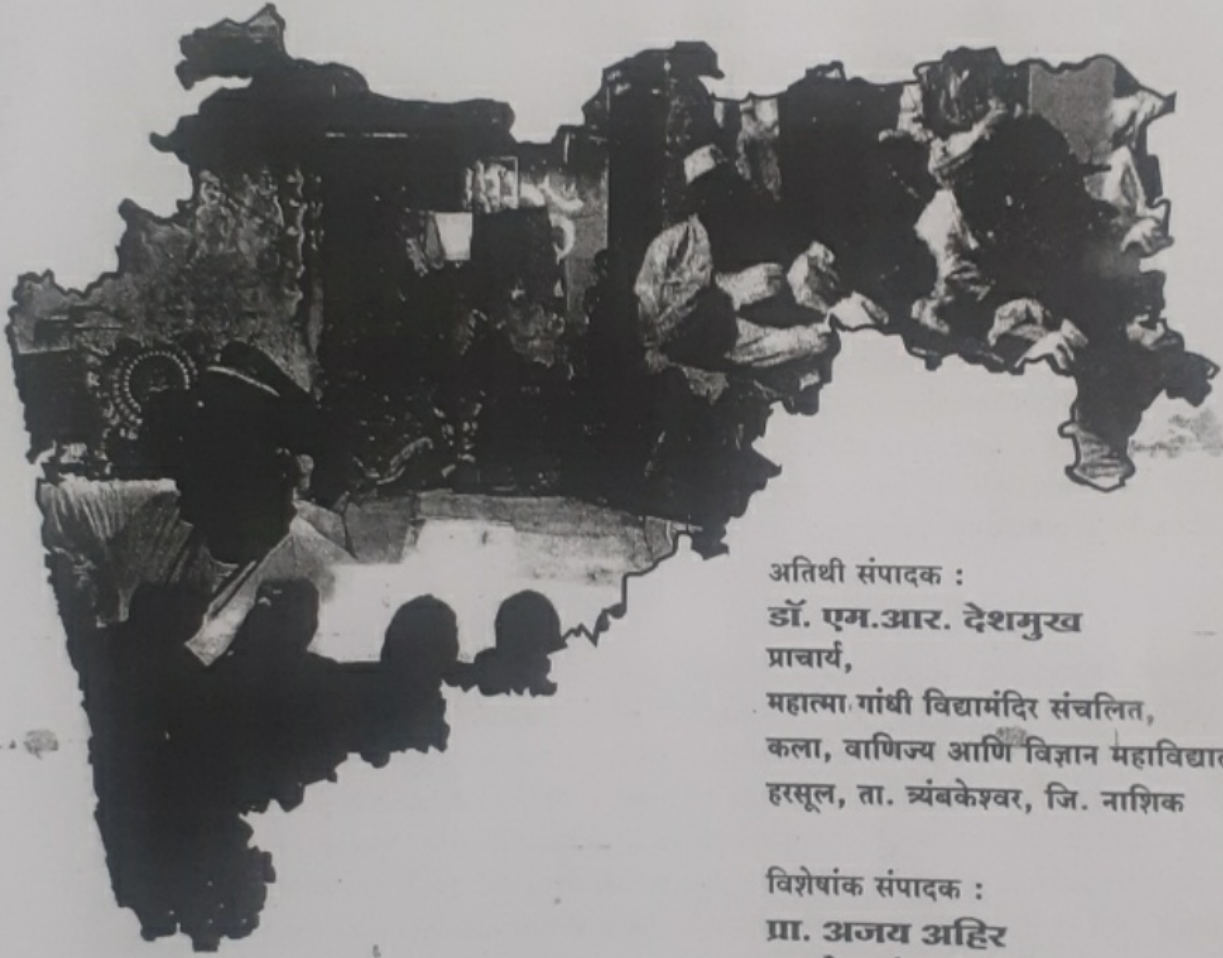


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SWATIDHAN PUBLICATIONS

The Social Reform Movement In Maharashtra

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Introduction –

One of the salient effects of British rule in India was the starting of social and religious reform movement after the British had achieved stability it turned its attention to strengthening its bonds with Indian society. There was gradual growing influence of western thought lifestyle and religious ideas on the Indian mind. Up to the 19th century Indian society was securely bound in traditional Social and religious belief and practices. It had become passing and lost the ability and will to change. As a result a number of tradition customs practices and rites had acquired unnecessary importance. The majority of the people were ignorant superstitious and accepted all religious traditions without question. This led to a decline in Social thinking

Need for the Movement of Social Religious Reforms -

The movement of social and religious reforms started from the beginning of the 19th century. This is regarded as the period of Indian Renaissance and awakening by some historians. The main cause for this Indian Renaissance and awakening was English Education. The British introduced English Education in India and this opened the gates for the study of physical sciences, modern thoughts, Renaissance, Democracy and administration. Indians who received this type of education became acutely aware of the backwardness in Indian society. They were convinced that if Indians had to progress they should give up undesirable practices, traditions, rituals and beliefs. They had undertaken the work of laying the foundations of social and religious reforms

