Chapter - 5
Social and Religious Movement

Brahmo Samaj

Ram Mohan Roy (1771-1833)

- He was born at Radhanagar in Bengal in 1772.
- He is regarded as the first great leader of modern India.
- He opposed idol worship and pressed on Doctine of the Unity of God.
- He believed that basically all religions preach a common message.
- He was deeply influenced by monotheism, anti-ideolatry of Islam, Suffism and ethical teachings of Christianity and liberal and rationalist doctrines of the west.
- He was one of the earliest propagators of modern education.
- Started the Atmiya sabha in 1814.
- The Brahma Sabha in 1829 (Brahmo Samaj). Based on the twin pillars of reason, the vedas and the Upanishads. Laid emphasis on human dignity, opposed idolatry and criticized social evils. Succeeded in persuading Lord Bentick to abolish sati in 1829.
- He gave enthusiastic assistance to David Hare, who founded the famous Hindu college in Calcutta.
- Established a Vedanta college (1825) in which courses both in Indian and western social and physical sciences were offered.
- Wrote Persian his famous work. A Gift to Monotheists or Tuhafat-ul-Muwahidin in 1809.
- Launched a movement for the abolition of Sati through his journal sahad Kaumudi (1819).
- Published his precepts of Jesus, 1820.
- He believed that the philosophy of Vedanta was based on this principle of reason.
- Was opposed to Sanskrit system of education, because he thought it would keep the country in darkness.

Brahmo Ideas

- The purpose of Brahmo samaj was to purify Hinduism and to preach monotheism.
- It laid emphasis on human dignity, opposed idolatry and criticized such social evils as the practice of Sati.
- Preached by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and later went through some changes.
- Opposed idol worship, priesthood and the ritualistic worship.
- Emphasized on worship through prayer, meditation and reading from Upanishads.
- It emphasized on higher human qualities like piety, virtue and benevolence.

The Brahmo Samaj

- The earliest reform movement of modern type.
- Founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828 under the name “Brahmo sabha”
- 1848 – Devendranath Tagore joined the Samaj.
- 1858 – Keshab Chandra sen joined the samaj.
- 1866 – Adi Brahmo samaj (under Devendranath Tagore’s leadership) – Brahmo Samaj of India (under Keshab Chandra Sen’s leadership).

Sadharan Brahmo Samaj

- (Led by the disgruntled followers of Keshab Chandra sen).
- It was based on democratic principles and gave equal rights to all members in management of Samaj.
Important members of the samaj were Sivnath Shastri, Anand Mohan Bose, Bipin Chandra Pal, Dwarka Nath Ganguly and Sir Surendra Nath Bannerjee. They contributed immensely to the growth of the spirit of nationalism in India. It started many new journals to educate the masses, such as Tattva Kaumudi, Brahma Public Opinion, Indian Messenger, Sanjibani, Nabhyabharat, Modern Review and Prabase.

**Dharma Sabha**
- The orthodox Hindus organized the Dharma Sabha under the leadership of Raja Radhakant Dev.
- The chief objective of all the activities of the Dharma sabha was only to counter the propaganda of the Brahmo Samaj.

**The Paramahansa Mandali**
- Founded by Dadhwa Pandurang and Bat Shastri Jambhekar in 1849.
- Founder believed in one god and were interested in breaking caste rules.
- Members took food cooked by low caste people.
- Believed in permitting widow remarriage and in education of women.

**The Prarthana Sabha**
- Founded in 1867 by M.G. Ranade
- Prominent leaders were Dr. Atmaram Pandurang and RG Bhandarkar and NG Chandavarkar.
- Along with its reformist attitudes the Prathana samaj was also very much attached with the Maharashtrian Bhakti cult.
- The two main planks of the samaj were worship and social reform.
- It rejected idolatry, denied the vedas and adopted the method of congregational worship.

