

Contribution of Social Reformers to Eradicate Social Evils

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ABSTRACT

It is stated that Indian civilization is five thousand years old and it has been very complex because people of different religions live in it. Moreover, the geographical locations of India vary from one place to another. India faced the attacks of many foreign invaders also. Those invaders brought their ethnic polymorphism, rituals and cultures. Due to different belief systems and ideologies, India has been a vibrant and sensitive country. This complexity of India has given birth to some social evils also. People from different religions live here and people of every religion face different types of problems according to their, religious practices, customs and rituals. A number of Social evils had crept into Indian Society. It is a great honor for India that great social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Swami Dayanand, Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindra Nath Tagore and many more social reformers brought revolutionary changes in the society through their reforms. The social reformers of India started the revolution of radical change in Indian society and they left no stone unturned to eradicate these evils. Some reformers decided to remove caste discrimination while others worked on the girl education, women empowerment, against child marriage, illiteracy etc. These great persons did incredible works for the good of the people, thereby creating a beautiful, peaceful, environment filled with humanity and happiness in the society. The social evils like polygamy, sati tradition, child marriage, casteism, dowry system, female infanticide, etc had made India crippled. The Social Reformers closely scrutinized the country's past and found that many beliefs and practices were no longer of any use and needed to be discarded; they also discovered that many aspects of India's cultural heritage were of intrinsic value to India's cultural awakening.

Keywords : Social reformers, Child Marriage, Sati Tradition, Caste Discrimination, Bounded Labour, Widow Remarriage, Ancient India, Modern Perspective.

I. INTRODUCTION

The dawn of nineteenth century witnessed the birth of a new vision- a modern vision among the enlightened sections of Indian society. This enlightened vision was to shape the course of events for decades to come and even beyond. It gave birth to the social- religious reform movements in the Indian subcontinents led by great reformers. They emphasized the human's intellect capacity to think and reason. By weeding out corrupt elements, religious beliefs and practices, the reformers enabled their followers to meet the official taunt that their

religions and society were decadent and inferior. A realization of the special needs of modern times , especially in terms of scientific knowledge , and thus promoting a modern ,this worldly, secular and rational outlook was a major contribution of Reformers.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

To begin with **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** (22 May 1772 - 26 September 1833) needs no introduction. He is known as the "father of Indian Renaissance". He was a great Indian social reformer. His contribution to

India is immense because without his reforms, the condition of India would not have become better.”. He initiated Brahmo Samaj Movement in 1828 and later he established the Brahmo Samaj. He is best known for his contribution in the abolition of “Sati”, change in the education system, politics, administration and religion.. He also made efforts for the spread of English education in India and strongly advocated teaching of Science to Indian Students.

He was against the child marriage and he had a very tender heart. He was always ready to help the poor people .He criticized the idol worship and told the people to follow the rules of our ancient Hindu scriptures.He is also credited with establishment of a first political organization of Indians. He published a book *The Precepts of Jesus: Guide to Peace and Happiness* in 1820 in which he told about the morality and simplicity of Lord Jesus. In the next year, he started two more magazines also *Pragya Chand* and *Samvad Kaumudi* and a Persian news magazine. Not only this, he established a Vedanta and Hindu College in Kolkata also. He also supported Widow Remarriage. India will be always indebted to such a great social reformer

Jyoti Rao Phule (11 April, 1827 - 28 November. 1890) was a dalit activist, social worker, thinker and a dalit writer from Maharashtra. He worked on the dalit and untouchable community of India. At that time, the position of dalits was very bad. They had no rights of education and jobs. He established the Satyashodhak Samaj with the help of his followers and tried his best to eliminate the untouchability and caste discrimination from Maharashtra.

His wife Savitribai Phule was also a dalit social reformer who worked for the women’s education. She was the first Indian dalit woman teacher. Her name is also taken with much respect among women of Maharashtra because she tried to change the fate of women by making them independent by giving

education and making them aware towards their rights.

Jyotirao Phule opened a school for girls and it was the first girls’ school in the country. Savtribai Phule was a teacher in this school. Jyotirao received many threats from the orthodox sections of society but he remained firm on his decision. In 1851, he started a big school there which became very famous. This school was open for all girls and there was no discrimination on the name of caste, creed, community or religion and anybody could get admission in it. He supported the widow remarriage and he was against the child remarriage because he thought that it impeded children’s development.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (26 September, 1820 - 29 July 1891) is also known from the name of Ishwar Chandra Bandopadhyay. He was an influential figure in the Bengal Renaissance. He was a Bengali polymath, teacher, philosopher, translator publisher, reformer and philanthropist. He worked on the education system of India. He simplified and modernized Bengali prose. He played an important role in pressurizing British Government to pass the Widow Remarriage Act. He worked for the upliftment of women because the condition of women was very bad at that time. He kept working for the welfare and honour of women throughout his life

Swami Vivekananda (12 January 1863 - 4 July 1902) needs no introduction. There will not be any young man of India who is not familiar with his name. His childhood name was Narendra Dutta and his guru’s name was Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Swami Vivekananda taught modern Vedanta and Raj Yoga to Indian people. He was much interested in the social service. He became a sanyasi and left his home and started working for the welfare of humanity. He founded the Ramakrishna Mission and Ramakrishna Math. He had a wonderful style of delivering speech. His speech on Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 America, Chicago, cannot be

forgotten and his words are learnt by all and sundry, "My brethren and sisters of America".

