

WOMEN STUDIES

Code NO: 18KP3HELH3

UNIT-I

Perspectives on women studies - Ultra conservative, Feminist, liberal, Marxist and Radical - Interpreting Patriarchy - matrilineal and Patriarch orders - concept of gender justice.

UNIT-II

Condition of women at the advent of the British in India - Male reformers against social civil afflicting women - Legislative measures adopted - Age of consent Act - sati and child Marriage Abolition Acts - Widow Remarriage Act - Devadasi system abolition Act.

1. Status and role of women

The position of women community has been a fluctuating subject since the early ages. With the ups and downs in the Hindu Society, the status of women has been affected.

During the Vedic period, the women enjoyed equal status with men. They were respected and honoured. Historical research and literary writing of the ancient period establish this fact. The education of women was looked upon so important. According to Atharva Veda, "the success of women is her married life depended upon her proper training during the Brahmacharya", Many vedic women composed hymns, some of the revered Vedic women are Lopamudra, Viswavara, Sikata, Nivavari, Gosha and Aswalayana.

During the Upanishadic period there were great Brahmavadinis who were enriched with deep knowledge of philosophy. Gargi and Maitraye asked difficult questions in a challenge with their husband Yajnavalkya, the great thinker.

During the Buddhist period, great women lived who were in no way inferior to men. The status of women was highly appreciable during the time of Jainism.

In ancient India marriage for male and female was considered necessary from religious as well as social view point. It was also contended that an unmarried person cannot take part in Vedic rites. They had a choice in selecting their husbands. Widows were allowed to remarry. The early Dharmasastras allowed divorce, Kautilya dealt with the problem of divorce in detail. Ancient Hindu scripture does not mention the prevalence of sati system. According to Vedic hymns, wife and husband had joint ownership rights of the property.

The women were degraded to a very lower status after 300 B.C. During this period women's rights were strictly subjected to restrictions. Many young women renounced their homes and joined Buddhistic and the Jain monasteries. It led to drastic social changes.

Then came the impact of political intrusion by the Greeks the Scythians. New developments affected the life of widow. The widow was confined to lead an ascetic life at home. During

the 8th century purdah system became more and more accepted as a part of custom, specially among the middle class. Neera Desai comments. "Ideologically women were considered a completely inferior species, inferior to the male, having no significance, no personality socially she was kept in a state of utter subjection, denied by polygamy, the purdah, the property structure, early marriage, self-immolation of widows (Sati) or a state of permanent widowhood, all these contributed to the smoothening of the free development of women".

In the 19th century many thinkers in India rose against the evil practices and so called customs framed with the intention of exploiting women. B. Kuppuswamy has beautifully described the wave of reformist thought in the 19th century from Ram Mohan Rai to Gandhiji. Thereby the fight against women subjugation in India started in 19th century. Due to the efforts of Ram Mohan Rai, Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of India, in 1829 abolished 'Sati' and declared that practice was a crime. The Brahmo Samajists, demanded widow remarriage as well as the freedom of equality of sexes. Iswarchandra Vidhyasagar campaigned tirelessly and it led to creation of Widow Remarriage Act, 1856. Keshab Chandra Sen was successful in getting passed the Civil Marriage Act, 1872. The striking feature of the Act was the enforcement of monogamy.

The restoration of property rights was given to the womenfolk by the Married Womens Property Right Act of 1874. Restriction on child marriages was brought by the efforts of Bekranji Malabari which led to the enactment of the Age of Consent Act of 1881.

Education is a catalytic agent for social change. Changes in life and position of women have been greatly accelerated by the spread of education. As a result women's organisations and a strong women's movement took place. Many greatest women emerged in the scene. Among them Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi, Pandita Rama Bai, Rama Bai Ranade, Madam Cama and Toru Dutt were prominent.

Jhansi Rani:

Probably, Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi (1835-1858) inspired women as well as men of India regarding the potentialities of

women by way in which she participated in the 1857 war of Indian Independence and died fighting valiently on the battlefield. She has become a legendary figure since then.

There were also several Indian leaders who worked for the emancipation of women in the nineteenth century. Among them the work of some may be briefly recounted here.

