to realize their subordinate position, and it persuaded them to regain their legitimate status. Educated women gradually came forward demanding equal rights with men.

With the advent of the British, the status of women underwent many changes. The East India Company was a trading company wanting to expand their trade network, for which they started acquiring territories. The law and order situation in the acquired territories became a challenge for the East India Company. Therefore, the company acquired the rights to make laws in the newly acquired territories. To deal with civil matters, especially matters dealing with personal laws, the Company consulted the Moulavis and Pundits. At that time, the customs were devised and sustained by male members, women were not consulted. The men considered it their right to control women.

Women were not given rights to property, did not enjoy adoption and divorce rights, widows did not enjoy rights to remarriage. This situation was criticized by the colonial authorities. The advocates of Indian nationalism argued in favour of the Indian tradition. Therefore, the 19th century is often termed as the century of social reform.

The criticism against social customs and practices outraged the people of India and was one of the causes for the revolt of 1857. It posed a serious threat to the colonial rule in India. Hence, the Queen's Proclamation of 1859 declared that the British authorities will not interfere in religious matters of the people.

To introduce reforms smoothly in India, legislations were passed to transform the family structure in the Princely States without much opposition. The provision of divorce was first introduced in Baroda. The Princely state of Mysore enacted the Infant Marriage Prevention Act of 1894. To keep pace with the princely states, Malabar part of Madras Presidency and Travancore introduced reforms but was not able to stop violation of these laws across their borders.

Sati

The first serious challenge for the reformers was the problem of widow immolation or sati, an ancient tradition, prevalent in Bengal, Rajasthan, and the Southern Indian kingdom of Vijayanagar. It was believed that any woman who committed sati would ascend the heaven. Social pressures on the widow and the status of widows among the Hindus were also responsible for promoting the growth of this custom. This abhorring act was first abolished in Calcutta in 1798, a territory that fell under the British jurisdiction. Ram Mohan Roy fought for the abolition of sati and with assistance from Lord William Bentinck, a ban on sati was imposed in 1829.

Widow Remarriage

The status of widows in India was deplorable in that they were not allowed to participate in any religious and social functions. Their lives were worse than death and one of the reasons behind many widows opting for sati. Widows of the upper-caste was most affected by the customs as prohibition against remarriage of widows was strictly observed only among the upper-caste Hindus. Laws to facilitate widow remarriage was vehemently opposed by the conservative Hindus, who believed that widow remarriage 'involved guilt and disgrace on earth and exclusion from heaven'. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who wrote Marriage of Hindu Widows, relying heavily on the Shastras, fought for widow remarriage. His efforts resulted in the enactment of the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act

of 1856. Reformers like Mahadev Govind Ranade and Dayananda Saraswati also actively participated in the reform movement. This law had a major drawback as it was only applicable to the Hindus and at the same time people were reluctant to implement the provisions of the Act. Significant contribution came from social reformers like Pandit Vishnu Shastri, R.G. Bhandarkar, and D.K. Karve in Maharashtra who had made significant contributions in this regard.

Right to Property

There was lot of ambiguity on the question of the rights of a widow to property which made it difficult for a widow to remarry. Before the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act XVIII of 1937 and the Hindu Succession Act XXX of 1956 came into effect, the Dayabhaga and Mitakshara laws laid down that a widow could become a successor to her husband's estate in the absence of a son, grandson, great grandson of the deceased, and the estate which she inherited from her husband which she could own only during her lifetime. On her death, the estate was transferred to the nearest living heir of her dead husband.

Child Marriage

Child marriage was another serious problem faced by women. Early marriage had negative effect on the growth and development of the children. Fixing the minimum age of marriage of men and women by law was felt and demanded as early as the mid-19th century by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Keshab Chandra Sen. According to Vidyasagar, early marriage was detrimental to the health of women. Efforts by them coupled with those of Mahatma Gandhi, resulted in passing of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929.

Female Infanticide

In India, a girl is considered to be a burden on her parents. Since a girl was supposed to go and live with their in laws after marriage, the parents did not want to spend their resources on their upbringing. Demand for large dowry and huge wedding expenses caused hardship to the parents. All these reasons made people to prefer a male child as they would be able to bring in large dowry. All this led to the practice of killing the girl child once she was born in some regions in India.

The practice of female infanticide was common among certain castes and tribes in India, especially in the north and north-western states. This custom was particularly prominent among communities where it was difficult to find a suitable husband for their daughters. An unmarried daughter in these communities was considered a disgrace to the family. The families also faced difficulties to spend a huge amount of money that the conventions demanded on the occasion of a daughter's marriage.

The earliest efforts to stop female infanticide were made in Kathiawar and Kutch. Infanticide was declared to be murder by Bengal Regulation XXII in 1795. The British Government ended the evil practice of female infanticide by propaganda and forceful action. Through the efforts of Keshab Chandra Sen, the Native Marriage Act of 1872 was passed. The Act abolished early marriages, made polygamy an offence, and sanctioned widow remarriages and inter-caste marriages. In 1901, the Government of Baroda passed the Infant Marriage Prevention Act. This Act fixed the minimum age for marriage for girls at 12 and for boys at 16. In 1891, the Age of Consent Act was passed which forbade the marriage of a girl aged below 12. In 1930, the Sarda Act was passed to prevent the solemnization of marriages between boys under the age of 18 years and girls below 14 years.

Women and Political Participation

Unlike the British and American women, Indian women did not face great difficulty in securing franchise. Gandhi stressed on the need for active participation of the masses during the freedom movement, including women. He encouraged participation of women resulting in the emergence of a large number of women freedom fighters. The Swadeshi movement, Non-Cooperation (1920–22) movement, Civil Disobedience movement (1930–34), and the Quit India (1942) movement drew large number of women. Millions of women from all parts of the Indian society, volunteered, campaigned, protested, fasted and made donations for the freedom struggle. They were an integral part of Gandhi's non-violence movement. Such participation helped women to voice the need for women's participation in the legislation process. Annie Besant, Madame Cama and Sarojini Naidu formed the Women's Indian Association. But, women still constitute a mere 10 per cent of the legislators in the Parliament and state assemblies. Success at the Panchayat level based on reservations for women convinced women's organizations that it is the right time to extend these reservations to the higher levels. Women face opposition from their family members, often resulting in their resigning their membership.

Status of Muslim Women

The absence of Muslim women from the public life is one of the reasons for the lack of information on Muslim women during this period. *Purdah* was a distinct feature of the Muslim women. The education of Muslim women was generally restricted to religious knowledge. Although Muslim girls and boys were educated in *maktabs* (primary school), girls were completely absent from *madrasas* (schools of higher learning). Several women of the Mughal royal families received private education. Babur's daughter Gulbadan Begum, author of the *Humayun Namah*, was the first Mughal woman to document the social realities of Muslim women. Zeb-un-Nissa, Emperor Aurangzeb's eldest daughter, was an eminent theologian and poet. Polygamy was practiced within the Mughal royalty.

Reform Movements

The British influence had a very deep impression in the minds of the Indian leaders. The reformist movements of the 19th century brought social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and many others, who were in the forefront of the struggle for women emancipation.

The first lady physician of India, Kadambini Ganguly (Figure 4.1), stands out as a symbol of progressive womanhood. This extraordinary woman has many firsts to her credit. She was one of the two first women graduates of India, among the first to pursue medicine as a subject, and the first woman to qualify as a Graduate of Bengal Medical College (GBMC) in 1886.

What makes her achievement noteworthy is the fact that she was married when she began her medical education, and had to mother at least five children from her husband's previous marriage!

Kadambini was also among the early Indian women to 'cross the seas' to Europe in 1892 to pursue higher studies. She returned with three advanced degrees in medicine and surgery to become the leading woman practitioner of Hippocratic medicine in the Asian subcontinent.

