

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL TRENDS IN INDIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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The first half of the nineteenth century marked an important epoch in the history of India. It was during this period that India faced the rising tide of Western imperialism and met the formidable challenge of foreign influences in political, social, cultural and intellectual spheres.

At this time, deep-rooted beliefs and worship of a number of gods and goddesses, rigid system of caste with different reservations and restrictions about untouchability, food, marriage, child-marriage, re-marriage of widows^① and the like were the distinct features of the Hindu Society. The stratification of customs, lack of interest in innovations^{and} stereotyped system of education had badly influenced the moral and mental outlook of the men and society. The long established social institutions were largely controlled by religion and the religion of the majority of the people was the Hinduism.

From the ancient times, the caste system in India, consisted of a number of hereditary groups. As time passed, it was transformed into four castes namely, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The form and working of these divisions are so well-known that it hardly requires any discussion.

So far as the nineteenth century social thinkers and reformers are concerned, they seem to have confined themselves more with the question of improving the condition of women and the Shudras. In Hindu Society the women were the real sufferers. Rigid and rigorous customs and conventions of the society afflicted then very greatly. Some features of the joint family system, or marriages and of prostitution (including Devdasis) also were an indication of their plight.

1. R.C.Majumdar, British Paramountcy And Indian Renaissance (ed.) Vol. X, Part II (Bombay, 1965), p. 21 (Hereafter as BPIR).

The Shudras were subject to exclusion in varying degrees in society. Their low position was revealed in their exclusion from the Hindu temples, schools and places of public resort. They were kept away by the other classes of society for fear of being defiled with their touch. S. Natrajan has pointed out that even in the untouchable or Antyaja Class, the caste restrictions as regards inter-marriage and inter-dining were more strict among their different groups than what they were in the higher castes.^①

The women in the Hindu society were the real sufferers. The hard and rigorous conventions laid down by the community regarding the status of women, marriage and joint family system made their life dull and miserable.

Social Awakening

The transformation of Indian society in the nineteenth century which resulted from the contact with the West, is one of the greatest movements of the age. It had far-reaching changes in every field of social life.

Just as the Muslim conquest brought a new "stream of religious thought (i.e. Islam) into the veins of Hindu society, so the British conquest also brought with it new views of the world, man and God."^② In other words, contact with the English, the impact of English education, the work of Christian missionaries and the sense of humiliation on the part of Indians, all combined to surge a new change in the country.

At the very outset, it is necessary to point out the attitude of the ruling Government namely the British Government. As the outstanding Western institution in India, the British Government did not favour any reform. They preferred to leave the

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1. A Century of Social Reform in India (Second Edition, Bombay, 1962), pp. 15-16.
 2. W.M. Theodore de Barry, S. Hay, R. Weiler, A. Yarrow, Sources of Indian Traditions (compiled), (Second Issue, Delhi, 1963), p. 602.

existing institutions as they were. The British rule had been recognised as being apposed to progressive social movements.^①

Education

The impact of the English education on the Indians was far reaching in its results. After the introduction of English education, in the first half of the nineteenth century, it remained as a dynamic trend in the prevailing educational systems in India. Raja Rammohan Roy, the staunch protagonist of English education called it " the great lever of national upliftment." He himself started an English school even before the famous minute of Macauley was written. After a great controversy, English was adopted as the medium of instruction for western education in India and its credit must be attributed to Roy.

During the first fifty years of English education and the learning of the Western ideas, "...a critical attitude towards religion and a spirit of inquiry into the origin of State and Society with a view to determining their proper scope and function"^② developed among the educated Indians. As a result, the blind faith in current traditions, beliefs and conventions was replaced by a spirit of rationalism. The rationalising effect of English education manifested itself in religious and social ideas of the time. It also profoundly affected the political consciousness of the people.

Christian Missions

Christian missions played significant part in introducing in India "...the humanistic side of Western Civilization."^③ At first the Christian missionaries, held that the Indian Society could not progress unless the Indians were converted to Christianity. The educational system founded in India rested on the belief that if Indians were educated in modern ideas ~~they would~~

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1. Natrajan, op. cit., p. 7.
 2. BPIR, Vol. X, Part II, p. 89.
 3. Natrajan, op. cit., p. 7.

they would become the natural leaders of reform and even the missionaries to convert India to Christianity.^① But history falsified that belief. The Christian missions, however, indirectly did much good to the country. They were the first to introduce the concept of social service as a new feature to the Indian life. A sense of social reform evolved from it.