Pandita Rama Bai:

The foremost among them was Pandita Rama Bai (1858 - 1922). She came from a learned Brahmin family in Karnataka. (She was a great scholar of Sanskrit and addressed many learned groups in different parts of the country and was given the title of "Pandita" and "Saraswat", for her deep knowledge of Sanskrit.) After the death of her parents she and her brother travelled different parts of the country. She spoke about social injustice done to women in the society. They went to Calcutta in 1878. Two years later her brother also died. A little later in 1880 she married a Bengali pleader of a lower caste. Thus, even at that time she was bold enough to marry a man of a different caste and different language. After the death of her husband two years later she returned to Pune and started the Arya Mahila Samaj with the help of leaders like Ranade and Bhandarkar.

In 1882, she gave evidence before the Hunter Commission who were very happy to see 300 women being educated in the Samaj. She pleaded for facilities for women to qualify themselves in medicine. In 1883, she went to England and was baptized as a christian. She went to America in 1886. On her return to Bombay in 1889, she started the Sharada Sadan to provide home for the destitute high caste widows again with the help of Ranade, Bhandarkar and others. In the institute many Hindus were converted to Christianity. So, a strong protest came from Tilak and others.

As a result of this even, liberal leaders like Ranade and Bhandarkar had to give up their connection with the Sadan. After this, she shifted to Khedgoan near Poona and established a Mukti Sadan. Soon there were 2000 children and women. Training was given from kindergarten to the teacher and the industrial section. In spite of the criticism against her, she was able to give general education and vocational training to several thousand women, who were able to become self-independent.

Rama Bai Ranade:

Another outstanding women who contributed to the emancipation of women in the nineteenth century was Rama Bai Ranade (1862-1922). She married the great economist and social reformer, Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade when she was just eleven. Ranade educated her and helped her in her various activities. She started the Hindu Ladies Club in her house in 1884 and later opened classes for illiterate women and widows. She also started the Poona Seva Sadan with branches in different parts of Maharashtra. Finally, she started a Nursing Medical Association and trained nurses.

Madam Cama:

Another woman of outstanding merit was the great revolutionary Madam Cama (1861-1936). She was a pioneer in the struggle for freedom. She left India in 1902 and settled down in England and joined the Indian Revolutionary movement there.

Toru Dutt:

Toru dutt (1855-1877) of Bengal was a great literary celebrity of the nineteenth century.

Swarnakumari:

Another great writer was Swarnakumari Devi (1855-1932) of the famous Tagore family. She wrote historical and social novels in Bengali.

Para:

Another outstanding woman was Para, a talented painter. She belonged to the Kangro school of Rajput Painting. She was a woman artist of great repute.

Present Status:

More than a hundred years ago, women took to the teaching profession and today, women constitute nearly 35 per cent of teachers in the country. Educated women are no longer confined to jobs such as those of school teachers, nurses etc. They have invaded the precincts of commercial establishments, airlines, banking, government offices and institutions of local self-governments.

During the post-independence period, women have been elevated to the most coveted posts of district officers, governors, ambassadors judges and even police officers. For instance, Vijayalakshmi Pandit has acted as ambassador of India. She has worked as Governor and also as the President of the U.N. General Assembly. Mrs. Indira Gandhi has had the distinction of being the first woman Prime Minister of the largest democracy in the world. Now Ms. J. Jayalalitha has become the Chief Minister of Tamil nadu. Indeed, modern women have gone far beyond the problem relating to their personal rights. Moreover women have a long way to go in order to emulate men in all fields of human endeavour.

There is a conspicuous drift of educated women to westernisation. The modern women may look westernised in form but in spirit, she is Indian. It is only when women act as chaste wives, good mothers, responsible public servants and enlightened citizens of free India that success will kiss their feet.

(i) Feminist Theories:

Women's studies begins with three cornered effect viz., women's studies as Understanding, as Awareness and as Action. Its explicit purpose is to promote the interests of women, who are the oppressed. "Women's studies is variously defined. Studying women with a women's prospective"; "looking at women in the world from woman's point of view" and so on.