**Arya Samaj**
- The first Arya Samaj unit was organized in Bombay in 1875, by Swami Dayanand Saraswati.
- It stood for the four-fold varna system determined by merit and not by birth.
- Stood for equal rights for both men and women in social and educational matters
- Opposed untouchability, caste discrimination, child marriage, and supported widow remarriage and inter-caste marriages.
- Their headquarter was later shifted to Lahore.
- Accepted the authority of the vedas (but sanctioned by rationalism and utilitarianism). Preached father-hood of God and brother-hood of man, equality of sexes, love and charity towards all.
- In 1886 – DAV school was instituted at Lahore by Lala Hansraj.
- In 1902 – Gurukula Pathshala at Hardwar was established.
- After the death of Dayanand in 1883, difference occurred in the Gurukul section led by Swami Shraddhananda and DAV section led by Lala Lajpat Rai and Lala Hansraj. While the Gurukul section laid emphasis on the traditional pattern of education the Dayanand – Anglo – Vedic section stood for the spread of English education stood for the spread of English education. This led to the split of the Samaj in 1892.
- The Anglo-vedic school established at Lahore in 1886 provided the nucleus for Arya Samaj movement. Lala Hansraj started the Gurukul near Hardwar to propagate the more traditional ideals of education.
- The Samaj started the shuddhi movement to convert non-Hindus to Hinduism. This became a contributory factor in the growth of communalism in India in the 20th century.
Swami Dayananda

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati (or Mulashankar) was born in 1824, in Gujarat. He received education from swami virajonanda at Mathura. Formally organized the first Arya samaj unit at Bombay in 1875.
- He was known as the earliest Neo-nationalist.
- His ideal was to unite India religiously, socially and nationally. He looked on the Vedas as India’s “Rock of Ages”, the true original seed of Hinduism. His motto was “Go back to vedas”.
- He condemned idol worship and preached unity of God.
- He decried untouchability and casteism and advocated remarriage and a high status of woman in society. Denounced infinite number of meaningless rites and launched a crusade against all religious superstitions.
- He was the first Hindu reformer who turned from defence to attack, from protecting Hindu faith from assaults.
- He wrote three books – “Satyartha Prakash” in Hindi, Veda – Bhashya Bhumika in Hindi and Sanskrit and “Veda Bhashya” in Sanskrit.

Sister Organisations of Arya Samaj

- DAV
- Shudhi Sabha
- Jaat – Paat Todak Mandal – By Bhai Parmananda.

Reaction to formation of Arya Samaj

Dharma Mahamandal – By conservative Hindus

Led to formation of two divisions of Hinduism

- Sanatan Dharma of conservative following (Puranic Hindus)
- Arya Samaj

Rama Krishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekanand

Rama Krishna (1836-1886)

- His original name was Gadadhar Chattopadhyay. He was born in 1836 in Kamarpukar village in Hooghly district of West Bengal.
- He was a priest in Dakshineshwar temple of Goddess Kali near Calcutta.
- He sought religious salvation in traditional ways of renunciation, meditation and devotion.
- Emphasized that service to man was service to god.
- His thinking was rooted deeply in Indian thought and culture, although he emphasized the truth in all religions.

Rama Krishna Mission

- The Ram Krishna Monastic order (1887) and mission (in 1897) were established by Swami Vivekananda to carry on humanitarian relief and social work.
- It laid emphasis not on personal salvation, but on a social good or social service. It opened many schools, hospitals and dispensaries, orphanages, libraries, etc.

Swami Vivekanand (1863-1902)

- His original name was Narendranath Dutta and was born at Calcutta in 1863. He was a disciple of Ramakrishna paramhansa.
He attended the parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893 and published two papers—prabhadha Bharata in English and Udbodhana in Bengali.

Social Ideas
- He stressed on social action and proclaimed the essential oneness of all religions and condemned any narrowness in religious matters.
- He believed that only in uplifting the masses lay the vitality of the nation. He urged people to imbibe spirit of liberty, equality and free thinking, wanted new social order based on freedom and equality.
- He was champion of emancipation of women and was of the view that “no social progress is possible without improving the condition of women, who were most important instrument of social change”.
- He said, “so long as millions live in hunger and ignorance. I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them”.

Religious Ideas
- Felt Hinduism needs reinterpretation.
- He subscribed to Vedanta, which he declared to be fully rational system and reinterpreted the vedant, which led to Neo-vedantism.
- Condemned the caste system and the Hindu emphasis on rituals and superstitions.
- Preached humanistic religion and was of the view that best from of worship was service to humanity.

Nationalism
- Contributed to the rise of nationalism. His nationalism was based on four pillars of:
  - Awakening of masses.
  - Development of physical and moral strength.
  - Unity based on common spiritual ideas.
  - Pride in ancient Indian glory.
- Wanted modernization of India through science and technology.
- In 1897, he founded the Ramakrishna mission to carry on humanitarian relief and social work. Belur became the headquarters of his mission and Matha. An irish woman Margaret noble popularized the teachings of the mission.

Vivekananda died in 1902.