K.M.Panikkar, keeping in view the ancient societies of India, China and Japan has given four broad based general characteristics of the Renaissance in Asia. Firstly, he considered Renaissance as "...a more or less successful attempt to reorganize the society in order primarily to adjust relationships which had become obsolete, e.g., caste in India, feudalism in Japan and the stratification of life in China." Secondly, he held that "it was realised from the beginning that fundamental social adjustments were not possible without a reformation of religion."^② Thirdly, he maintained that the Renaissance was an "...attempt to assimilate the learning and thought of the West," but he hastened to add that the approach was one of national survival. Fourthly, he declared that there was an "an emphasis on nationalism. The growth of national feeling was the direct result of the reaction against Western aggression."^③

These observations may be examined with reference to Indian society. Firstly, the re-organisation of society was the work of thinking men at the top and was not due to the awakened conscience of the masses. Except Swami Dayanand (1824-1883) all other reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), Bal Shastri Jambhekar (1810-1846), Jyotiba Phule (1828-1890), M.G.Ranade (1842-1901), Swami Vivekanand (1863-1902) and the founders of the Theosophical society were English-knowing and they highly appreciated the value of English learning. "The conservative

1. Ibid.

2. K.M.Panikkar, Asia And Western Dominance (Seventh Impression, London, 1967), p.240.

3. Ibid., p. 238.

majority not only kept aloof but was intolerant, and persecution of religious and social reformers through social boycott and slander was usually to be expected.^①

Secondly, without religious reform, social reform was not possible. The hold of religion on the mind of the Indians was so strong that it was not easy to change the society without a change in religion which sanctioned the social change. Swami Vivekanand held the view that all social institutions were wrongly considered to be religious institutions, and therefore, social reform and religious reform were identical.^②

The third point of the movement was the attempt to assimilate the learning and thought of the West. The Western culture included two currents namely, Christianity and modern science. In India, except the oppressed classes in the Hindu Society, all Hindus bitterly resented the attempts to propagate or spread of Christianity by the missionaries.^③ As referred to earlier, the protagonists of English education and learning made it more or less their mission to acquire and spread Western knowledge. Even B.G.Tilak and Chiplunker, who can be called 'revivalists', established a school of Western type in Poona which later on developed into a college. The Arya Samaj movement led to the establishment of a net-work of D.A.V. Colleges in North-Western India.

Fourthly, the cultural transformation in India was due to gradual growth of nationalism. Panikkar's judgement that "The growth of national feeling was the direct result of the reaction against Western aggression,"^④ is meaningful. But it should be conceded that the reaction was slow in its development. The last

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1. P.J.Jagirdar, Studies in the Social Thought of M.G.Ranade (Bombay, 1963), p. 24.
 2. Ibid., p. 25.
 3. Panikkar, op. cit., p. 314.
 4. Ibid., p.317.

quarter of the nineteenth century, however, saw a rapid growth of national feeling in India. Social reform and nationalism were the two facets of the Renaissance that began to affect the Indian life powerfully after the middle of the nineteenth century more particularly.

Social Thinkers and Reform Movement

Raja Rammohan Roy, the Father of Modern India and a true representative of his age, accepted the virtues of Western learning. He stood for the assimilation of all that was best in the West. For the improvement in India's literary, social and political conditions, he desired greater contact with the Europeans.^①

The social reforms for which Rammohan stood were: eradication of Kulinism, stopping of the sale of girls in marriage, abolition of the caste system, introduction of widow marriage and abolition of Sati. He vehemently opposed polygamy and concubinage. He was the first Hindu to cross the sea.^② The abolition of Sati was his most important contribution to the cause of social reform in India.

Rammohan's experiments in forming "religious societies - the Atmiya Society (1815), the Unitarian Committee (1822), and the Brahmo Samaj (1828)"^③ did not assume a form of popular movement for various reasons. He held that "The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. ... Some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort."^④ Roy's revolt against existing Hindu society and his appeal to Indians to purify their religion and reconstitute their institutions, however, echoes ~~the~~ throughout the century after

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1. J.K.Majumdar, Raja Rammohan Roy and Progressive Movements in India (ed.) (Calcutta, 1941). p.439.
 2. H.C.E. Zacharias, Renascent India (London, 1933), p.18.
 3. Natrajan, op. cit., pp. 39-40.
 4. Raja Rammohan Roy, English Works (J.C.Ghosh, ed.) Vol.II, (Calcutta, 1887), pp. 929-930.

his death. ^① Later reformers were inspired to take up the work of improvement in the condition of widows, the education of women and the removal of caste restrictions from his writings.

Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891), the follower of Rammohan Roy, took up the cause of the Hindu widows. He and his followers, in their crusade for emancipation of Indian women, illuminated women's inferior status, their enforced seclusion especially in Bengal and Northern India, their extremely early marriage and the lack of education among them. They collected facts about this and put before the society. Under the leadership of Ishwar Chandra, the Brahma Samaj adopted social reform as an integral part of its religious movement. ^②

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) who joined the Brahma Samaj in 1857, infused new life and vigour into it. He thought of a great national awakening which would combine religious and social reform. He decried the state of India and called it "fallen nation a nation whose primitive greatness lies in buried ruins." ^③ He made Brahmanism a real force all over Bengal and was the first to inaugurate an all-India movement of religious and social reforms. He undertook a missionary tour to Bombay and Madras in 1864 and North-Western Provinces in 1868. He and his followers carried the message of Samaj all over India. The Brahma Samaj ~~and its~~ ~~had~~ congregations were established in intellectual places of India. They assumed different names, for example, in Bombay as Prarthana Samaj and in Madras as Veda Samaj (later called Brahma Samaj). In course of time, Keshab Chandra under the aegis of Brahma Samaj, launched a comprehensive programme of social reform which formed a vital part of Indian Renaissance.

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1. C. H. Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform (Bombay, 1964), p. 11.
 2. BPIR, Vol. X, Part II, p. 256.
 3. Heimsath, op. cit., p. 16. Quoted.

In Western India, the reform movement followed a different pattern. In Poona, especially, a school of thought developed with a constructive programme for social and political advancement. It dominated the course of nationalist movement for several decades. Sardar Gopal Hari Deshmukh known as "Lokahitwadi" (1823-1892), like Dayanand Saraswati, made scathing attacks on the traditional Brahmin monopoly of education and religious life and condemned it. As early as the 1840's, he dared to call the priests as unholy and the Pundits as worst than priests. He asked the Brahmins to give up their foolish concepts and accept all men as equal and everybody's right to acquire knowledge. ①

Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (1857-1895), a vigorous newspaper editor, also joined Deshmukh in his campaign. Agarkar wrote in Marathi so that the common masses could understand him. He urged reason as the only proper guide to conduct. He accepted the challenge of a minority faction, led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak which feared that social reform would weaken political nationalism. It is quite apparent that the forces of nationalism were gaining ground in this period. Agarkar disapproved the claim of those educated Indians who regarded India's traditions superior to all others. He regretfully wrote: "It is a shame that people like us (meaning Bal Gangadhar Tilak) whose eyes are open should also become so narrow-minded and act like blind people." ②

As referred to earlier, the Prarthana Samaj, the counterpart of Brahma Samaj, was established in 1867. R.G. Bhandarkar (1837-1925) and M.G. Ranade who joined the Samaj in 1869, infused new strength into it. This was the time when the Indian nationalist movement was getting momentum. The endeavours for social revolt and social reform were applauded in certain quarters. Ranade soon came out as a moderate reformer and provided the intellectual standard for social criticism. His speech marked the proceedings of the National Social Conference established in 1887.

1. G.K. Deshmukh, A Collection of Essays (Marathi), pp. 44-45.

Quoted by Heimsath, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

2. Heimsath, op. cit., p. 17.

Analysing the cause of social evils, he announced: "We do not want to break with the past and cease all connection with our society. We do not desire to give up our hold on the old established institutions..." Making clear his stand he said that he was not '... one of those who would abandon society because it tolerates what seems to be great evils.'^①

In support of his conviction, Ranade pointed out that the most of the evil customs which now prevailed in the Hindu society ran counter to the practices observed in the old times. He cited the "...dependent status of women, infant marriage, prohibition of re-marriage of widows, restriction of marriage within the narrow circles of the sub-caste to which one belonged, ignorance and seclusion (purdah) of women, prohibition of foreign travel, various kinds of absentions enforced upon women, restrictions as to interdining among various castes, untouchability etc." as examples of innovations for which no sastric sanction could be pleaded.^②