Feminist scholarship has attempted to grapple with the problem of women and has come up with a number of concepts that may be useful: "Status", "Power", "Autonomy". These need further classification, further refining to be able to serve our purpose effectively.

• (ii) **Feminism in India:**

Feminism in India means the influence of women on India. In the previous pages it is dealt in detail. Yet under this heading it is desirable to discuss something about feminism.

Today the primary feminist-concern is women's equality. The most obvious form in which women's inequality is expressed by the society is the rigid sex based on gender based division of work. This rigidity is found strictly in contemporary society. Sex division is not so visible during the precolonial and early industrial days. But, today we find that a woman's role is that of home maker and mother, the feminist's object to this division of work and insist that a woman must also be able to go out and work and earn as an expression of her right to equality. This ability to go out and work forces the society to recognise her status and her right. By emphasising women's right to work what we have achieved is recognition of her ability to work like a man, her ability and talent for the same jobs that men have to do. Male and female are part of biological continuum and not polar opposites.

Feminine jobs are linked to home and house only. They include making food, maintenance of the household, physical

LIBERAL FEMINISM

Liberal feminism is an individualistic form of feminist theory, which focuses on women's ability to maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. Liberal feminists argue that society holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men; thus it tends to discriminate against women in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace. Liberal feminists believe that "female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that blocks women's entrance to and success in the so-called public world". They strive for sexual equality via political and legal reform.^[1]

Liberal feminism is contrasted with radical feminism.^{[2][3][4][5]}

Philosophy[edit]

Liberal feminism does not have a clearly defined set of philosophies, which makes their beliefs abstract. They value individualistic approaches to justice and societal structures instead of blaming inequalities on patriarchal gender relations.^[6] As Susan Wendell states, "liberal feminism's clearest political commitments, including equality of opportunity, are important to women's liberation and not necessarily incompatible with the goals of socialist and radical feminism."^[6]

The basis of liberalism gave liberal feminism a familiar enough platform that it came the closest out of other waves to convincing the general public and the government that their feminist philosophies "could and should be incorporated into existing law."^[7] As Ryan Musgrave states, "Liberal feminists argued for women's rightful inclusion in the liberal category of the autonomous individual as the basic social unit, and that women likewise be accorded the individual rights connected to the category."^[7]

History[edit]

The goal for liberal feminists in the late 1800s and early 1900s was to gain women's suffrage under the idea that they would then gain individual liberty. They were concerned with gaining freedom through equality, putting an end to men's cruelty to women, and gaining the freedom to opportunities to become full persons.^[8] They believed that no government or custom should prohibit the exercise of personal freedom. Early liberal feminists had to counter the assumption that only white men deserved to be full citizens. Feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Judith Sargent Murray, and Frances Wright advocated for women's full political inclusion.^[8] In 1920, after nearly 50 years of intense activism, women were finally granted the right to vote and the right to hold public office in the United States.

Liberal feminism was quiet for four decades after winning the vote. In the 1960s during the civil rights movement, liberal feminists drew parallels between systemic race discrimination and sex discrimination.^[9] Groups such as the National Organization for Women, the National Women's Political Caucus, and the Women's Equity Action League were all created at that time to further

MARXIST FEMINISM

Marxist feminism is a philosophical variant of feminism that incorporates and extends Marxist theory. Marxist feminism analyzes the ways in which women are exploited through capitalism and the individual ownership of private property.^[1] According to Marxist feminists, women's liberation can only be achieved by dismantling the capitalist systems in which they contend much of women's labor is uncompensated.^[2] Marxist feminists extend traditional Marxist analysis by applying it to unpaid domestic labor and sex relations.

Because of its foundation in historical materialism, Marxist feminism is similar to socialist feminism and, to a greater degree, materialist feminism. The latter two place greater emphasis on what they consider the "reductionist limitations"^[3] of Marxist theory but, as Martha E. Gimenez^[3] notes in her exploration of the differences between Marxist and materialist feminism, "clear lines of theoretical demarcation between and within these two umbrella terms are somewhat difficult to establish."

Theoretical background in Marxism^[edit]

Marxism follows the development of oppression and class division in the evolution of human society through the development and organization of wealth and production, and concludes the evolution of oppressive societal structure to be relative to the evolution of oppressive family structures, i.e., the normalization of oppressing the female sex marks or coincides to the birth of oppressive society in general.