His main objective was to work on the young generation of India for their physical and mental development. He told that strength is life and weakness is death. He was against the blind-beliefs, orthodoxy, idol worship and superstition. In his screeches also, he emphasized to eradicate the social evils of the society. He laid emphasis that women can change the future of India. He claimed that if only fifty young men and women were ready to help him for the welfare of India, he could transform the whole country. He emphasized that the people should stick to the rules of Hinduism. He told that India has a great past and the people of India should respect its culture, heritage and philosophy. But at the same time he discarded all social evils that were prevalent in Hindu society and tried to establish Hinduism on the basis of rationality and reason.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (12 February, 1824 - 30 October, 1883) was another great social reformer in India and his ideology was similar to Swami Vivekananda's in some aspects. He was a religious social reformer who founded the Arya Samaj in Mumbai in 1875. At that time, the Hindu religion was gripped with so many religious problems. The priestly class looted the innocent people in the name of religion. He attacked the false rituals, traditions and hypocrisy prevalent in Indian society. He advocated people for the use of India made things and preached importance of simple living and high thinking. He focused on the Brahmcharya and told that India can become great only if young Indians follow the rules of celibacy. He started Gurukuls for this purpose and he used the term 'Swaraj' for the first time in 1876 which was promoted later by Lokmanya Tilak at the time of Indian Independence. He was a great scholar of Vedantic learning and had an excellent command on Sanskrit language. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the great philosopher, writer and the President of India called

him one of the "makers of modern India" along with Sri Aurobindo

Sree Narayan Guru (20 August 1856-20 September 1928) was another great social reformer who brought radical changes in the social religious sphere of Kerala. He started the "Sree Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana Movement" among the Ezhavas of Kerala, who were a backward caste of toddy – tappers and were considered to be untouchables, denied education and entry into temples. The Ezhavas were the single largest caste group in Kerala constituting 26 percent of the total population. Narayan Guru himself from Ezhavas caste, took a stone from the Neyyar river and installed it as a Sivalinga at Aruvippuram on Sivaratri in 1888. It was intended to show that consecration of an idol was not the monopoly of the higher castes. With this, he began a revolution that soon led to the removal of many discriminations in Kerala's society. In 1889, the "Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam" was formed which was decided to expand into a big organization to help the Ezhavas to progress materially as well as spiritually. Sree Narayan Guru held all religions to be the same and condemned animal sacrifice besides speaking against divisiveness on the basis of caste, race, creed. On the walls of Aruvippuram temple he got inscribed the words

"Devoid of dividing walls of caste or race, or hatred of rival faith, we all live here in brotherhood."

Sree Narayan Guru urged the Ezhavas to leave the toddy tapping profession and even to stop drinking liquor. The SNDP Yogam took up several issues for the Ezhavas such as – right of admission to public schools, recruitment to government services, access to roads and entry to temples, political representation.

Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (14 April, 1891 - 6 December, 1956) was a great luminary and a visionary leader, social reformer from Maharashtra. He got his education from many prestigious universities. He

received many degrees and diplomas. He was the maker of Indian constitution, a great economist, social reformer and a dalit activist. He encouraged dalit people to embrace Buddhism and raised his voice against the caste discrimination and untouchability against dalits.

Ambedkar fought for the upliftment of the lower caste poor people. He would consider untouchability a terrible social evil in India. He told the dalit people to get good education because he believed it was very difficult to claims and fight for your rights until and unless you are aware of your rights. He fought for separate electorate for Dalits during British Rule but later agreed for reservation to them under Poona pact in 1932.. He wanted to spread awareness among the dalits through a platform and for that purpose he established Bahishkrit Hikkarni Sabha in Mumbai on 20 July 1924. He burnt Manusmriti which, he claimed promoted and perpetrated the caste system in a way that no other scripture did. He also worked for the dalit women and he convinced them that only education can bring change in their social and economical condition. One of the major contribution of Dr Ambedkar in fighting justice for Dalits was his advocacy of political rights for Dalits. He strongly fought for political empowerment of Dalits. He believed that without political powers no real progress could be made for the emancipation of untouchables. It was his efforts that British Government and later Constitution of Free India gave reservation to Dalits in the field of Political office, Public employment, Education classifying them as "Scheduled Castes".