Ranade, however, showed a spirit of reverence towards the traditions which might have been made with the best intentions, but thought that they might have been failed to carry out these good intentions. Ranade, no doubt attempted to pacify the orthodox section with a view to making smooth the path of reforms. Yet, in one ^{of the} ^{es} speech^s at the National Social Conference, he changed his stand against the revivalists by enumerating several 'abominable practices' and 'immoral usages' that were prevalent in old India. Finally, he came to the decision that the only basis of social reform was the real need of the country as rationally conceived.^③ It can be clearly seen that whatever might have been the theoretical differences, all social reformers virtually agreed on removing the concrete abuses or evils cited by Ranade.

1. BPIR, Vol.X, Part II, p. 256. Quoted.

2. Ibid., p. 257.

3. C.Y.Chintamani, Indian Social Reform, A Collection of Essays (Madras, 1901), Part II, pp. 85-95.

Later on Ranade also added some more social elements for reform. They consisted of purity-movement comprising anti-nautch(dancing) and temperance agitation, admission of converts from other faiths and reduction in extravagant marriage expenses.

Rande was one of the seventy two all-India leaders who founded the Indian National Congress in 1885. It was intended that the Congress should deal principally with social reforms.^① But the view that the social questions would raise differences and would impair the national character of the Congress, it was decided to exclude social questions from the deliberations of the Congress. So, the Congress restricted its activity to politics only. This necessitated the founding of Indian National Social Conference in Madras in 1887. Ranade remained as the moving spirit behind the work of the Conference. The Conference met every year at the time and place of the Congress Session and worked quite separately. Ranade gave the inaugural address each year for fourteen years. He evolved the principles of the movement as a whole in relation to the political and religious movements of the time. Because of his energy, his erudition and his sympathetic nature, Ranade distinguished himself as a moderate reformer, leader of the reformers and "... provided the intellectual standard for social criticism which marked the proceedings of the National Social Conference."^②

After Ranade's death in 1901, N.G.Chandavarkar (1855-1923) took up his work and the Conference under his stewardship assumed new dimensions and played a more forceful role in the field of social reforms. As a result many such associations were organised in different parts of India, namely both in British India and the Indian States. The work of these associations is looked down as a characteristic feature of the first half of the twentieth century.

1. Natrajan, op. cit., p. 65.

2. Heimsath, op. cit., p. 17.

Revivalist Reformers

Among the revivalist social reformers of the nineteenth century, the names of Keshab Chandra Sen, Swami Dayanand and Swami Vivekanand (1863-1902) stand prominent. As referred to earlier, Keshab Chandra launched a comprehensive programme for social reforms. It included inter-caste marriage, widow-remarriage and removal of purdah for women. These were not liked by older section of the Brahma Samaj. So it led to open conflict and in 1866 the Samaj was divided into 'The Brahma Samaj of India' under Keshab Chandra and the 'Adi Samaj' under Devendranath.

Keshab Chandra deliberately excluded politics from his sphere of work and concentrated his energies on religious reform. He based it on personal liberty, social equality and emancipation. He insisted on bringing women into social life. He regarded India's contact with Christian civilization as the surest means of its moral regeneration and exhorted educated Indians '...to be loyal to the British Government.' He felt that they had come to their rescue when the '...country was sunk in ignorance and superstition and hopeless jejuness and had lifted them to the present condition.'^① Keshab Chandra put the education of women in the forefront of the programme of social reforms from the beginning to the end. He started an organisation for educating female members at home. He, as well as other members of the Samaj, started several associations for the uplift of women.

In few year's time, younger men with still more radical views challenged the authority of Keshab Chandra and deserted him as he had done to Devendranath.^② When Keshab Chandra consented to the marriage of his thirteen-year old daughter to the young Maharaja of Cooch-Behar in 1878, the leadership in the reform movement finally slipped away from the hands of the Samajists.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, founder of the Arya Samaj in