Fig. 4.1 *Kadambini Ganguly*

Healing was not her only forte. Kadambini was a prominent espouse for women reforms and emancipation. She was also the first woman to address an open session of the Indian National Congress in 1890. Kadambini's biography would be incomplete without the mention of the seminal role two men played in her life—father Braja Kishore Basu and spouse Dwarkanath Ganguly. Both were liberated Brahmo Samajists and ardent champions of female education.

Gandhi's efforts led to the elevation of the status of women, involving them in the struggle for social progress and political independence. Prominent among them were Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Kamala Nehru and Aruna Asaf Ali, who participated in the political arena. After initial hesitation, even Muslims took to modern Western education in large numbers.

The early 20th century witnessed a nascent women's movement which campaigned for furthering female education, raising the age of marriage for woman, and the abolition of *purdah*. In 1929, the All India Women's Conference passed a resolution against *purdah*. The All India Women's Conference passed a resolution favouring girl's education at its Lucknow session in 1932. Resolutions were also passed against communal electorates for women untouchability, abolition of the unilateral right to divorce, and communal unity. More than any other factor, participation of women in the national movement contributed to their awakening and emancipation. Women's struggle for equality took a big step forward with independence.

4.3 WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

By the end of the nineteenth century, a few women emerged from within the reformed families who formed organizations of their own. One of the first to do so was Swarna Kumari Devi, daughter of Devendranath Tagore, a Brahmo leader, and sister of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, who formed the Ladies Society in Calcutta in 1882 for educating and imparting skills to widows and other poor women to make them economically self-reliant. She edited a women journal, *Bharati*, thus, earning herself the distinction of being the first Indian woman editor. In the same year, Ramabai Saraswati formed the Arya Mahila Samaj in Pune and a few years later started the Sharda Sadan in Bombay.

Check Your Progress

1. Which was the first princely state to introduce the provision of divorce?

2. When was the ban on Sati imposed?

3. State the major drawback of the Widows Remarriage Act of 1856.

4. In which year was the Sarda Act passed?

The National Conference was formed at the third session of the Indian National Congress in 1887 to provide a forum for the discussion of social issues. The Bharat Mahila Parishad was the women's wing of this and was inaugurated in 1905. It focused on child marriage, condition of widows, dowry, and other 'evil' customs. The Parsis, Muslims, and Sikhs all formed their own women's organizations. Women in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and other smaller cities formed associations whose members were drawn from among a small group of urban educated families. They were useful in bringing women out of their homes, giving them an opportunity to meet other women, doing philanthropic work, encouraging them to take an interest in public affairs and thus, broadening their horizon. It also gave them the experience of managing an organization.

The early women's organizations had been confined to a locality or city. In 1910, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, daughter of Swarna Kumari Devi, formed the Bharat Stree Mandal (Great Circle of India Women) with the object of bringing together 'women of all castes, creeds, classes and parties on the basis of their common interest in the moral and material progress of the women of India'. It planned to open branches all over India to promote women's education. Branches were opened in different cities such as Lahore, Amritsar, Allahabad, Hyderabad, Delhi, Karachi, and other cities. *Purdah* was regarded by Sarala Devi as the main obstacle for women's education and teachers were sent round to women's homes to educate them. She wanted women to escape male domination and so only women were allowed to join her organization. The Bharat Stree Mahila Mandal, however, proved to be a short-lived venture.

The Indian women's movement began in the 19th century. Initially, male social reformers took up issues concerning women and started women's organizations. Women started forming their own organization from the end of the nineteenth century first at the local and then at the national level. In the pre-independence era, the two main issues they took up were political rights and reform of personal laws. Women's participation in the freedom struggle broadened the base of the women's movement.

In post-independence era, large numbers of women's autonomous groups have sprung up that challenge patriarchy and take up a variety of issues such as violence against women, greater share for women in political decision making, etc., both at the activist and at the academic level. India has a rich and vibrant women's movement, but it still has a long way to go to achieve gender equality and gender justice.

4.3.1 National Women's Organizations

The rising number of cases of sexual abuse and domestic violence clearly states how women do not enjoy their basic human rights. In the light of this statement, it is essential to have various support groups for women. India is a country where the population of women alone is more than the total population of many other countries. In this context, fundamental issues like equality, right to life and other basic human rights become important concerns that need to be addressed with urgency.

Today, a number of women's organization exists which try to assist women from all classes. The most important of which are as follows:

- **NGOs:** Non-government organization or NGO is a legal organization established by individuals and operates independently from the government. The term was coined at a United Nations meet and is usually deployed to identify non-profit support systems. Instances where the government funds or establishes similar organizations, they continue to retain their non-governmental status. Typically, organizations that are non-governmental and non-profit usually address forms of

injustice and discrimination. There are several NGOs that are functioning in the service of upliftment and emancipation of women.

- **Women's Resource Centre:** It offer gender training and workshops for women. It also sensitizes women in rural areas.
- **Democratic Women's Association:** It aims at achieving equality and emancipation.
- **Forums Against Women's Oppression:** These are campaign groups that take up various issues such as domestic violence, dowry, wife-beating and other similar concerns.
- **Women and Child Development Departments:** This aims at the joint welfare of the mother and child.
- **Umbrella Organizations:** They deal with issues of domestic health, social emancipation, education as well as violence against women at the workforce.
- **Women's Studies Unit:** These organizations try to spread awareness among students and policy makers regarding women and development issues concerning women.

There are various organizations for women at national, state and local levels. Some of the organizations are as follows:

Women's Organizations at National Level

1. **Bharatiya Mahila Bank** (**BMB**): It is an Indian financial services banking company based in New Delhi, India. Former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh inaugurated the system on 19 November 2013 on the occasion of the 96th birth anniversary of former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Although the bank allows deposits from everyone, but lending is predominantly done to women. India is the third country in the world to have a bank especially for women, after Pakistan and Tanzania.

2. **Bharatiya Grameen Mahila Sangh or BGMS (National Association of Rural Women India):** This was founded in 1955 and is a non-political and non-sectarian national organization with branches all over India. It is affiliated with the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), the world's largest organization for rural women.

   The goal of BGMS is the welfare, uplift and empowerment of women, children, the aged and partially impaired. It is known for creating Mahila Mandals (women self-help groups) across villages for women empowerment and education.

3. **NAWO:** The National Alliance of Women (NAWO) is a national network of women. It is an umbrella organization and its membership is open to all progressive minded women groups and institutions, women workers, women's unions, non-governmental organizations, individuals and others who share the principles, objectives and values of NAWO, as defined in the Constitution of NAWO.

   Objectives of NAWO

   The main objectives of NAWO are listed below:

   - Strengthening and building new initiatives, networks, forums for protecting women's rights

- Monitoring the Government's commitments, implementing the platform for action with special focus on the eight point agenda discussed at the CEDAW, Conference of Commitment, Human Rights and other United Nations Convention

- Advocacy, lobbying and campaigning on women related issues

- Information dissemination and documentation

- Solidarity and linkages with other regional and global forums

4. **Women Power Connect (WPC):** It is a national level organization of women's groups and individuals working together for formalizing the process of legislative coordination. Their activities are aimed at influencing legislators and policy makers to frame gender-friendly policies, which impact women positively.

5. **FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO):** This organization was established in 1983. FLO believes that the strength and resources of women should be channelized to help their full potential. It acts as a catalyst for social and economic advancement of women.

Women's Organizations at the State Level

1. **Swadhina: Swadhina** (Self-esteemed Women), established in 1986, is primarily a civil society organization focused on *empowerment of women and child development based on sustainable development and right livelihood.* This organization believes that positive social change has a direct effect on the lives of women and that change is possible only through an equal and spontaneous participation of women. This organization is active in five states across the country in remote tribal districts of Purulia and West Midnapur in **West Bengal**, Singbhums in **Jharkhand**, Mayurbhanj in **Orissa,** Kanya Kumari in **Tamil Nadu**, and East Champaran in **Bihar**. Swadhina programmes cover over 3,200 families, 80 villages, 5100 women and 2400 children belonging to economically backward classes.