In *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), Friedrich Engels writes about the earliest origins of the family structure, social hierarchy, and the concept of wealth, drawing from both ancient and contemporary study. He concludes that women originally had a higher social status and equal consideration in labor, and particularly, only women were sure to share a family name. As the earliest men did not even share the family name, Engels says, they did not know for sure who their children were or benefit from inheritance.^[4]

When agriculture first became abundant and the abundance was considered male wealth, as it was sourced from the male work environment away from the home, a deeper wish for male lineage and inheritance was founded. To achieve that wish, women were not only granted their long-sought monogamy but forced into it as part of domestic servitude, while males pursued a hushed culture of "heterism". Engels describes this situation as coincidental to the beginnings of forced servitude as a dominant feature of society, leading eventually to a European culture of class oppression, where the children of the poor were expected to be servants of the rich.^[4]

Theory and ideology^[edit] RADICAL FEMINISM

Radical feminists assert that society is a patriarchy in which the class of men are the oppressors of the class of women.^[10] They propose that the oppression of women is the most fundamental form of oppression, one that has existed since the inception of humanity.^[11] As radical feminist Ti-Grace Atkinson wrote in her foundational piece "Radical Feminism" (1969):

The first dichotomous division of this mass [mankind] is said to have been on the grounds of sex: male and female ... it was because half the human race bears the burden of the reproductive process and because man, the 'rational' animal, had the wit to take advantage of that, that the childbearers, or the 'beasts of burden,' were corralled into a political class: equivocating the biologically contingent burden into a political (or necessary) penalty, thereby modifying these individuals' definition from the human to the functional, or animal.^[12]

Radical feminists argue that, because of patriarchy, women have come to be viewed as the "other"^[13] to the male norm, and as such have been systematically oppressed and marginalized. They further assert that men as a class benefit from the oppression of women. Patriarchal theory is not generally defined as a belief that all men always benefit from the oppression of all women. Rather, it maintains that the primary element of patriarchy is a relationship of dominance, where one party is dominant and exploits the other for the benefit of the former. Radical feminists believe that men (as a class) use social systems and other methods of control to keep women (as well as non-dominant men) suppressed. Radical feminists seek to abolish patriarchy by challenging existing social norms and institutions, and believe that eliminating patriarchy will liberate everyone from an unjust society. Ti-Grace Atkinson maintained that the need for power fuels the male class to continue oppressing the female class, arguing that "the *need* men have for the role of oppressor is the source and foundation of all human oppression".^[14]

The influence of radical-feminist politics on the women's liberation movement was considerable. Redstockings^[15] co-founder Ellen Willis wrote in 1984 that radical feminists "got sexual politics recognized as a public issue", created second-wave feminism's vocabulary, helped to legalize abortion in the USA, "were the first to demand total equality in the so-called private sphere" ("housework and child care ... emotional and sexual needs"), and "created the atmosphere of urgency" that almost led to the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.^[6] The influence of radical feminism can be seen in the adoption of these issues by the National Organization for Women (NOW), a feminist group that had previously been focused almost entirely on economic issues.^[16]

WOMEN, PATRIARCHY AND FEMINISM

Women constitute nearly half of the world's population and perform two-thirds of the world's work hours, yet are poorer in resources and poorly represented in positions of decision making. According to Jeanne Vickers, "when we speak of the 'poorest of the poor', we are always speaking about women. Poor men in the developing world have even poorer wives and children."¹ Women do most of the housework, in most contemporary societies, and also most of the work of caring for young children. Women are much less likely to be present in the public realm than men, and when they are, usually have less in the way of resources. For instance, in almost all parts of the world men are better paid than women. When women do get jobs, their average wages are lower than men. "They do about 55 per cent of the world's work when unpaid economic activities in the household are taken into account. This is without even considering unpaid and unrecognized domestic services in households.