1. Ibid., p. 21. Quoted.

2. BPIR, Vol.X, Part II, p. 105.

1875, was a vigorous controversialist. He stressed on the purification of the Hinduism and denounced other religions with a crusading zeal.^① He adopted a programme of social reform. He rejected the hereditary system of caste and even did not recognize the authority or even the superiority of the Brahmanas merely on the ground of birth. He announced everybody's right to study the Veda and the other Hindu scriptures. He denounced the worship of gods and goddesses and preached the worship of Supreme Being. He encouraged inter-caste marriage but decried child-marriage. He fixed twentyfive and sixteen years as the minimum marriageable age for boys and girls respectively. But he opposed the remarriage of widows. He would permit a childless husband to remarry and a widow to procreate sons by others according to the system of niyoga (levirate) prescribed in the Vedas. This last contention, however, was dropped by the Arya Samajists. In short, the creed of social reform of Dayanand was based on the belief that the social customs related to marriage, food, dress and the multitude of petty practices related to caste, had no religious significance.^② It is noteworthy that two distinctive features of the Arya Samaj are social services like famine-relief and the spread of education.

In this period the sanction of active social disapproval of various established customs was often backed by religious censures from the Brahmin priests. These were so painful in experience that many devoted reformers hesitated or turned back instead of facing them. Two illustrations reflect this feeling. Surendranath Banerjea who returned from England in 1871 found that the ban on overseas travel was very firm. The whole attitude of the Hindu Society was one of unqualified disapproval. His family was practically outcaste. These who used to drink and eat with them on ceremonial occasions also stopped all

1. Natrajan, op. cit., p. 74.

2. Heimsath, op. cit., pp. 119-20.

intercourse with them and refused ^{to} invite his family. ①

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, known for his devotion to orthodoxy, had to bear the brunt of the onslaught of the orthodox section for his reformed behaviour. In 1891, Tilak attended a tea party given by Christian missionaries. He was tried before the court of Shankaracharya and was forced to take prayaschitta for it. In spite of this he strongly believed that social reform was necessary, but it should not be forced upon the people by legislation under the foreign rule. He wanted educated people to carry the message of social reform to the common people by their own example. ② Tilak, in his personal life, carried out all the reforms which he advocated. He educated his daughters and got them married only after the age of sixteen. He freely admitted members of the depressed classes in his company, crossed the seas and went to England, attended widow remarriage parties and freely interdined with men of any creed, community or religion. ③ But he was uncompromisingly against social reform by legislation.

Swami Vivekanand (1863-1902), the greatest disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836-1886), came out with his different interpretation of the Hinduism. He "...wrote perhaps the most biting, articulate, and bitter condemnations in recent times of the physical misery and misguided beliefs of most Indians." ④ According to him the problem of India was too much of religion which was of the wrong kind. He observed: "There is a danger of our religion getting into the kitchen. We are neither Vedantists, most of us know, nor Pauranics, nor Tantries. We are just 'don't touchists.' Our religion is in the kitchen. ... If this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum." ⑤

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1. Surendranath Banerjea, A Nation in the Making, (London, 1925), p.25.
 2. T.V.Parvate, Bal Gangadhar Tilak (Ahmedabad, 1958), p.44.
 3. Ibid., p. 46.
 4. Heimsath, op. cit., p. 25.
 5. Vivekanand, India and Her Problems, p. 23. Quoted by Heimsath, op. cit., p. 27.

He expressed his unflinching faith in the Hindu religion, denounced 'Dont-touch-ism' tooth and nail and insisted on raising the status of women and the masses. He held past generations of India responsible for the suppression of such large sections of humanity. He believed that the masses must be "...elevated by means of education based on religion, and the caste must be restored to its original foundation, namely, quality of head and heart and not mere accident of birth."^①

Vivekanand had a strong conviction that no individual or nation could live by holding itself apart from the community of others. We should give our ancient spirituality and culture and get in return Western science, technology, methods of raising the standard of life, business integrity and technique of collective effort.^② Vivekanand's thought marked the culmination of the nineteenth century social revolt. He cannot be considered as an up-holder of orthodoxy, nor as a blind revivalist. He devoted his time and energy in organising the Remkrishna Mission as a comprehensive body doing educational, social and medical work.

Review of Social Reform in Bengal, Bombay and Madras

During the greater part of the nineteenth century religious and social reform remained closely related to the private lives of the educated Indians. Similarly in this period before the emergence of nationalist organisations, religious and social reform became often insparable phenomena resulting largely of individual revolt against the restrictions of the religious and social order. From the time of Rammohan Roy to that of Dayanand Saraswati, the reformers presented "...creeds suited to their own personal need for individual opposition to existing society and to the intellectual needs of a limited following of educated men."

