UNIT 9: SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss about the Brahmo Samaj,
- discuss about the Parthana Samaj,
- analyse about the Arya Samaj,
- discuss about the Ram Krishna Mission,
- discuss about the Theosophical Society,
- analyse about the Aligarh Movement.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth century witnessed a remarkable transformation of the social ideas in India. This was mainly because of the introduction of the English education and import of liberal ideas of West. The newly emerged English educated middle class, who were influenced by the scientific and rational outlook of the west, began to look for the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian society. The spirit of enquiry gave birth to irresistible forces of

socio-cultural reforms during the first half of the nineteenth century.

9.3 SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS UNDER COLONIAL RULE

9.3.1 Brahmo Samaj

The central figure of the socio-religious awakening of nineteenth century was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who is regarded as the 'Father of Modern India'. In 1828 Brahmo Samaj was founded by Ram Mohan Roy in Calcutta. The Brahmo Samaj played a notable role in the socio-religious awakening in India. The Samaj declared its opposition to idol worship, priesthood and sacrifices of any kind.

Figure - 9.1



Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Source : Google image

The Brahmo Samaj attacked the caste system prevalent in the Hindu society and protested against the practice of sati and child-marriage. It attacked many dogmas and superstitions prevalent in the Hindu society. It worked for the respectable status for the women in the society. Ram Mohan Roy also influenced Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of India, to declare *sati* illegal and a

punishable offence by a Regulation in 1829. He died at Bristol in England in 1833.

9.3.2 Prarthana Samaj

The Prarthana Samaj was founded in Bombay in 1867 by Atmarang Pandurang under the guidance of Keshab Chandra Sen. The chief architect of the Samaj was Mahadev Govinda Ranade. Prarthana Samaj preached the worship of one God and laid stress on social reform. The Samaj laid stress on abandonment of caste system, advocated widow remarriage, abolition of purdah and child marriage, etc.

9.3.3 Arya Samaj

The Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875. He drew his inspiration from ancient Indian religion and tradition. His motto was 'Go back to the Vedas'. He founded the Arya Samaj with a view to rescuing the Hindu society from the degeneration. One of the characteristic features of Arya Samaj was its *Suddhi* movement i.e., conversion of the non-Hindus to Hinduism. He also published the famous work Satyartha Prakash to preach his principles. To spread education and to revive Vedic ideas Dayanand Anglo Vedic institutions were established.

9.3.4 Ram Krishna Mission

Ram Krishna Mission was founded by Swami Vivekananda in 1897. He was a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Vivekananda realized that truth is in every religion and there are different paths to reach one goal. In 1893 Vivekananda, attended the Parliament of Religion at Chicago where he propounded the true meaning of Hinduism. He strongly opposed the social inequality which was prevalent in Indian society.

9.3.5 Theosophical Society

The Theosophical society was founded by Madam Blavatsky and Henry Olcott in 1875 in the United States of America. Annie Besant came to India in 1893 after the death of Madam Blavatsky. She became the president of the Theosophical Society of India, establishing it does headquarter at Adiyar, in Madras in 1907. Under her leadership the society engaged itself in socio-religious reformations throughout India. Besant laid the foundation of the Central Hindu College in Banaras in 1898 where both the Hindu and western scientific subjects were taught.

9.3.6 Aligarh Movement

Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan dedicated himself to the cause of upliftment of his community –the Muslims of India. The Aligarh movement was a socio-cultural reform movement with Aligarh at its centre. Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan founded the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1875. He was the first Muslim leader to realize the importance of modern scientific and western education for Muslims. In 1863 he founded Muhammedan Literary Society at Calcutta.

There were also some secular reformers like Jotibha Phule, Sir Narayan Chandravarkar, Harichand Thakur etc. All of them greatly contributed towards the upliftment of the depressed sections of the society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: By whom and when was the Brahmo Samaj founded?

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Q 2: In which year Widow Remarriage Act was passed?

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Q 3: In which year Swami Vivekananda attended the Parliament of

Religion at Chicago?

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Q 4: Who established the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College?

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Q 5: When the Ramakrishna Mission was established?

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Q 6: Where headquarter of the Theosophical Society in India was located?

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9.4 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt about

- the role of Brahmo samaj as a socio-religious movement.
- the role of Arya Samaj, Ramkrishna Mission, Parthana Samaj and Theosophical Movement in reforming the nineteenth century Indian society.
- the role of Aligarh Movement in the upliftment of the social condition of the Muslim Community of India under Colonial rule.



9.5 FURTHER READING

1) Bandyopadhyay, Sekhara. (2004). From *Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India.* New Delhi, India: Orient Longman.
2) Chandra, B., Mukherjee, A., Panikkar, K.N. & Mahajan, S. (Ed.). (1988). *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947.* Delhi, India: Penguin.
3) Majumdar, R.C., Raychaudhuri, H.C. & Datta, K. (1978). *An Advanced History of India* (4th Ed.). New Delhi, India: Macmillan India

9.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to the question No.1 : Raja Ram Mohan Roy

Answer to the question No.2: 1829

Answer to the question No.3 : 1893

Answer to the question No.4 : Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan

Answer to the question No.5 : 1897

Answer to the question No.6 : Adiyar, in Madras

9.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q.1: In which year Brahmo Samaj was established?

Q.2: When and who established the Arya Samaj?

Q.3: Who founded the Theosophical Society in India?

Q.4: Who was the chief architect of Parthana Samaj?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q.1: Write a short note on Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Q.2: Write a short note on the Aligarh Movement.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in between 300-500 words)

Q.1: Write an essay on socio-religious movements in India under the Colonial rule.

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