2. **Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs (COWE):** It is an NGO/social organization engaged in the social and economic 'upliftment of women through entrepreneurship'. It was inaugurated on 22 December 2004 by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy in Hyderabad. It has over four hundred and fifty entrepreneur members in the field of food processing, information technology, pharmaceuticals, printing, packaging, manufacturing, retailing, industries, textile and the like.

   COWE's vision is to build a group of women who are economically empowered, valued citizens of the nation by combining the dormant talent, skills, practical knowledge and resources of women.

Political Organizations of Women

1. **The Durga Vahini (*Carrier of Durga*):** It is the women's wing of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). It was established in 1991. The Vishva Hindu Parishad states the purpose of the Durga Vahini is to encourage more women to participate in prayer meetings and in cultural activities. The aim of the organization is to establish Hindu solidarity by helping Hindu families during the time of hardship and by providing social services.

Women NGOs

1. **Point of View:** It is a non-governmental organization based in Mumbai. The organization aims 'to promote the points of view of women through a creative and sustained use of media, art and culture.

2. **Gulabi gang:** It is a group of Indian women activists. The group first appeared in Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh and was started by Sampat Pal Devi, as a response to widespread domestic abuse and other violence against women. The group has spread since 2010 and is now active across North India. It takes up causes both on the streets as well as in (local) politics.

3. **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA):** SEWA is a trade union registered in 1972. It is an organization of poor, self-employed women workers. These are the women who earn a living through their own labour or small businesses.

4.4 CHANGING POSITION OF WOMEN: THE CONTEMPORARY SCENARIO

Independence of India heralded the introduction of laws aimed to improve the position of women. The Constitution provided equality to men and women and also gave special protection to women to realize their interests effectively. Special laws were enacted to prevent indecent representation of women in the media and sexual harassment in workplaces. The Hindu Code Bill gave the women the right to share the property of their parents. Widow remarriage was encouraged and child marriages were prohibited. The right of divorce was also given to women. The law also gave equal rights to women in the matter of adoption, maternity benefits, equal pay, and good working conditions.

However, many of these rights were more on papers than in actual practice. The traditional customs were so strongly rooted in the minds of people that they did not easily take these new reforms. When we start drawing a comparison between the role and status of women in modern India and in the other countries of the world, particularly related to emancipation of women, we cannot but be stuck with certain unexpected contrasts. Although the status of Indian women have changed, it is not satisfactory. Indian society has all along been a male-dominated society, where women's roles are confined to their homes. Their role is limited to procreation and upbringing of children and catering to the needs of men folk. They existed for men and always played a second fiddle to them.

At the international level, the UN Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) sought to guarantee better legal status to women. However, certain contentious issues like the Jammu and Kashmir Permanent Resident (Disqualification) Bill 2004 (which deprived a woman of the status of permanent residency of the state if she married an outsider) and the Supreme Court judgment in Christian Community Welfare Council of India (in an appeal over the Judgment of the High Court, Mumbai), the latter has permitted, under certain circumstances, the arrest of a woman even in the absence of lady police and at anytime, day or night. These instances have once again brought to the forefront the traditional male domination.

The victims of exploitation and oppression have been largely women of the third-world countries in general and lower sections among them in particular. India accounts for 15 per cent of world's women characterized by vast regional differences and a variety of cultures. However, social discrimination and economic deprivation on the basis of gender is common to all, irrespective of religion, cast, community, and state. Empowerment of women, gender discrimination, and violence against women, which have become serious subjects of sociological research in contemporary times, was hitherto neglected. While contemporary social changes have exposed women to unprotected socio-economic, cultural and political environment, there corresponding protective social systems and institutions of social justice to safeguard their interests. There are many who are skeptical about women's ability to exercise equal rights as those of men. Innovations in science and technology have removed the disparity between men and women attributed to physical strength alone. Women are able to handle modern appliances that require intelligence and training and not merely physical strength. Thus, India has now several women working as pilots, driving locomotives, buses, tractors and machinery in workshops. Sex as a maternal factor in the area of legal rights has practically disappeared. It is therefore, not fair to relegate women to an inferior position in the society. The Constitution does not regard sex as a permitted classification and prohibits sex as a basis of differential treatment in all areas of legal rights.

Modernity has resulted in a growing flexibility and changes in the gender roles of men and women. The earlier conception that man was the provider of basic necessities for family and women the child bearer and care taker of home is no longer valid in the changing social structure and economic compulsions.

In spite of the progress made, rural women and those belonging to the Dalit, Tribal and nomadic communities remain unaffected. Similar is the case with Muslim women among the minorities. The low level of political participation of Muslim women in India is not only a consequence of the lack of resources but also the result of the status of Muslim women in the community. Since women in India have little place in the public arena they also express less faith in the political process. In spite of the UN Charter of Human Rights and the provisions of the Indian Constitution, women continue to be the victims of exploitation. The view that the future generation of a family is carried on and preserved by only men has degraded the position of women in society. Similarly, it is noticed that majority of the women are lacking in the spirit of rebellion. If careful attention is not paid and major steps are not taken, the situation will become extremely critical.

Therefore, any attempt to assess the status and problem of women in a society should start from a sociological framework. Social structure, cultural norms, and value systems are crucial determinants of women's role and their position in the society. With respect to the status, there is a gap between the theoretical possibilities and their actual realization.

4.4.1 Gender Discrimination in India

The word, gender, refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, and the way the society distinguishes between men and women and assigns them social roles. Gender discrimination is meant only for women, because they are the only targets of gender discrimination. From times immemorial, women have been considered inferior to men. This mindset exists even today. The chief of UN Human Rights has said on the occasion of International Women's Day (7 March 2012) that deep rooted discrimination against women in political, economic, social, and cultural sphere weakens society as a whole.

Gender discrimination is not biologically determined but is determined socially and the discrimination can be changed by initiating proper efforts. Hence, educating the people and creating awareness is of utmost important. The women are given equal rights and privileges.

The distinction between sex and gender was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women's subordination to their anatomy. For ages, it was believed that different characteristics, roles, and status accorded to women and men in society are determined by sex, and that they are natural and therefore, not changeable.

Women face discrimination in various forms as presented subsequently:

- **Foeticide:** Female foeticide is the act of destroying or aborting the growth of a female foetus. This problem has been specific to the Indian context. Sex selective abortion or foetal sex discrimination by medical professionals has grown into a booming underground industry in India. Female foeticide is another way of discriminating between the two sexes, which has led to the abortion of an estimated number of over ten million female foetuses. The process began simultaneously with the growing use and popularity of ultrasound techniques. While the ultrasound was designed to check the health of the foetus, it inadvertently became the instrument through which female foetuses were detected and aborted. In 1994, the government passed the Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) which declared sex-selective abortion illegal. It was modified almost a decade later in 2003 holding medical professionals legally responsible.

- **Eve-teasing:** It is the most common manifestation of sexual aggression directed at women. Making inappropriate remarks or gestures, by a man or several men to a woman or several women in a public place, are referred to as eve-teasing. It is a form of aggression that ranges in severity from sexually suggestive remarks to brushing in public places. Eve-teasing, unfortunately is encountered in almost every place and is perhaps the most widespread form of sexual harassment.

- **Sexual harassment:** Deemed as a form of minor rape, sexual harassment is very difficult to prove in the court of law. Offenders usually disguise harassment in ways that are not easy to detect or prove. However, the law sees this as a punishable offence and describes it as teasing, varying in degree and nature. Often strangers are the perpetrators of this form of crime. They prowl in public places and remain discreet in their intentions. The criminal objective in this case is to leverage the nuanced anonymity of the crowd in order to fulfill their motives. The fact that harassment takes place in public places is the most important factor that helps offenders to escape punishment.