In India, only 29 per cent of women were reported as economically active in 1990. But when the data were re-analysed to follow the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of economically active, the figure fumed to over 80 per cent, nearly the same as men, because of women's unrecognized and unpaid economic contributions at home."² Women are discriminated by men in all walks of life. The question of why men should dominate and discriminate women has also raised a related one: How are women and men constituted as separate genders.

¹ Vickers, Jeanne, *Women and World Economic Crisis*, Zed Books Limited, London, p. 15.

² United Nations, "Focus on Women: Women and Economic Decision-making", Department of Public Information, New York, April 1995, p. 1.

Defining Women: The Social Definition of Women

Women are constantly defined in relations to men whether they are similar, different or complementary to men. Most obviously women are defined in familial terms as carers and nurturers. Their identity and status derive from their relations to the explicitly gendered categories of mothers, daughters and wives i.e. female category. Women are thus defined not only in relations to men, but as dependent on men and subordinate to them. Men, on the other hand, are not defined in relations to women, or in purely familial terms, but in relation to a larger 'public' world in which they operate as workers, colleagues or citizens.

In the opinion of Mary Wollstonecraft, "In tracing the causes that, in my opinion, have degraded woman, I have confined my observations to such as universally act upon the morals and manners of the whole sex, and to me it appears clear that they all spring from want of understanding, whether this arise from a physical or accidental weakness of faculties, time alone can determine; ...I only contend that the men who have been placed in similar situations, have acquired a similar character – I speak of bodies of men, and that men of genius and talents have started out of a class, in which women have never yet been placed."³

3.1.2 Women as 'the other'

Men's specific gender is thus ignored; they represent the universal and the human to which women are 'other'. Thus perception of women as 'the other' has been taken for granted in most social and political thought as well as in every day life. It was examined in detail by Simone de Beauvoir⁴ whose book became one of the founding texts for women's studies as a distinct area of study. "By viewing women as either other or victim, theorists were implicitly accepting the male

³ Marywollstonecraft: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (First published by Joseph Johnson in 1792, London), Penguin Book Ltd., London, 1992, p. 98.

⁴ Beauvoir, Simone de, (Translated and edited by H.M. Parshley), *The Second Sex*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1981 Reprint (1949).

Gender Justice

AT THE NORMATIVE HEART OF FEMINISM lies the belief that nobody should be disadvantaged because of their sex. Here I propose, and defend, a principle of gender justice meant to capture the nature of a very wide range of injustices based on gender.¹ In a nutshell, the principle says that, in a gender just world, a gender-neutral lifestyle would be the least costly option for both women and men. Gendered lifestyles need not be ruled out, but should not be achievable at lower costs than a gender-neutral lifestyle. This principle is grounded in the values at the core of liberal egalitarian justice: equality of access and the good of individual choice.

Because the principle is meant to explain the injustice of a very wide range of phenomena, the sense of “costs” is similarly wide. Such costs can be material – for example financial, time or effort – psychological – self-respect, a good relationship with one’s body and emotions – and social – such as reputation, social acceptance and valuable social relationships.²

I illustrate my proposal by discussing the injustice involved in the gendered division of labor, which is one of the most important, yet philosophically disputed, gender issues in the developed world. Some liberal egalitarians contest that a freely chosen gendered division of labor is unjust.³ Others believe that in order to know whether particular outcomes are gender just we need to pay attention to the context of people’s choices, to the processes of preference formation and to the cumulative effects of particular choices. Some of the latter even doubt that liberal egalitarianism has the theoretical resources to recognize the gendered nature of the gendered division of labor.⁴ I argue that it does.

The gendered division of labor is also at the core of a long-lasting debate about two different models of change, embodied by different strands of feminism. Here is a crude picture. The first model, centered on equality between women and men, consists in empowering women to enjoy all the “good things of life” that men have traditionally enjoyed. The second model, centered on “difference,” consists in discovering, explaining and enhancing

the value of what has long been deemed “women’s lifestyles.” Traditionally, women have been associated with the spheres of the family, close relationships, domestic work and with the individual virtues believed to make life in these spheres as good as it can get. Men have been associated with the complementary spheres of politics and commerce and their respective virtues.

