

10th Social Science Lesson 1 Notes in English

1. Social and Religious Reform Movements in the 19th Century

Introduction

- English education, introduced with the object of producing clerks, also produced a new English-educated middle class.
- This class came under the influence of western ideas and thoughts. Christianity also had its effect on the newly emerging middle class.
- Though small in number, the educated middle class began to take a lead in political as well as in reform movements. The Indian reformers were, however, quite hesitant to subject their old notions and habits to critical scrutiny. Instead they attempted to harmonize both Indian and Western cultures.
- Their ideas and their actions helped to mitigate social evils such as sati, female infanticide, and child marriage and various superstitious beliefs.
- The reform movements of nineteenth century in the realm of religion fall under **two broad categories: reformist movements like the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj and the Aligarh Movement; and the revivalist movements such as the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Deoband Movement.**
- There were also attempts to challenge the oppressive social structure by **Jyotiba Phule in Pune, Narayana Guru and Ayyankali in Kerala and Ramalinga Adigal, Vaikunda Swamikal and Iyothee Thassar of Tamil Nadu.**

Early Reform Movements in Bengal

Raja Rammohan Roy and Brahmo Samaj

- **Rammohan Roy (1772–1833)** was one of the earlier reformers influenced by the Western ideas to initiate reforms.
- He was a great scholar, well-versed in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and English apart from his knowledge in his **mother tongue, Bengali.**
- Rammohan Roy was opposed to meaningless religious ceremonies and all forms of pernicious social customs.
- Yet he wanted to preserve continuity with the past. In his **religio–philosophical social outlook**, he was deeply influenced by monotheism and anti-idolatry.
- Based on his interpretation of the Upanishads, he argued that all the ancient texts of the Hindus preached monotheism or worship of one God.
- Deeply concerned with the prevailing customs of sati, child marriage, and polygamy he published tracts against them and petitioned the government to legislate against them. He advocated the rights of widows to remarry.

- **He wanted polygamy to end.** His opinions were resisted fiercely by orthodox Hindus. He appealed to reason and humanity and compassion of the people.
- He visited the crematorium of Calcutta to try and persuade the relatives of widows to give up their plan of self-immolation.
- His campaign played a key role in forcing the Governor-General **William Bentinck's legislation abolishing sati in 1829.**
- Rammohan Roy condemned the subjugation of women and opposed the prevailing ideas that women were inferior to men.
- He strongly advocated education for women. He gave his full support for the introduction of English language and western sciences in schools and colleges. Rammohan found in the Upanishads a new revelation of one infinite, divine Being, the eternal Brahman, while Hinduism as he saw in the daily life around him was a perversion of their teaching.
- **Rammohan Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1828.** On 20 August 1828 he opened a temple in Calcutta, where there was no image.
- There he laid down that **'no religion should be reviled or slightly or contemptuously spoken off or alluded to.'**
- The Samaj forbade idol-worship and condemned meaningless religious rites and ceremonies. However, from the beginning, the appeal of the Brahmo Samaj remained limited to the intellectuals and enlightened Bengalis.
- Though the Samaj failed to attract the people from the lower sections of society, its impact on the culture of modern Bengal and its middle class was quite significant.

Maharishi Debendranath Tagore

After the death of Rammohan Roy (1833), **Maharishi Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905), the poet Rabindranath Tagore's father,** carried on the work. He laid down four articles of faith:

1. In the beginning there was nothing. The one Supreme Being alone existed who created the Universe.
2. He alone is the God of Truth, Infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, eternal, omnipresent, the One without second.
3. Our salvation depends on belief in Him and in His worship in this world and the next.
4. Belief consists in loving Him and doing His will.

Keshab Chandra Sen & Brahmo Samaj of India

- Debendranath was a moderate reformer. But his younger colleagues in the Sabha were for rapid changes.
- The greatest of these, **Keshab Chandra Sen, (1838–84)** joined the movement in 1857.