- **Rape:** This is the most violent form of sexual aggression directed at women. Rape usually involves sexual intercourse against a woman's will. The law sees this as a gruesome act of violation which negates the fundamental concept of equality and right to liberty as stated in the Constitution.

- **Adverse ratio of a girl child:** The declining child sex ratio can be attributed to female foeticide. In comparison with the census data of 2001, the child sex ratio in districts of Gujarat, such as Kutch, Banaskantha, Porbandar, Amreli, Panchmahal, Dahod, Narmada, Bharuch, Dangs, Valsad, Surat and Tapi, has seen a dip in 2011. Most of these districts have sizeable tribal population. Even cosmopolitan cities like Pune, did not fare well with regard to the child sex ratio as it declined by 29 points as against 902 girls per 1,000 boys in the 2001 census.

Legislations and banning sonography do not solve the problem of female foeticide. The society needs to be sensitized about gender equality.

- **Denial of education**: In poor families girls are not allowed to attend school. There are two reasons underlying this. One, if they go to school, there will be no one at home to take care of the siblings. They are the working hands of their family. The other reason being that parents do not have adequate resources to educate their girl child. Instead of spending the money on their education, they prefer accumulating it for the daughter's marriage.

- **Not given appropriate healthcare while in ill health:** GOI Planning Commission (2008) indicated that discrimination against women and girls impinges upon their right to health and manifests itself in the form of worsening health and nutrition indices. Thus, India continues to grapple with unacceptably high MMR, IMB, and increasing rates of anaemia, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS among women.

- **Early marriage:** Marriage is one of the basic institutions of Indian social life. A strong normative structure has developed around the institution which governs various practices and behaviours associated with it. Early marriage is defined as a marriage in which the bride is below 18 years of age and the groom is below 21 years of age. Girls who bear children before their adolescence remain physically under-developed and have greater risk of complications in pregnancy and maternal death. To reduce the incidence of child marriage, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 was passed and amended in 1979, 2006, and 2008.

  A premature marriage for girls denies all rights of freedom and individuality. The law of age of consent, which was passed almost a century ago, abolishing marriage below 12 years, is being violated in rural society even today.

- **Dowry**: Dowry deaths (wherein a woman is killed due to insufficient gifts/money given by her parents at the time of her wedding) though declared illegal in India but are still widely prevalent. India reports the highest total number of dowry deaths with 8,391 such deaths reported in 2010. The actual number of deaths is thought to be larger, given that many deaths occur due to reasons of insufficient dowry but are not reported. The rates of dowry deaths are higher among the poor and the lower castes.

India has witnessed gender inequality since ancient times due to its socio-economic and religious practices resulting in a wide disparity between the position of men and women in the society.

The causes of gender discrimination are discussed below:

- **Educational backwardness:** The reluctance of parents to educate daughters has its roots in the beliefs that have been prevailing in our society. The foremost view is that education of girls brings no returns to parents and that their future roles, mainly reproductive and perhaps including agricultural labour require no formal education.

- **Caste system:** The caste system is very much a part of modern Indian society and politics. Its interactions with gender, religion, and other variables make it a defining factor in many social and economic processes and its effect on these processes. There is a crucial relationship between caste and gender in the perpetuation of the caste system. Gender and caste are both linked to each other.

According to Claude Levi Strauss, a French anthropologist and ethnologist, true endogamy (marriage within the caste) is merely the refusal to recognize the possibility of marriage beyond the limits of human community. Even remarriage of the upper-caste women was banned on one end and sometimes, cohabitation of the lower-caste women was enforced on the contrary. The larger rationale of the caste system as a system of labour appropriation has shaped the codes of gender to further the ends of the other upper castes.

Dalit communities, schedule castes (15 per cent of the population) and schedule tribes (7 per cent) are the largest and most well-known lower caste groups in India. Historically discriminated against, studies show that poverty rates among these groups are still markedly higher than others. However, the position of women within these lower caste groups is worth noting. Dalit communities have only marginally lower Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs) for girls than the national population, and there is only a negligible gap between GERs for boys and girls, unlike other sections of the population where this gap is pronounced. Women within these groups also have higher labour force participation rates, and are thus, less likely to be involved exclusively in domestic duties, though their employment is concentrated in casual labour. The higher economic productivity of women in these communities must be further researched to fully understand its implications on their status within the community, especially to see if it results in furthering their decision-making ability within the family and the community. Studies of intra-community and household processes in these communities are also lacking, making it hard to quantify any assessment of their economic and social status.

- **Religious beliefs:** In India, Hindus comprise 81.3 per cent of the population, Muslims 12 per cent, Christians 2.5 per cent and Sikhs 1.9 per cent. Religion is an important part of Indian society and has become an increasing part of Indian politics in recent times. Women are particularly affected by religion. Seen as the bearers of religious tradition, there are often restrictions on their public and private roles in the name of religion. Women are often discouraged from taking education or being economically productive, marriage pressures are high from a very young age (especially in rural areas), and biases within religions towards men are some examples of how religion can affect women's development. Analysing the role of women in their religious communities is vital to both understanding the causal agents of their social and economic status and to design intervention programmes to address their needs.

The vast majority of India's population still leads traditional lives in rural areas. Religious laws and traditions still determine the lives of many people, particularly women. Even if women are formerly entitled to own land and resources, social and religious factors make many women refrain from this right in order not to cause distortions within the family. The preference for having sons permeates all social classes in India, which sets the standard for girls throughout their entire lives.

- o Culture
- o Family honour
- o Customs and beliefs
- o Races
- o Low income
- o Unemployment

o Society

o Family situation and attitudes

Like men, women also play an important role in the family and in national development but her contribution is not recognized by the male-dominant society.

The involvement of women as members of staff, the quality of work assigned to them and their contribution to the GDP are indicators of the extent of their being mainstreamed into the economy. On all these parameters, women in India fare worse than men and the challenge is to bridge the inequality. Opening up of the economy and rapid economic growth have escalated some of the existing structural barriers faced by women and new challenges in the form of dismantling traditional support structures, displacement due to migration, obsolescence of traditional skill sets have emerged.

Data from the 66th round of the NSSO indicate that female work participation rate has decreased between the years 2004–05 to 2009–10. The share of women workforce has declined from 28.7 per cent to 22.8 per cent. In rural areas, this has declined from 32.7 per cent to 26.1 per cent and in urban areas from 16.6 per cent to 13.8 per cent.

The gap between the wages in the urban areas is also quite marked as it results from the employment of women in different and low-paying activities. They are exploited at various levels. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in society.

Today, women are joint partners with men in the economic field. Indian women joined the police force, army, and now the first batch of female pilots has also emerged. Some of the successful Indian women entrepreneurs are Indra Nooyi, the CEO of Pepsi Coke, Naina Lal Kidwai, Sulajja Firodia Motwani, the Joint Managing Director of Kinetic Motors and Managing Director Kinetic Finance.

Strong-willed, with an acute acumen for financial strategizing, Nooyi is the CEO and President of Pepsi Co. Her strong acumen for business has helped the company garner as much as 30 billion dollars worth crucial deals within the last couple of years. With a Masters Degree in Public Management from Yale University and Masters in Finance and Marketing from IIM, Kolkata, Nooyi held several senior positions at Motorola and Asea Brown Boveri before joining Pepsi Co.

From being Head of Investment Banking at ANZ Grindlays from 1982–1994 to Vice Chairman of JM Morgan Stanley, Naina Lal Kidwai is one of the most successful and famous Indian businesswomen. The first Indian woman to graduate from the elite Harvard Business School, she is currently Country Head and Group General Manager HSBC Group India. Apart from working at HSBC, Kidwai has also held other eminent positions such as that of Global Advisor, Harvard Business School, non-executive director at Nestle SA and as a member of Governing Board NCAER, Auditor General of India, and several other positions. Naina has received the distinguished Padma Shri award for her contributions in the segment of trade and industry.