Since “feminine” as well as “masculine” functional spheres are necessary for individual survival and social reproduction,⁶ both emancipatory models proposed by the two different strands of feminism have run into major difficulties. If women and men are to have an equal share of the good things in life by merely opening men’s lifestyles to women, the question is: Who will do what it takes to maintain the spheres of family, close relationships and domestic work? Feminists who advocate “masculine” lifestyles for women have been criticized as compromising the quest for equality by relegating “feminine” work to the often-exploited women whose poverty, race or immigrant status pushes them to the margins of society.⁷ The alternative possibility, that the *entire* “feminine domain” be outsourced, looks unappealing to most, and possibly not even coherent.⁸ The second solution to gender justice, that is, making women and men equally well off by giving more recognition and economic support to “feminine lifestyles,” was criticized for entrenching the gendered division of labor and therefore curtailing women’s access to “masculine” lifestyles.”

In India many women's movements were started for their upliftment and liberation. Particularly after Independence those liberation movements became so strong to achieve many things. Many young women who were active in the students' front of the left parties and also those who got radicalised during the general movements in Gujarat Bihar and West Bengal realised that all these movements against injustice, exploitation of have nots were neglecting 'women's causes'. They also felt discriminated against within these movements. Moreover when they felt that all these radical movements relegated women's issues to the background; they dissociated themselves, from those movements and articulated their thoughts on the 'women's question' independently.

After 1972 small women's groups adhering to the ideology of the women's liberation movement became more vocal on issues like sexism in media, beauty contest, dowry, rape, sexual harassment and torture of women undertrials and prisoners and rape by policemen and got very good response from the media and the masses. At this stage all important political parties also joined the bandwagon

On various issues, women of a party collaborate with autonomous women's groups, though they are quite hostile to new women's rights groups and allege them as being political and 'anti-men'. Other far-left groups, earlier quite hostile to women's movements now slowly and gradually are overcoming their former sectarian attitude. Now they no more feel that the women's movement is breaking the working class movement or that it is a non-class or CIA sponsored movement.

The emergence of reform movements or organisations in the nineteenth century marks the beginning of a new era in Indian society.

Western education and Industrial Revolution brought about a new awakening in the minds of the Indian intelligentsia. The enlightened and educated Indians developed consciousness about the pristine glory of Indian culture and realised that the existing social evils such as the sati system, untouchability, ban on widow remarriage, and host of other evil practices were leading to human degradation. To give a decent good-bye to those evils many reformists emerged in our Indian scene

Brahmo Samaj:

Raja Ram Mohan Rai (1772 - 1833), the Father of Indian Renaissance established the Brahmo Samaj on 20th August 1828 and through this Samaj he spread modern and progressive ideas. He stood for the principle of freedom of women and equality of sexes. So he campaigned for widow remarriage. He also advocated one Supreme Reality in the world.

Raja Ram Mohan Rai was deeply concerned with the eradication of social evils like sati, child marriage, polygamy etc., In 1811, his brother died, and his brother's widow Alokmanjari decided to commit sati though Ram Mohan Rai made an unsuccessful attempt to prevent her from doing so.

Her self - immolation gave a rude shock to the mind of Raja Ram Mohan Rai. He rightly believed that very few widows gave consent to commit sati. Mostly the bodies of widows were consigned to flames by overcoming their reluctance. This was a heinous crime perpetrated on the innocent women folk. So he wholeheartedly supported the Governor General Lord William Bentinck when the latter enacted legislations abolishing sati in 1829.

Raja Ram Mohan Rai attacked the polytheistic degeneration of ancient Hindu Monotheism. He also criticised the predominance of idol worship in Hindus and expounded the concept of "one

God of all religions and humanity". He asserted to adopt rational approach to religion. He called caste-system as undemocratic in human and anti - national.

After Ram Mohan Rai, Rabendranath Tagore (1817-1905) became the leader of Brahma Samaj, under his leadership instead of scriptures intuition was well advocated.

Keshab Chandrasen (1838-84) adopted the doctrine of Christianity.

Prarthana Samaj

Justice M.G. Ranade formed Prarthana Samaj in 1867. The programmes and actions of this samaj were passed on the programmes and policies of Brahma samaj. Notable contributions were made by the Samaj. He also organised the Indian Social Conference in 1888.