1. BPIR, Vol. X, Part II, p. 128.

2. Ibid.

In Bengal, Raja Rammohan Roy introduced certain Western ideas and ways of life into his life and it attracted educated Bengalis. By founding the Brahma Samaj in 1828, he gave it an institutional form. The Samaj rejected Brahmini's priesthood between man and God, repudiated idolatry and sacrifices for its public services, ignored caste distinctions and adopted a congregational form of worship.¹ About 1818, Rammohan Roy undertook the social reform crusade and campaigned against Sati. And it was in December 1829 that the regulation prohibiting Sati was issued, a triumph for the crusader! After Rammohan's death in 1833 and not until Debendranath Tagore's (1817-1905) entry, the Brahma Samaj had no effective leadership. Debendranath infused new spirit into the life of the Samaj and searched for religious truth. However, he had '...little social reform impact on 'Brahmos', much less on Hindu Society in general'.²

The most famous social reform movement which emerged from the various activities of mid-century Bengal according to Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) was the crusade for widow re-marriage. He held that the custom prohibiting re-marriage of widows was '...cruel and unnatural in itself, is highly prejudicial to the interests of morality.'³ He noted that widow re-marriages "...are neither contrary to nature nor prohibited by law or custom in any other country or by any other people in the world."⁴ After a vigorous campaign, Hindu Widows' Re-marriage Act was passed in 1856. However, for the Hindu society generally, the Act remained ineffective and produced the most meagre results.⁵ Pandit

1. Heimsath, op. cit., p.74.

2. Ibid., p. 78.

3. Ibid., p. 83.

4. Ibid.

5. In his Bombay Social Conference speech, at Satara in 1900, M.G.Ranade stated that 300 re-marriages had taken place throughout India "in the higher castes" since Vidyasagar initiated the movement. Chintamani, op. cit., Part II, p.133.

Vidyasagar was disappointed to see not only the relatively small number of widow re-marriages but the exploitation by men willing to marry widows only for the sake of monetary rewards. In 1886, a widow Re-marriage Association was started in Calcutta, but it failed to achieve any tangible results as the public did not evince any active or practical interest in the matter.¹

Keshab Chandra Sen, who assumed the leadership of the Samaj in 1862, had some progressive views on social reform in contrast to the older Brahma Samajists. He opposed any form of idolatry even in domestic worship services; denied the significance of caste; urged adult wives to appear in public and receive education and condemned certain semi-religious practices like nautch dancing. His liberal or radical views led finally to schism in the Samaj. The orthodox section led by Debendranath had religious aims concerned only to Hindu community and more particularly to high castes within it, while Keshab Chandra's religious aims covered the world and sought a universal faith. The Brahma Samaj, however, attempted creditably to establish a major objective of all Indian social reform movements, the social freedom and cultural advancement of Hindu Women.²

In Western India

Bombay

In the 1840's, the Bombay Presidency was developing a religious and social reform tradition. The earliest religious and social reform group in the Presidency was the Paramhans Mandali (The Divine Society) which was founded in 1840. Its objectives of working were the abolition of caste, the introduction of widow re-marriage, and the renunciation of idolatry. As the Mandali's members were not seeking dramatic personal breaks with the society, its meetings were held in secrecy.³ In 1848, the

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1. Indian Social Reformer, September 16, 1906, p. 32. Cited by Heimsath, op. cit., p.86.
 2. Heimsath, op. cit., p.91.
 3. James Kellock, Mahadev Govind Ranade (Calcutta, 1926), pp. 18-19.

Students' Literary and Scientific Society was established to discuss social questions and undertake education of girls. The Gujaratis in Bombay founded Buddhi-Vardhak Hindu Sabha in 1851 as a centre for discussing the new ideas penetrating from the West. The Dnyan Prasarak Mandali, one of whose organisers was Dadabhai Naoroji, also met for similar purposes. The notable feature of both such religious and social reform societies was that its membership consisted largely of students and graduates.

Bal Shastri Jambhekar (1812-1846), one of the first students and subsequently, the first Indian Professor at the Elphinston Institution, "... provided powerful intellectual incentives for the young generation of the mid-19th century in Bombay."^① He urged widow re-marriage, liberalisation of caste formalities, and the re-admission to Hindu society of persons who had been baptised Christians.