Indu Jain is known by many different identities such as that of a spiritualist, humanist, entrepreneur, an aficionado of culture and arts, an educationalist but her most prominent and eminent role has been that of the Chairman of the Times Group.

Amandeep Sharma is one such woman who has been deployed on the Wagah border check post. The Border Security Force (BSF) has deployed its first batch of women battalion along the highly sensitive Indo-Pak border.

Kalpana Chawla (July 1, 1961–February 1, 2003) was an astronaut and space shuttle mission specialist of STS-107 (Columbia). She died on February 1, 2003 over the southern United States when the space shuttle, *Columbia* and the crew perished during entry, 16 minutes prior to scheduled landing. She was born in Karnal, Haryana, India.

P.T. Usha became the first Indian women to enter the finals of an Olympic event at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. She won five gold medals at the Asian Meet in Jakarta in 1985.

Reproductive Health Status of Women in India

Reports show that India's maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is highest in South Asia. An estimated 1,36,000 women die in India every year due to complications in pregnancy. However, the measures taken by the government have not proved effective despite the fact that high fatalities occur among women every year due to poor reproductive health practices. One of the reasons why women succumb to reproduction related complications is the absence of timely transportation to the nearest hospital. Experts estimate that 70 per cent of the maternal-related deaths are preventable. Good sanitation, nutrition, avoiding overwork and stress will improve the health of Indian women. The need of the hour is to shift focus from the medical to the social, beginning with healthy antenatal care. However, cultural, social and economic barriers delay or prevent women from seeking reproductive health care at any state—antenatal, delivery, or post nature.

4.4.2 Women and Education

Education is of vital importance in almost every sphere of women's empowerment. There is little argument that ending illiteracy among women raises their capabilities, enhances their agency, and involves them in the development process. Women's education is basically very critical since this is their human right and is exigent for the advancement of most of their capacities.

The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan's focus on creation of educational infrastructure and improving quality of education in rural areas has had positive outcomes. It has led to rise in the Gender Parity Index (GPI) in primary (0.94) as well as upper primary (0.92) education. Enrolment of girls at the primary level increased by 8.67 per cent (86.91 per cent in 2001–2002 to 104.7 per cent in 2009–2010) and at upper primary level by 13 per cent (52.1 per cent in 2001–2002 to 65.1 per cent in 2004–2005).

The challenge, however, remains that the high enrolment rate has not translated into high attendance rates as well. According to the India Human Development Report, 2011, the national attendance rates during the year 2007–2008 at primary and upper primary levels were 82 per cent and 60 per cent, respectively. Therefore, despite attaining high enrolment rates of 96 per cent at the primary level, the attendance rates remain low. This needs to be addressed to enable women to access education.

The National Literacy Mission or Saakshar Bharat Mission, with its objective of extending educational options to those adults who have no access to formal education, targeted female literacy as a critical instrument for women's empowerment. This has led to an increase in literacy, among women, from 53.67 per cent (Census, 2001) to 65.46 per cent (Census, 2011). It is also for the first time that of the total of 217.70 million literates added during the decade, women (110.07 million) outnumbered men (107.63 million).

Improving Literacy Rates

There has been sharp improvement in the educational achievement of both, males and females, in India since the past several decades. In 1971, only 22 per cent of women and 46 per cent of men were literate (Register General and Census Commissioner (RGCC), 1977). By 1991, 39 per cent of women and 64 per cent of men were literate (RGCC, 1993). By 2005–2006, total literacy rate of the country is 68.3 per cent, in which 58 per cent of women and 78 per cent of men were literate (source sample survey). Thus, there has been a substantial rise literacy figure of women in merely 35 years. Due to advancements in literacy, the gender disparity in literacy has gone down since 1981. According to Sample Survey 2005–2006, the gender gap in literacy rate is 20 per cent.

Table 4.1 *Literacy Rate in India*

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

From this analysis one can infer that the female literacy rate (only half of the female population are literates) is still lagging behind male literacy rate (three-fourth of the male population are literates). The rate of school drop outs is also found to be comparatively higher in case of women. This higher rate of illiteracy of women is undoubtedly responsible for the dependence of women on men. The lack of education is the root cause for women's exploitation and negligence. Only literacy can help women to understand the Indian's constitutional and legislative provisions. Thus, promoting education among women is of great importance in empowering them to accomplish their goals at par with men in different spheres of life.
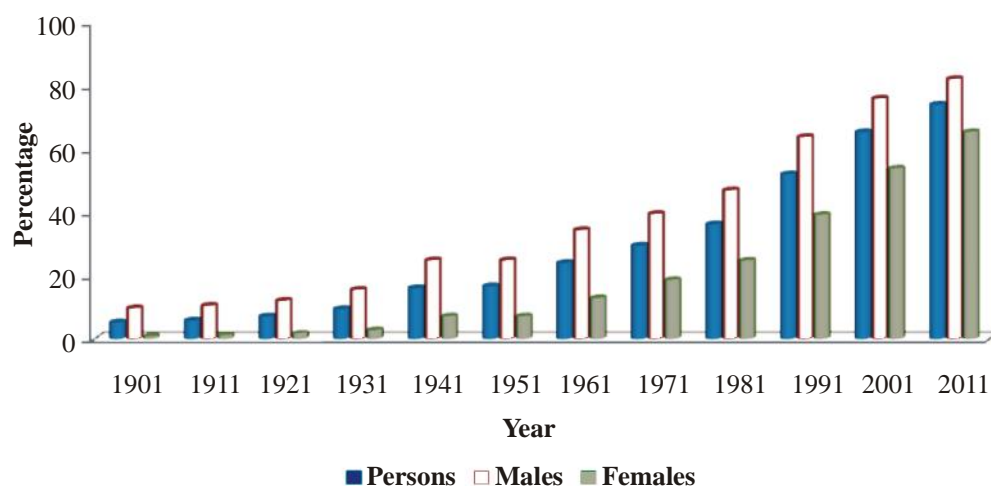
Fig. 4.2 *Literacy Rate in India*

4.4.3 Status of Women in Assam

The Indian constitution extends equal rights and opportunity to all. However, the grim reality is that women are treated differently from men. In Assam, the status of women is comparatively higher than rest of the country. One significant feature of the Assamese community is that women are not expected to bring dowry after marriage. Yet off late, Assam has registered a few cases of dowry deaths. The sex ratio is an important factor through which the status of women in society can be gauged. It appropriates to what extent she enjoys those basic rights of survival, protection and development. Education is one way of determining the average position of an individual in the society. The phenomenon of school drop-out is a negative indicator of educational attainment. The drop-out rates have been higher for girls. Female work participation is another indicator of social acceptance and status in society. Assam is moderate in terms of human development and gender equality.

In terms of occupation, Assam predominantly has an agrarian economy which is characterized by high participation of women. This however, has not benefited women in any substantial way. The work participation rate of women in Assam is considerably lower than that of men in general except in the primary sector where the rates favour women.

Given the recent scenario, the episode of a girl being publically abused by a mob of men may not perhaps be common occurrence in Assam. But, it is part of the growing landscape of brute force and violation as seen against women. The national crime report bureau has reported a steady increase in the crimes against women – notably domestic violence, sexual crimes, dowry deaths, kidnapping and trafficking, especially in the last two decades, in which Assam has the highest recorded yearly incidence rate.

Historically, the incorporation of non-Aryan practices with the Aryan culture helped break the monopoly of hard-line practices such as sati. Nevertheless, the position of women is confined within the domestic sphere. This practice was common in India where women were discouraged from entering into any mainstream practice.

Ancient, Medieval Assamese literature has abundant references to women's lower status in Assam. A late 19th century treatise on women eulogizes women as caregivers and mothers. Thus, Assamese women, although not as deprived as other women in other parts of the country still occupy an inferior status as compared to men. Along with this, globalization has introduced many new ways of imagining the modern world. It has made several spaces open to women which were not traditionally unwelcoming of their presence. Social media sites have added to this and allowed women to acquire a voice of their own.