Arya Samaj

Arya Samaj was founded in 1875 in Bombay by Dayanand Saraswati. This organisation, though embodied the upsurge of Indian nationalism, yet it organised a peculiar type of movement. He declared the Vedas as fallible and inexhaustible source of all knowledge. He believed in Karma and also in the transmigration of soul.

The Samaj advocated

1. Fatherhood of good and brotherhood of man
2. Equality of sexes
3. Absolute justice and fairplay between man and man and nation and nations
4. Equal opportunity to all according to their nature, Karma and merit and
5. Love and charity to all.

Many orphanages had been established by the Samaj. During famines relief operations were undertaken. Educational institutions were set up. The foremost institution was Dayanand Anglo - Vedic College. It condemned the evils of child marriage and purdah system.

Swami Dayanand launched the cow protection movement. He raised funds for the purpose. He launched the Shuddhi Movement. It was designed to reconvert those Hindus who embraced

other religions to Hinduism. He made efforts to afford protection to the untouchables. He inspired the people to have faith in themselves. He was a staunch supporter of swadeshi and gave the slogan "India for Indians".

Theosophical Movement

Madame Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott introduced theosophy in 1879 in India. Mrs. Annie Besant was responsible for popularising this movement as religious reform movement in India.

Theosophy believed in the spiritual philosophy of ancient Hinduism and propagated the doctrine of transmigration of soul after the death of an individual. Mrs. Annie Besant started a Home Rule League and under its auspices established organisations throughout the country. Mrs. Besant worked for women's emancipation. She tried to improve the lot of the women, fought for their rights and tried to free them from their disabilities. She believed that female education would go a long way to emancipate the womenfolk.

The Ramakrishna Mission

Ramakrishna a great Hindu saint and philosopher inspired the movement named after him. The basic principle on which this movement stressed attention was 'Devotion or Bhakti'. "Its principal propagandist was Swami Vivekananda a disciple of Ramakrishna and an intellectual of a very high calibre who, after the death of the saint founded the Ramakrishna Mission (1897) to propagate his teaching".

The foremost aim of the mission was to protect India from the materialist influences of the west. Ramakrishna Mission a humanitarian as well as a religious organisation did a wonderful service to the downrodden. Under the auspices of Ramakrishnan Mission, various schools, dispensaries and hostels had been established in various parts of the country and about 100 Missions were operating in India doing useful humanitarian work for the benefit of the poor.

Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

Pandit Ishwar Chandra was a great educator, humanist and social reformer. He was born in 1820 in a village in Midnapur, Bengal. He rose to be the Head Pandit of the Bengali Department of Fort William College. He firmly believed that reform in Indian society could only come about through education. Vidyasagar founded many schools for girls. He helped J.D. Bethune to establish the Bethune School. He founded the Metropolitan Institution in Calcutta. He protested against child marriage and favoured widow



PANDIT VIDYASAGAR

He protested against child marriage and favoured widow

remarriage which was legalised by the Widow Remarriage Act (1856). It was due to his great support for the spread of education that he was given the title of Vidyasagar.

Jyotiba Phule

Jyotiba Phule belonged to a low caste family in Maharashtra. He waged a life-long struggle against upper caste domination and Brahmanical supremacy. In 1873 he founded the Satyashodak Samaj to fight against the caste system. He pioneered the widow remarriage movement in Maharashtra and worked for the education for women. Jyotiba Phule and his wife established the first girls' school at Poona in 1851.

Rao Bahadur Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu (16 April 1848 – 27 May 1919) was a social reformer and writer of Madras Presidency, British India. He is considered as the father of renaissance movement in Telugu. He was one of the early social reformers who encouraged women education, remarriage of widows which was not supported by the society during his time and fought against dowry system. He also started a school in Dowlaiswaram in 1874.^[2] He constructed a temple known as 'Brahmo Mandir' in 1887 and the 'Hithakarini School' in 1908 in Andhra Pradesh. His novel *Rajasekhara Charitramu* is considered to be the first novel in Telugu literature.^[3]

He is often considered as Raja Rammohan Roy of Andhra. He was also known by the title Gadya Tikkana, meaning 'Tikkana of Prose'.^[4]