Prarthana Samaj –

Taking inspiration from the activities Brahma Samaj social reforms of Maharashtra started the Prarthana Samaj in Mumbai on 31st March 1867. earlier it was known as “Ekeshwar Upasak Mandali” (worshippers of monism) Dr. Atmaram Pandurang, Dr. Bhandarkar, Justice Ranade, Waman Abaji Modak and others were the leaders. Prarthana Samaj supported the social reforms in Hindu society. They did not approve the undesirable practices, customs etc. Prevalent in Hinduism. However, They believed that it was possible to remain in Hinduism and bring about reformations in social and religious and with the some objectives, they have established the Prarthana Samaj

Principles of Prarthana Samaj -

- 1) God is one and all human beings are the children of God.
- 2) The praise and worship of God and doing only that is pleasing to God is true worship
- 3) God does not take incarnations (avatar) neither has he created any religions scripture.
- 4) Idol worship is not a worship or the devotion of God.
- 5) All human beings are the children of one supreme God alone hence all are equal and discrimination of the basis of caste must be given up.



Social Contribution-

Prathana Samaj did many Socially relevant activities. One of its members, Mahrshi V.R. Shinde started the "Depressed classes Mission society of India" on 18th oct 1906 for the betterment of untouchable sections of Hindu Society. N.M. Joshi started "Social servicer league" to improve the lot of the labour class. Justice Ranade Dr. Bhandarkar did yeoman services in the field of social work. They resolutely opposed child marriage and caste discrimination and untouchability. They supported marriage of widows. They aimed to arouse social awareness to these practices. In this way worked extensively throughout Maharashtra and their work was indeed praiseworthy.

Arya Samaj -

Swami Dayanand Saraswati got Inspiration for religious reforms form the Brahmo Samaj. But he Decided to have a separate organization and on the 7th April 1875 established the Arya Samaj in Bombay at kakadwadi. On 14th July 1877 at the opening of the branch at Lahore he finalised the constitution of the Arya Samaj

Activities of Arya Samaj -

- 1) Re- conversion to Hinduism - Arya Samaj was very active in north India Lala Hansraj; Swami Shradhanand; Lala Lajpatrai were the followers. Arya Samaj used to re-conversion who had joined another religious.
- 2) Starting Of School And Colleges- Arya samaj laid stress on education and started Gurukul institutions and Dayananda Vedic Colleges in Various cities of India.
- 3) Arousing Awareness for Social Reforms- Arya Samaj Aroused rethinking in society. It exhorted its followers to stop idol Worship, Child Marriages, discrimination Other Basis Of Cast. They Also Encouraged intercast marriages. They also encouraged marriages of widows.
- 4) Superiority of Indian culture- The unique nature of Arya samaj Was that it held that Indian Culture and the four- Fold Cast System was superior And aimed to popularise them. With this, they effected the revival of Hindu Religion. It also said that the evil practices and faults in Hinduism should be removed.

Satyashodhak samaj- It is a social reform society founded by Mahatma jotiba phule in pune, India, on 24 September 1873. Its purpose was to liberate the less privileged in the then prevailing society such as women, sudra and dalit from exploitation and oppression. Jotibhas

Wife Savitribai was the head of women's section of the society .

Activities of Satyashodhak Samaj -

In the year 1848 he started the first school in Maharashtra at Bhide wada, Budhwar peth, Pune. This was for teaching of girls. in the beginning there was stiff opposition from society but jotiba phule continued his work. savitribai also taught in the school. there was opposition from his father, and he had to leave fathers house. within four years three more schools were started and many girls got opportunity to learn.

While this work was going on jotiba phule started efforts for uplift of women and also of low caste people. he opened his own house to allow them to take drinking water. Widow marriage was encouraged and many such marriages were performed. He provided shelter to widows.

When Hunter Commission visited pune in 1882 he approached them and explained the need to spend more money on primary education and also to provide equal opportunity for learning to all students .

Objectives -

- 1) To set free the shudras from the exploiting policies of brahmins .
- 2) Convincing and persuading every individual that he/she is a child of one God and thus on God is their father .
- 3) The necessity of education in the people of lower class .
- 4) Eradicating the status which is given to Brahmins .
- 5) Making such changes which allow men and women to marriage at affordable cost
- 6) To set free men from the handcuffs of the beliefs of ghosts , astronomy ,study of stars, predication etc.
- 7) The society called God as their father and thus asked an individual to live with fraternity and brotherhood between them.

Conclusion -

English education was effective enough to give a modern outlook to the educated class to desire a change in proper perspective and rid society of its various ills .there efforts resulted in a number of reform movement .

The effects of reform movements was to create a formidable public opinion against superstitions and unhealthy practices like sati, child marriages, female infanticide etc. and to support the government to pass suitable legislation barring these practices .Low permitting marriages of widows was passed . voices were raised against untouchability and caste discriminations, superstition, blind beliefs and ignorant practices witchcraft etc were examined critically by scientific methods of inquiry by educated Indians .for the first time , society realised that women, lower caste people and the deprived sections of society also needed to be treated justly and humanely .this was the most favourable atmosphere and Indian society did advance in the direction of modernity.

In this way there were number of reforms introduced in all social and religious areas by the social reformers in India during this period. Hence the credit of social and religious awakening is given to the reformers .

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