4.5   WOMEN ISSUES: LEGISLATIONS

Reference has already been made to the practice of Sati in certain parts of India and the passing of legislation prohibiting it. The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, Hindu Women's Right to Property Act 1937, and the Hindu Women's Right to Separate Residence and Maintenance Act, 1946 were some of the measures that sought to improve social and economic status of women to a very limited extent. The framers of the Indian Constitution rightly felt that it was not sufficient to confer some minor benefits on women, but it was necessary to declare in unequivocal terms, their right to equality with men and various other rights which would help them in

attaining an equal status or an equal footing with men. These include Articles 14, 15, 23, and 39, among others. Article 14 of the Indian Constitution provides that the state shall not deny to any person equality before or equal protection from the law. Article 15 says that no women can be discriminated against on the ground of sex. Article 15 (3) emphasizes that the state shall make special provisions for women and children and Article 16 provides equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment by the state. Article 39(a) emphasizes that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to adequate means of livelihood. Article 39(d) says that the state should secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women and Article 34 provides that the state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions for work and maternity relief.

Besides the provisions in the Constitution, the following legislations were passed since 1950:

- Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- Hindu Succession Act, 1956
- Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

The provisions of this Act are as follows:

- Maternity benefits to be provided on completing 80 working days.
- Not required to work during six weeks immediately following the day of delivery or miscarriage.
- No work of arduous nature, long hours of standing likely to interfere with pregnancy/normal development of foetus or which may cause miscarriage or is likely to affect health, to be given for a period of six months immediately preceding the period of one week before delivery.
- One medical certificate, advance maternity benefit to be allowed. Rupees 250.00 as medical bonus to be given when no prenatal confinement and post-natal care is provided free of charge.

Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

The provisions of this Act are listed below:

- Payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers for same or similar nature of work protected under the Act and also under the provisions at SI. No. 4.
- No discrimination permissible in recruitment and service conditions except where employment of women is prohibited or restricted by or under any law.

An important step was taken in securing social justice to women in the Hindu Marriage Act, which gave women the right to divorce by mutual consent. Despite such legislation it has to be admitted that cases of divorce are rare in our country.

Under the law, women are entitled to equal pay as men for equal work. They are further entitled to the maternity benefits under the Maternity Benefits Act. Today, women have secured an honourable position in all sectors of work. The employment opportunities for women are increasing everyday and they are often preferred over men.

Other legislative measures favouring women include the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890. Section 19 of the Act includes mother along with the father as a fit person to be appointed as the guardian so as to remove gender inequality. The Hindu Marriage (Amendment) Act has provided irretrievable breakdown of marriage as a ground for divorce.

The government of India has appointed the **National Commission for Women** to protect the interests of the women at large. The Commission is vested with powers of a Civil Court. It is entrusted inter alia with the task of looking into complaints, take *suomoto* notice of non-implementation of laws relating to women and non-compliance with policy decisions, guidelines, and instructions aimed at mitigating hardships and ensuring welfare and providing relief to women.

Twenty-six laws have been enacted so far to protect women from various crimes. The recent law on the 'protection of women against domestic violence' satisfies the long-pending demand of the women activists.

Review of Various Programmes

A review of government's various programmes for women empowerment such as *Swashakti, Swayamsidha, Streeshakti, Balikasamrudhiyojana*, and another two thousand projects reveal that little has been done or achieved through these programmes. Women make up 52 per cent of our country's population. Hence, there can be no progress unless their needs and interests are fully met. Empowerment would not hold any meaning unless they are made strong, alert and aware of their equal status in the society. Policies should be framed to bring them into the mainstream of society. The patterns of resource mobilization by government also have significant effects on women that are usually not recognized. This is not only because the consumption of such items may be curtailed but also because the provisioning of such items is frequently considered to be the responsibility of the women of the household. Women have not actively participated in their own emancipation due to their lack of economic independence and rampant illiteracy. One of the popular schemes employed by several NGOs, and supported by some international and bilateral agencies, is the 'micro-finance' or small loans that usually range up to $100 (₹5,000) per woman to start some form of business.

4.5.1 Property Rights of Women

Traditionally, property right is availed to men in our patriarchal society. Inheritance law remains strongly biased against women in our society. When the distribution of inherited wealth is highly unequal, the effect of this disparity on economic inequality is great. Women in our society find huge obstacles in inheriting land. Their ability to inherit land is highly restricted due to prevailing traditions and customs. Our legislation, which is women friendly, has attempted to provide property rights to women too. It is necessary to their welfare, empowerment, and equality in society. The Hindu succession Act, 1956, has legislated that the son and daughter have equal rights over the property of their father, however, they have partial participation/right on the joint property. Legally, 'right to property', is provided to the son as well as daughter but these legislations are not practised fairly in society. There are some obstacles which were highlighted by Bina Agarwal, a prize-winning development economist and Director and Professor of Economics at the Institute of Economic Growth in University of Delhi. These were:

- Girls go to her in-law's place after marriage.

- In future, parents of the girl hesitate to take any financial assistance from the daughter due to some traditional customs and practices.
- Some women leave their property right to their brothers.
- If she uses this property right, it will negatively affect her relationship with her brothers.

Further, Bina Agarwal focused on two aspects of gender inequality.

- **Inequality in command over property**: Inequality in command over property is the single most important form of persisting economic inequality between women and men. Command over property implies not just rights in law but also effective rights in practice. Command implies control, whether or not one owns the property. Hence, command over property is not just related to private property but also public property.
- **Social perceptions and norms**: Gender ideology embedded in social perceptions and social norms can affect economic outcomes for women in every sphere, be it property rights, employment, or household allocation. In the labour market, gender often defines perceptions about abilities and can lead to discriminatory hiring and pay practices.

4.5.2 Political Participation

Though according to the Constitution, women have equal political rights as men so as to enable them to take part effectively in the administration of the country, even today there is inadequate representation of women in the political field. Representation of women in Assemblies and Parliaments is dwindling with every election and does not exceed 10 per cent. During elections, very few get a chance of being elected against a male candidate. In villages specially, men have a dominant voice and are able to dictate to women whom they should vote. Most of them are illiterate and are dependent on their husbands or fathers. Until and unless, women are educated and made aware of their rights and attain independence, one cannot expect a woman to take an active part in the administration of the country in large numbers. In addition, if some sort of reservation is not made for women in the state assemblies and Parliament, it is practically impossible for women to be elected in the male dominated world. A bill to provide for 33 per cent reservation for women in the state assemblies and Parliament is yet to become a law. In the political field, reservation for women is a significant step forward towards their political empowerment.

Women's political participation is considered to be a major measure of women's empowerment. The Indian Constitution has been committed to introduce socio-economic and political transformation. The initiatives of empowering women and the marginalized sections are the reflection of its democratic spirit that can be noticed from a number of amendments in these fields. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts provide for an opportunity for women's entry into political spheres. These Amendment Acts provide for a 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in the governance of local bodies (rural and urban) with an aspiration of good governance and fair representation in the development process at the grassroots level.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India were termed the 'silent revolution'. These Amendments paved the way for women's entry into local governance by reserving 33 per cent of seats for them in the *panchayats* at all the levels, including that of the chairperson's seat. In most states, reservation of seats has

met with success, with female representation exceeding the 33 per cent quota in states such as Karnataka, Kerala, and Manipur.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is an important landmark in the history of Indian women's participation in the formation of democratic institutions at the grassroots level. Not only do they have one-third membership, but they also head, as chairpersons, one-third of the *panchayats*. According to the estimates, three would be a total of 7.95 lakh women in leadership roles in three tiers of the Panchayati Raj alone. In fact, in Karnataka, 43.88 per cent of seats were won by women in the 1994 and 1996 elections, much beyond the stipulated 33.3 per cent in the Constitution. The new government system in India has shown that given an opportunity, women too can perform very well in the public sphere.