Vinoba Bhave (11 September, 1895 - 15 November, 1982) was another great social reformer. He was a lawyer. He fought for the human rights and the and believed in the ideology of non violence. He is also known for the Bhoodan Movement. He can be called the spiritual successor of Mahatma Gandhi and the 'National Teacher of India'. He also participated in the nationalist struggle for freedom by making active

contribution in the Satyagraha movement. However, he is best known for the Bhoodan Movement of Telangana in 1951. This movement forced the landlords to give land to the poor farmers. This movement was a good move towards social justice. It also countered the Communist propaganda of inflicting violence in the name of taking lands from rich landlords and giving it to poor farmers and landless labourers . Vinoba established an ashram for the women named "Brahma Vidya Mandir" so that women could start doing some work to become independent and produce food for others. He believed in the religious generosity and tried to convince people with his thoughts, writings and teachings. He was highly impressed by religious scriptures such as the Gita, Quran and Bible etc

Another great social reformer was **Mother Teresa** who was born on 26 August 1910 in Skopje. It is the capital of Macedonia. She was raised in an Albanian family called Agnes Gonzha Boyajiju. His father's name was Nikola Boyaju and her mother's name was Drana Boyaju. Teresa's real name was 'Agnes Gonzha Boyajiju'. In the Albanian language, 'Gonzha' is called 'a flower bud' in Albanian language.

She was a beautiful, laborious, kind and studious girl. She would love reading books and singing songs. She had made up her mind that she will devote her life in the service of humanity. She did not like the traditional garments and started wearing only blue-bordered saree and started working to serve the people in great need.

Mother Teresa arrived at the 'Loreto Convent' from Ireland on 6 January 1929 in Kolkata. After this Mother Teresa completed essential nursing training from Holy Family Hospital in Patna and returned to Kolkata in 1948. In 1948 he opened a school to teach the children there and later founded the 'Missionaries of Charity' which was recognized by the Roman Catholic Church on 7 October 1950. Mother Teresa's

Missionaries Association opened 755 destitute homes in about 125 countries by 1996, which feed about 5 lakh hungry people. Mother Teresa established two ashrams 'Nirmal Hriday' and 'Nirmala Shishu Bhavan'. The 'Nirmal Hriday' ashram was meant to serve the patients suffering from the disease, while the 'Nirmala Shishu Bhavan' ashram was established to help orphan and homeless children, where they self-serve the afflicted patients and the poor.

Mother Teresa received many international accolades and awards for her service to humanity. In 1962, the Government of India appreciated him for his social service and public welfare, and honored him with the Padma Shri. In 1980, she was given the country's highest civilian honor 'Bharat Ratna'. The Mother Nobel Peace Prize was also awarded to her because of her missionary work spread around the world and to help the poor and helpless.

She had heart stroke in 1983 and at that time her age was 73. She went to Rome so that she may meet Pope John Paul II. In 1989 she got another heart attack. With the increasing age, her health also deteriorated. On 13 March 1997, she stepped down as the head of the Missionaries of Charity and died on 5 September 1997. By the time of his death, the Missionaries of Charity had 4,000 sisters and 300 other affiliates, who were involved in social services in 123 countries of the world. Pope John Pal II declared Mother Teresa 'blessed' in Rome on 19 October 2003, in view of the intimacy with which she served the afflicted. Mother Teresa is no longer with us, but her mission is still engaged in social service.

Baba Amte (26 December, 1914 - 9 February, 2008) is also known by the name of Muralidhar Devidas Amte whose main contribution was working for the poor, sick people of India. He is well-known for his work the upliftment, treatment and rehabilitation of those poor people who were suffering from leprosy. His wife Sadhana Amte started Anandvan. This

organization was started by them for the leprosy patients in 1950. Amte was given many awards and honours such as Gandhi Shanti Award, Padma Vibhushan, Ramon Magsaysay Award, Jamnalal Bajaj Award and Templeton Award for his exemplary work. He spread awareness among people that leprosy is not an infectious disease and people should not remain away from such patients. He proved it by getting leprosy virus injected into his body. He established three ashrams in Maharashtra and also built a hospital on August 5, 1949. He also created awareness among people to be aware about forest, wildlife conservation and ecological balance. He participated in the Narmada Bachao Andolan and struggles for the displaced people due to Sardar Sarovar Dam.

III. CONCLUSION

Though there are some social evils whose solution still awaits deliverance. Some of them include- crime, corruption, beggary, sexual violence against women, juvenile crime, child sexual abuse, religious violence, atrocities against SC / ST community, dowry, female foeticide etc. Although the reform movements generated great awareness in our society and successive Governments have made strict laws to eradicate these evils there are yet some social evils which still need to be eradicated. But we are highly indebted to our social reformers who took all pains to eradicate a number of social evils prevalent in India in their time and now it must be our responsibility to mitigate the social evils which are prevalent in India today.

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