Early life^[edit]

Veeresalingam was born in Rajahmundry, Madras Presidency, to Subbarayudu and Poornamma. When he was six months old, he suffered from smallpox, a dangerous disease during that time, and when aged four his father died. He was adopted by his paternal uncle, Venkataratnam. After studying in an Indian street school, he was later sent to English medium school where his talents were recognised. His good nature and studiousness earned him the best student award in his school. He completed his matriculation in 1869 and got his first job as a teacher in Korangi village.^[2]

Literature^[edit]

Veeresalingam was a scholar in Telugu, Sanskrit, and Hindi. Considering literature as an instrument to fight against social evils, his writings also reflected the same. He wrote plays such as *Prahlada* (1885), *Satya Harischandra* (1886).^[2] He published a novel *Rajasekhara Charita* in 1880, originally serialised in *Viveka Chandrika* from 1878. Generally recognised as the first Telugu novel, it is inspired by *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a novel by the Irish writer Oliver Goldsmith.^[2]

His works include:

- First novel in Telugu 'Rajasekhara Charitra'
- 'Viveka Vardhini' a journal for women education in 1887.
- 'Satihita bodhini' a monthly magazine for women.
- First drama in Telugu and first book in Telugu on sciences & history.

1. Prevention of Sati Act

Sati or the burning of the widow on the funeral pyre of the husband was the custom practised extensively in Rajasthan, among Rajput princes, and also among the Brahmins in Bengal, and to some extent in M.P. and other northern states.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy began the active campaign against sati. He studied **Dharma Sastra** and showed that they did not enjoin 'sati'. He pointed out that Manu never mentioned 'sati'. The reformers said that it was a barbarous custom. In 1829 Lord William Bentick, an enlightened Governor General, passed the Prevention of Sati Act, according to which any one abetting the commission of sati would be guilty of culpable homicide and any one taking part in compelling a widow to commit sati would be guilty of murder. There was no result but orthodox Hindu groups appealed to the Privy Council against the Act. The progressive group consisting of social reformers filed counter petition. The appeal was lost and sati was banned in British India and later on in the Indian states.

(ii) Widow Remarriage Act:

Yet another revolutionary social legislation of this period is the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. It legalised the marriages of widows. It also declared the issue of such marriages as legitimate. The first widow remarriage according to this Act was performed in Calcutta in the very same year 1856. Iswar Chandra Vidhya Sagar himself set an example by getting his son married

to a widow. As a result of this Act, the social reformers started widow's homes and widow remarriage associations in different parts of the country.

(iii) Female Infanticide Prevention Act

This Act was passed in the year 1870. Man Mohan Kaur has given details of this barbarous custom of killing the female infants as soon as they were born. Because of the difficulty in getting a bridegroom in the same sub - caste and because of the heavy dowry and marriage expenses the new born female children were put to death. So in 1870 legislation was passed prohibiting this custom and enforcing registration of births and deaths.

(iv) The Special Marriage Act of 1873

This Act provided for marriage irrespective of differences in religion. This Act did not provide for intercaste marriages. This Act was amended in 1923 in order to permit the intercaste marriages. Because of Kashab Chandra Sen polygamy was abolished.

(v) The Age of Consent Bill 1891

Another important social legislation in pre-independent India was against child marriage. Little children of 5 to 10 years were being married. The leaders of Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj protested against this custom. In 1860, at the instance of Iswar Chandra Vidhyasagar the Indian Penal Code prohibited the consummation when the girl was less than 10 years old. Keshab Chandra Sen carried on a vigorous propaganda against child marriage and the marriageable age was fixed at 14 for the girls and 18 for the boys according to the Brahmo Act of 1872. (In 1891, the Age of Consent Bill was passed by the government prohibiting cohabitation with a wife under the age of 12). With further agitation the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed in 1929 raising the marriageable age of girls to 14 and of boys to 18.

(vi) The Sharda Act, 1929

In 1891 the Age of Consent Bill was passed. In spite of this, the evil persisted in the society. In 1927 Harbilas Sharda introduced a bill before the legislature to regulate marriage among the