The most significant aspect is that the gender representation in the decision-making process has been taken into account. Although, the Acts have enabled women to participate in the PRI as members, Sarpanch, Block and Zilla Panchayat Adhyakshas throughout the country for over five years, an urgent need is felt to strengthen them.

The reservation in *panchayats* has provided for the erosion of the traditional gender, caste, class roles, and hierarchy, but it is a long and difficult process. Women not only have to fight for their right to be more than proxy members but also to break the barriers of gender division of labour, illiteracy, low level of mobility, seclusion, lack of training and information, which still continue to exist without enough support from the power structure. Women's low self-esteem at the household level and their new role in local politics where they are now expected to function as leader creates a contradiction between women's role at home and in local government.

It has only been about a decade for India since the enactment of these constitutional changes. This, however, is too short a period to modify the dominant patriarchal structure of society that has continued to exist for last many millennia via the historical processes and social formations.

Experience over the last decade has shown that women who have gained access to the *panchayats* and municipalities have performed well. Some of them have already established excellent records of service and have even won distinguished awards for their performance. Being mostly illiterate, a large number of them have placed a high priority on acquiring literacy to be able to perform better at their jobs. Substantial numbers of teachers, lawyers, and other functionaries at the grassroots level have been able to win elections and become members of the *panchayats*.

The process of empowerment in the local government institutions will enable women to re-examine their lives, recognize the source and structure of power and of their own subordination, and initiate action to challenge the existing ideology as well as structures and institutions.

By contesting and getting elected to local government, women have shattered the myth of their own passivity—that women are not willing to enter politics. However, women's representation in the decision-making positions with monitoring power is still negligible. The present rules of the game and decision-making procedure do not allow a greater participation of women and in the absence of women, there is no effort to recognize or change the same. The very absence of women at these levels thus, leads to preservation and reinforcement of male-oriented and male-benefiting types of decisions.

Women are changing the governance in India. They are being elected to local councils in an unprecedented number as a result of amendments to the constitution that

mandate the reservation of seats for women in local governments. In India, we call this new system the Panchayati Raj Institution System (PRI). The women whom PRI has brought into politics are now governing, be it in one village, or a larger area such as 100 villages or a district. This process of restructuring the national political and administrative system started as recently as January 1994, and thus, it is too early to assess the impact of women's entry into formal structures of the government. The sheer number of women that PRI has brought into the political system has made a difference. The percentages of women at various levels of political activity have shifted dramatically as a result of the constitutional change, from 4–5 per cent to 25–40 per cent. But the difference is also qualitative, because these women are bringing their experience in the governance of the civic society. In this way, they are making the state sensitive to the issues of poverty, inequality and gender injustice.

Palanithuri (1997), in a case study, 'New Panchayati Raj System at Work: An Evaluation of Tamil Nadu', reported that women were not informed or invited to the meetings in the male-headed *gram panchayat*. It is common that the husbands of the members used to accompany them (women) when they come to attend the meetings. Pai (1998) according to his field notes in Meerut District 'Pradhanis in New Panchayats' revealed that many of the Pradhanis were illiterate and only able to put their signatures on official papers. Regarding their roles, the study revealed that they were almost insignificant in the functioning of gram and block panchayat bodies.

As they belonged to better-off families in the villages, they do not work outside their homes. They agreed to stand for elections due to family pressure and also the decision of their community and not because they were keen to do so. The reservations provided by the Government had forced them to contest elections; provision of reservation has not led them to participate in decision-making in the local bodies.

Nambiar (2001), in her study, 'Making the Gram Sabha Work', noted the difference utilities in organizing the gram sabha. Majority of women reported that they were not informed or invited to the meetings while others were hesitant in participating in meetings in the presence of a large number of elder members. However, they have to forego their daily wages or household duties just to identify beneficiaries as to convey what the gram panchayat would do in future. In this context, further study and research need to be undertaken.

However, in 2006, the Constitutional Amendment took a historic decision to give 50 per cent reservation to women in PRI'S under Nitish Kumar's Bihar Government. Bihar is the first state to do so. The most significant gain produced by election to the panchayats is the emergence of women power in rural Bihar. Some other states like Chhattisgarh, Manipur, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh also provided 50 per cent reservation for women in local bodies.

In November 2009, Government of India introduced a Constitutional Amendment Bill (112th Amendment) seeking 50 per cent reservation for women in urban local bodies.

Introducing the bill in Parliament in 2009, then Urban Development Minister S. Jaipal Reddy, said, 'Enhancement of reservation for women in urban local bodies will not only ensure their increased representation and participation but also mainstream gender concerns in governance and decision making process, particularly, those related to women's issues such as water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, health and education'.

In July 2011, the Union Cabinet approved the proposal for enhancing reservation for women in panchayats from the present 33 per cent to 50 per cent with the provision

being applicable to all seats filled through direct election, office of chairpersons and of offices reserved for SC/ST.

The Cabinet approved the proposal for moving an official amendment to the Constitution (One Hundred and Tenth Amendment) Bill, 2009 for enhancing reservation for women in panchayats at all tiers from 1/3 to at least 50 per cent. The government envisages that enhancement of reservation for women in panchayats will facilitate more women to enter the public sphere and this will lead to further empowerment of women and also make panchayats more inclusive institutions, thereby, improving governance and public service delivery. Bihar and some states have already made suitable amendments to increase reservation for women in panchayats from 33 to 50 per cent.

At present, out of the elected representatives of panchayats numbering approximately 28.18 lakh, 36.87 per cent are women. With the proposed Constitutional amendment, the number of elected women representatives is expected to rise to more than 14 lakh.

Women, however few, have been articulating and trying to sensitize local and national leaders and decision makers of the need for women's participation in the political process. Efforts are underway to take political scene more democratic, participatory, accountable, and transparent so as to ensure a just, humane, and equitable society. The urgency for political empowerment of women has therefore, increased manifold. There is a need to enable women to be more effective members of local government bodies. Two aspects of effectiveness need to be considered, i.e. effectiveness in participating in overall Union Parishad operations and their involvement in the development issues.

4.5.3 Empowerment of Women

Women have been the vulnerable section of society and constitute a sizeable segment of the poverty-struck population. Women face gender-specific barriers to access education, health, and empowerment. Micro-finance loans are meant especially for women below the poverty line. Micro-loans are available solely and entirely to this target group of women.

Women empowerment is the most vital system to strengthen the future of women in India. It is systematic approach which needs to be developed more seriously in India. Empowerment of women will help in removing any sort of bias against women, and thus, will affect long-term changes. The Government of India declared the year 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year' to focus on a vision 'where women are equal partners like men.'

Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behave, take action and control work in an autonomous way and take control of one's own destiny. It includes both control over resources (physical, human, intellectual and financial) and over ideology (belief, values and attitudes). Empowerment implies expansion of assets and capabilities of people to influence control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.

Empowerment can be viewed as a means of creating a social environment in which one can take decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. It strengthens one's innate ability by way of acquiring knowledge power and experience. One of the definitions of empowerment terms it as a process of awareness, of capacity development unfolding increased contribution, effectual authority

to take decisions and execute the power and control leading to transformative action. This involves the ability to get what one wants and to influence others on our concerns. The connection between women and power is influenced by various factors at multiple levels; family, community, market and the state. Significantly, at the psychological level, it involves women's ability to assert themselves and this is constructed by the gender roles assigned to her specially in a culture which resists change.

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives, communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important.

Empowerment occurs within sociological, psychological, economic spheres and at various levels, such as individual, group, and community and challenges our assumptions about status quo, asymmetrical power relationship in decision-making, personal and social rights, access to resources and entitlement, and social dynamics. Empowering women focuses the spotlight on education and employment that are essential to sustainable development.