In 1867 the Prarthana Samaj was founded in Bombay under the inspiration and encouragement of Keshab Chandra Sen. It closely resembled Sen's branch of Brahma Samaj - belief in a single, all-powerful, all-loving God; salvation through worship of God; denial of the ideas of Karma and transmigration; opposition to the authorities of priests and idolatry. Though Prarthana Samaj revered the Up-nishads, it stressed the idea of devotion to a personal God, through Bhakti. The Samajists of Bombay did not set themselves apart from the Hindu Society and maintained an attitude that religious reform and social reform could proceed along different courses and at Varying rates; and neither reform should have a break with the past. K. T. Telang one of the first to join the Samaj asserted, "I am first and last a Hindu."^② About M. G. Ranade enough has been discussed in foregoing pages.

1. Heimsath, op. cit., p. 100.

2. Heimsath, op. cit., p. 100.

Gujarat

In Gujarat also the earliest reform activity was started by Mehtaji Durgaram Mancharam (1809-1874), a primary school teacher in Surat. Mehtaji did not know English. In 1838 he publicly protested against the treatment of widows and six years later organised the Manav Dharma Sabha to discuss social problems including those arising from the caste system. Narmada Shanker (1833-1886) well-known Gujarati essayist, thinker and poet, took up the cause of women's education. He urged widow re-marriage, attacked caste barriers and advocated travel to England in order to acquire Western scientific knowledge.^① Other Gujarati reformers such as Dalpatram, a poet; Mahipatram Rupram, the first Gujarati to travel abroad; and Karsondas Mulji, of Maharaja Libel Case fame, also contributed towards social reform in Gujarat.

It is significant to note that Gujarati and Marathi reformers used vernacular literary media namely poetry, dramas, essays and novels to propagate their views. Great public debates on social issues also became a standard way to focuss more attention of the readers of the vernacular press in Western India.

Poona

Gopal Hari Deshmukh, known as Lokahitwadi, wrote critically in vernacular on the caste system, child marriage and the treatment of widows. He attacked the intellectual monopoly exercised by the Brahmins over Hindu life. He supported English education and urged that education should be based on English-language texts, or translation of them. He entertained the idea of freedom in acquiring knowledge and condemned Sanskrit because it hindered the spread of new ideas to all classes of people.

Among the early Western Indian reformers who appeared more concerned with public crusades, Jyotiba Govind Phule (1827-1890) took up the cause of women and down-trodden classes. In 1850, he started one girls' school at Poona, two schools for

1. Ibid., p. 101.

untouchables and in 1863 a foundling home to care for the unwanted children of widows. It was named as the Home for the Prevention of Infanticide. He was assisted by his wife in his work. In spite of harrassment from the society, he remained undaunted. He favoured widow re-marriage and opposed polygamy and child marriage.^① He began his greatest mission of his life by organising the Satyashodhak Samaj in 1873. Its aim was to save the "lower castes from the hypocritical Brahmins and their opportunistic scriptures."^② The Samaj later on became the nucleus of a movement in Maharashtra and made profound effect on the social and political life in the twentieth century. Phule challenged the domination and leadership of the Brahmins in all spheres of social and political life of Maharashtra.^③

Pandita Ramabai was a well-known social reformer in Poona. The homes and educational institutions for widows were long established in Poona. Ramabai who had lost her parents and brother, married out of her caste to a Bengali and became a widow. The orthodox people turned against her, because she had married out of caste. Yet her scholarship and eloquences were admired by all.^④ With a view to do social service, she started the Arya Mahila Samaj in Poona under the auspices of the Prarthana Samaj for Hindu Women. Her similar efforts in Bombay met with little success. Disgusted at the attitude of the people towards her efforts, she turned to the missionaries and after a three years' stay in England and America, returned to Poona, with a promise of financial support for educational work.