- He was greatly influenced by Christianity, believing in its spirit but not in the person of its founder.
- But in 1866 a split occurred in the ranks of Brahmo Samaj. Keshab left the Samaj and founded a new organization.
- Debendranath's organization, thereafter, came to be known as **Adi Brahmo Samaj**.
- After Keshab had his fourteen-year-old daughter married to an Indian prince, in contravention of the Samaj's condemnation of child marriages, the opponents of child marriage left the Brahmo Samaj of India and started **the Sadharan Samaj**, which developed anti-Christian tendencies.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

- Another outstanding reformer in Bengal was **Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820–1891)**. While Ram Mohan Roy and others looked to western rationalist ideas to reform society, Vidyasagar argued that the Hindu scriptures were progressive.
- He provided evidence from scriptures that there was no sanction for burning of widows or for the prohibition on the remarriage of widows.
- He wrote a number of polemical tracts, and was the pioneer of modern Bengali prose. He played a leading role in promoting education of girls and helped them in setting up a number of schools.
- He dedicated his whole life for the betterment of the child widows of the Hindu society.
- The movement led by Vidyasagar, resulted in the **Widows' Remarriage Reform Act of 1856**.
- This Act was intended to improve the lot of child widows and save them from perpetual widowhood.

Prarthana Samaj

- The Maharashtra region was another region where reform activities gained steam. A movement similar to the Brahmo Samaj, but founded in **Bombay in 1867, was Prarthana Samaj**.
- Its founder was **Dr. Atma Ram Pandurang (1825–1898)**. The two distinguished members of this Samaj were **R.C. Bhandarkar and Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade**.
- They devoted themselves to activities such as intercaste dining, inter-caste marriage, widow remarriage and improvement of women and depressed classes.
- **Ranade (1842–1901)** was the founder of the **Widow Marriage Association (1861)**, the **Poona Sarvajanic Sabha (1870)** and the **Deccan Education Society (1884)**.
- While the above reformers worked among the upper castes, during the same time **Jyotiba Phule** worked for the uplift of depressed castes and the cause of women.
- His book **Gulamgiri ('Slavery')** is an important work that condemned the inequities of caste.

Hindu Revivalism

Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Arya Samaj, 1875

- In the Punjab, the reform movement was spearheaded by the Arya Samaj. It was founded (1875) by a wandering ascetic in the western Gangetic plain, **Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–83)**.
- Swami Dayanand later settled in the Punjab to preach his ideas. **His book, Satyarthaprakash**, enjoyed wide circulation.
- He declared the practices such as child marriage, the prohibition of widow remarriage, and the alleged polluting effects of foreign travel had no scriptural sanction.
- The positive principles enunciated by Dayanand were: strict monotheism, condemnation of idolatry, and rejection of Brahman domination of ritual and social practices.
- He also rejected superstitious beliefs in Hinduism, especially Puranic literature and his cry was **"go back to Vedas."**
- Arya Samaj attempted to check the incidence of religious conversion in British India.
- One of its main objectives was counter-conversion, prescribing a purificatory ceremony called suddhi, directed at Hindus who had converted to Islam and Christianity.
- The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period of great turmoil in undivided Punjab with intense debates between Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.
- The primary achievements of the Arya Samaj were in the field of social reform and spread of education.
- The Samaj started a number of **Dayananda Anglo–Vedic schools and colleges**.

Ramakrishna

- As we saw earlier, the Brahmo Samaj, as a response to Christian and rationalist criticism had criticised idolatry and other orthodox Hindu practices.
- The popularity that **Ramakrishna (1836–86)**, a **simple priest of Dakshineswar near Kolkata**, gained in the latter half of the nineteenth century was a response to this.
- He emphasised the spiritual union with god through ecstatic practices such as singing bhajans.
- An ardent worshipper of goddess Kali, the sacred mother, he declared that the manifestations of the divine mother were infinite.
- In his view, all religions contain the universal elements which, if practised, would lead to salvation. He said, **"Jiva is Siva" (all living beings are God)**.
- **Why then talk of showing mercy to them? Not mercy, but service, service for man, must be regarded as God.'**

Ramakrishna Mission

- Ramakrishna's primary achievement was his ability to attract educated youth who were dissatisfied with the rational orientation of religious reform organizations such as the Brahmo Samaj.
- After his death in **1886**, his disciples organised themselves as a religious community and undertook the task of making his life and teaching known in India and abroad.