Women empowerment generally has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have the power of control in their own lives, power of control within their home; power of control outside home; and lastly, their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a just social and economic order nationally, internationally, and universally.

The doubts pertaining to women's empowerment and the state and position of women have now become crucial for human rights-based approaches to development. The Cairo conference in 1994 held by UN on Population and Development emphasized more focus towards women's empowerment as the core issue and UNDP developed Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM) which were directed at the three variables that are indicators of women's role in society—political power or decision-making, literacy and health.

This process has been further accelerated with some sections of women becoming increasingly self-conscious of their discrimination in several areas of family and public life. They are also in a position to mobilize themselves on issues that can affect their overall position. Empowerment would become more relevant if women are educated, better informed and can take rational decisions. A woman needs to be physically healthy so that she is able to take on challenges.

Empowering women means control making them economically independent, controlling resources like land and property and reduction of burden of work. A society or programme which aims at women's empowerment needs to create and strengthen sisterhood and promote overall nurturing, caring, and gentleness. The Beijing conference 1995 had identified certain quantitative and qualitative indicators of women empowerment.

Qualitative Indicators

- Increase in self-esteem, individual, and collective confidence
- Increase in articulation, knowledge, and awareness on health, nutrition reproductive rights, law and literacy
- Increase or decrease in personal leisure time and time for child care
- Increase or decrease of workloads in new programmes
- Change in roles and responsibility in family & community

- Visible increase on decrease in violence on women and girls
- Responses to, changes in social customs like child marriage, dowry, discrimination against widows
- Visible changes in women's participation level attending meeting, participating, and demanding participation
- Increase in bargaining and negotiating power at home, in community and the collective
- Increase access to and ability to gather information
- Formation of women collectives
- Positive changes in social attitudes
- Awareness and recognition of women's economic contribution within and outside the household
- Women's decision-making over her work and income

Quantitative Indicators

- Demographic trends
  - Maternal mortality rate
  - Fertility rate
  - sex ratio
  - Life expectancy at birth
  - Average age of marriage
- Number of women participating in different development programmes
- Greater access and control over community resources/government schemes-crèche, credit cooperative, non-formal education
- Visible change in physical health status and nutritional level
- Change in literacy and enrolment levels
- Participation levels of women in political process

Economic empowerment of women is one of the most vital conditions for the upliftment of the social status of women. Unless women become economically independent or make nearly equal economic contribution to the family for its sustenance, they cannot be equal to men in the decision-making process. The problem of gender-based discriminations or subordination of women is very much rooted in the economic dependence of men.

The economic empowerment of women is a vital element in the strong economic growth in any country. Empowering women enhances their ability to influence changes and to create a better society. They are equal to men in all aspects. Women are more perfect in the power to create, nurture and transform. Today, women are emerging as leaders in a growing range of fields be it aeronautics, medicine, space, engineering, law, politics, education, and business. In India, the empowerment process has already begun. We are now witnessing a steady improvement in the enrolment of women in schools, colleges, and even in professional institutes.

Since women's empowerment is the key to socio-economic development of the community; bringing women into the mainstream of national development has been a major concern of government. The ministry of rural development has special

components for women in its programmes. Funds are earmarked as 'Women's component' to ensure flow of adequate resources for the same.

4.6 SUMMING UP

- The position that women occupied in the medieval and the colonial period is of utmost importance.

- The Vedic law did not discriminate between men and women.

- During the medieval period, practices such as polygamy, sati, child marriage, ill treatment of widows already prevalent during the Dharmashastra age gained further momentum.

- With the advent of the British, the status of women underwent many changes.

- There was lot of ambiguity on the question of the rights of a widow to property which made it difficult for a widow to remarry.

- The Swadeshi movement, Non-Cooperation (1920–22) movement, Civil Disobedience movement (1930–34), and the Quit India (1942) movement drew large number of women.

- The early 20th century witnessed a nascent women's movement which campaigned for furthering female education, raising the age of marriage for woman, and the abolition of purdah.

- At the international level, the UN Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) sought to guarantee better legal status to women.

- The word, gender, refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, and the way the society distinguishes between men and women and assigns them social roles.

- Gender discrimination is not biologically determined but is determined socially and the discrimination can be changed by initiating proper efforts.

- The distinction between sex and gender was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women's subordination to their anatomy.

- Reports show that India's maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is highest in South Asia.

- Women's education is basically very critical since this is their human right and is exigent for the advancement of most of their capacities.

- The higher rate of illiteracy of women is undoubtedly responsible for the dependence of women on men.

- In 1910, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, daughter of Swarna Kumari Devi, formed the Bharat Stree Mandal (Great Circle of India Women).

- Non-government organization or NGO is a legal organization established by individuals and operates independently from the government.

- Under the law, women are entitled to equal pay as men for equal work. They are further entitled to the maternity benefits under the Maternity Benefits Act.

- Today, women have secured an honourable position in all sectors of work.

- The government of India has appointed the National Commission for Women to protect the interests of the women at large. The Commission is vested with powers of a Civil Court.

- The Hindu succession Act, 1956, has legislated that the son and daughter have equal rights over the property of their father.

- Women's political participation is considered to be a major measure of women's empowerment.

  The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts provide for a 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in the governance of local bodies (rural and urban) with an aspiration of good governance and fair representation in the development process at the grassroots level.

- Women empowerment is the most vital system to strengthen the future of women in India. It is systematic approach which needs to be developed more seriously in India.

- Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives, communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important.

- Empowering women enhances their ability to influence changes and to create a better society.

4.7 KEY TERMS

- **Female foeticide:** It is the act of destroying or aborting the growth of a female foetus.

- **Eve-teasing:** Making inappropriate remarks or gestures by a man or several men to a woman or several women in a public place, is referred to as eve-teasing.

- **Gender:** Gender, refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, and the way the society distinguishes between men and women and assigns them social roles.

- **Women's empowerment:** Women's empowerment is a way through which more and more women can be sensitized to issues concerning their lives and the choices they make.

4.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Baroda was the first princely state to introduce the provision of divorce.

2. A ban on sati was imposed in 1829.

3. The major drawback of the widows Remarriage Act was that it was only applicable to the Hindus. Also, people showed little enthusiasm to implement the provisions of the Act.

4. The Sarda Act was passed in 1930.

5. The Bharat Stree Mandal was established in 1910.

6. Non-government organization or NGO is a legal organization established by individuals and operates independently from the government.

7. AIDWA came into existence in 1981 as a national level organization of women.

8. Gender, refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, and the way the society distinguishes between men and women and assigns them social roles.

9. Women face discrimination in various forms such as eve-teasing, dowry.

10. In 1994, the government passed the Preconception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) which declared sex-selective abortion illegal. It was modified almost a decade later in 2003 holding medical professionals legally responsible.

11. The government of India has appointed the National Commission for Women to protect the interests of the women at large. It is entrusted with the task of looking into complaints, take suomoto notice of non-implementation of laws relating to women and non-compliance with policy decisions, guidelines, and instructions aimed at mitigating hardships and ensuring welfare and providing relief to women.

12. The Hindu succession Act was passed in 1956.

13. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts provide for a 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in the governance of local bodies (rural and urban) with an aspiration of good governance and fair representation in the development process at the grassroots level.

14. Women's empowerment is a way through which more and more women can be sensitized to issues concerning their lives and the choices they make. The objective of empowering women is so that they can make informed decisions about their life.

4.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What was the position of women in Ancient India?

2. Write a short note on the women's movements in the early 20th century.

3. State positive and negative outcomes of the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan.

4. Write a short note on the status of women in Assam.

5. State the provisions of the Maternal Benefit Act of 1961.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the position of women in India giving a historical perspective.

2. Write an essay on the position of women in India in the contemporary period.

3. Discuss the various women organizations.

4. Explain the various women issues related to legislations, property rights, and political participation of women.

4.10 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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