Ramabai, thereafter, became a Christian and started the Sharda Sadan in 1889 in Bombay, which she shifted to Poona the

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1. A.K.Ghorpade, Mahatma Phule (in Marathi). Cited by Heimsath, op. cit., p. 103.
 2. S.A.Wolpert, Tilak and Gokhale (Ph.D.Dissertation) (University of Pennsylvania, 1959), p.43, ~~XXXXXX~~ Cited by Heimsath, op. cit., p. 103.
 3. Natrajan, op. cit., pp. 61-62.
 4. Natrajan, op. cit., p. 86.

following year. Ranade and Bhandarkar continued to support her as before, but Tilak denounced her for doing conversion work under the garb of imparting education. Social reformers also denounced her for betraying the Hinduism. Ultimately, Ramabai openly admitted her proselytising work. Both Ranade and Bhandarkar cut off their association with her activities. As a result, she shifted her institution to Kedgaon. Despite her conversion she became a source of inspiration to many Hindus because of the devotion of her service to young widows and the tenacity of her struggle for women's right.^①

The services of D. K. Karve (1858-1962) (later Maharshi) in the cause of education of women deserve mention. To set an example of himself as a social reformer, he married a twenty three year old widow in 1893. He also revived in the same year the defunct Widow Re-marriage Association of Poona which was started in 1875 by V. S. Pandit. Karve soon became a victim of social ostracism and condemnation for flouting orthodox sensibilities by marrying a widow. But he faced the situation boldly and in 1900, founded Hindu Widows Home, an exclusively educational institution.

There was a marked difference between the work of Karve and other social reformers. Karve wrote comparatively very little on social reform but put the principles into practice on which other reformers spent their energies in proclaiming.^② Karve believed that the surest way to create and maintain social progress is through educating women and freeing them from customary but valueless restraints. The present girls' educational institutions including colleges and the S.N.D.T. University which are connected with the name and work of Karve, are his living monuments.

1. Heimsath, op. cit., pp. 238-39.

2. Ibid., p. 240.

In Madras

In 1864, Ved Samaj resembling Brahma Samaj was established in Madras. This was due to Keshab Chandra Sen's missionary activity there in 1864. In 1871 Ved Samaj was re-organised by Shridharlu Naidu and was renamed as the Brahmo Samaj of South India. Under the leadership of M.B.Pantulu and R. Venkata Ratnam, the Samaj gained some strength by 1885. Though Brahma Samaj movement spread very slowly, it did not emerge as it did in Bengal. In the words of M. C. Parekh, the message of the Brahma Dharma fell more or less on deaf ears among the people of Madras.①

In Madras, The Prarthana Samaj had greater missionary impact to such an extent that two-thirds of the theistic churches in peninsular India were called Prarthana Samajes.② Viresalingam Pantulu stood as the leading advocate of widow re-marriage in the Telugu-speaking areas and as the energetic Prarthana Samajist in the southern Presidency. In 1878 he founded the Rajahmundry Social Reform Association, revived Telugu language through his original dramas, journalism, translation of English and Sanskrit works into the regional language. While advocating religious and social reform, he sarcastically exposed caste and idolatry. It has been observed that in "...the 1870's and 1880's, he (Viresalingam) was a rare type, and if a movement for reform could be said to have existed in the southern Presidency in his time, that movement was largely the personal career of Viresalingam."③ It seems that Madras had no group of social reformers like Bombay who gave fairly consistent and influential support to the established causes.

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1. Shri Swami Narayana (Rajkot, 1937), p. 230.
 2. J.N.Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India (New York, 1924), p. 78.
 3. Heimsath, op. cit., p. 110.

It has been stated that when the social reform movement was under way in Madras, in later decades, it touched only '... peripheral issues, such as nautch dancing, alcoholism, and income distribution in the joint family'.^① In 1892, the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association was founded. A. Subba Rau, K. Subba Rao and B. Varada Charlu whom Ranade called as the "the young Madras party,"^② associated themselves with the Indian Social Reformer and achieved some success in spreading reform ideas. However, Viresalingam Pantulu and Sir R. Vekanta Ratnam Naidu remained as the two outstanding individual reformers in the Madras Presidency. Viresalingam worked at Rajahmundry and in the Northern Sircars while Venkata Ratnam at Masulipatam. Viresalingam founded Widow Marriage Association in 1891 and a Widows' Home at Rajahmandry. Later on he made Madras as his head-quarters and worked for the Hindu widows.

The social reform movement in the three Presidencies show a multifaceted intellectual expression of the social and cultural transformation till the end of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, the attention of the social reformers was concentrated on the women and depressed classes. The problems affecting prohibition, temperance, spread of education and removal of minor evils and abuses in social life were also not neglected.

1. Ibid., p. 112.

2. M.G. Ranade, Miscellaneous Writings of Mr. Justice, Ed. by Ramabai Ranade, (Bombay, 1915) p. 120.