- The chief spirit behind this task was Vivekananda. Following the **organizational structure of Christian missionaries, Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission** which did not restrict itself to religious activities but was actively involved in social causes such as education, health care and relief in times of calamities.

Swami Vivekananda

- **Narendra Nath Datta (1863–1902)**, later known as Swami Vivekananda, was the prime follower of **Ramakrishna Paramahansa**.
- An educated youth, he was drawn to Ramakrishna's message. Dissatisfied with conventional philosophical positions and practices, he advocated the practical Vedanta of service to humanity and attacked the tendency to defend every institution simply because it was connected with religion.
- He emphasized a cultural nationalism and made a call to Indian youth to regenerate Hindu society.
- His ideas bred a sense of self confidence among Indians who felt inferior in relation to the materialist achievements of the West.
- He became famous for his addresses on Hinduism at the **1893 World Congress of Religions in Chicago**.
- Despite his fame, he was condemned by orthodox Hindus for suggesting that the lower castes should be allowed to engage in the Hindu rituals from which they were traditionally excluded.
- Vivekananda's activist ideology rekindled the desire for political change among many western-education young Bengalis.
- Many of the youths who were involved in the militant nationalist struggle during the Swadeshi movement following the Partition of Bengal were inspired by Vivekananda.

Theosophical Movement

- During the nineteenth century, Hindu religion and culture were being discredited in the West, especially due to missionary propaganda.
- However, some Western intellectuals looked to the East for spiritual salvation as a remedy to the materialistic orientation of the West.
- The Theosophical Society, founded by **Madame H.P. Blavatsky (1831–1891)** and **Colonel H.S. Olcott (1832– 1907)** played a key role in this. Founded in the **USA in 1875**, it later shifted to India at **Adyar, Chennai in 1886**.
- Theosophical Society stimulated a study of the Hindu classics, especially **the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita**.
- The Theosophical Society also played an important role in the revival of Buddhism in India.
- Western interest in Hindu scriptures gave educated Hindus great pride in their tradition and culture.

Contribution of Annie Besant

- In India the movement became further popular with the election of **Annie Besant (1847–1933)** as its president after the death of **Olcott**.
- She played a role in Indian nationalist politics, and formed the Home Rule League demanding home rule to India on the lines of Ireland.
- Annie Besant spread Theosophical ideas through her newspapers called New India and Commonweal.

Anti-Caste Movements

Jyotiba Phule

- Jyotiba Govindrao Phule was born in **1827 in Maharashtra**. Phule is chiefly known as the earliest leader of the non-Brahman movement.
- He opened the first school for “**untouchables**” in **1852 in Poona**.
- He launched the **Satyashodak Samaj (Truth-Seekers Society)** in **1870** to stir the non-Brahman masses to self-respect and ambition.
- Phule opposed child marriage and supported widow remarriage, which was prohibited particularly among high-caste Hindus.
- Jyotiba and his wife Savitribai Phule devoted their lives for the uplift of the depressed classes and women.
- Jotiba opened orphanages and homes for widows. Unlike many contemporary nationalists he welcomed British rule and missionary activities on the ground that British rule enabled lower castes to challenge the supremacy of Brahmins.
- His work, **Gulamgiri (Slavery)** is an important text that summarized many of his radical ideas.

Narayana Guru

- Born to poor parents in Kerala, **Narayana Guru (1854– 1928)** evolved into a poet and scholar in Malayalam, Tamil and Sanskrit.
- In his days the people of depressed classes had no access to temples, streets, public tanks and wells and educational institutions.
- Men and women belonging to lower castes were not allowed to wear the upper garments.
- Disturbed by the terrible caste tyranny, that the lower caste people suffered, he dedicated his whole life for the betterment of the oppressed.
- He set up the **Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam**, an organization to work for the uplift of the “**depressed classes**”.
- He established a grand temple at Aruvipuram and dedicated it to all. His movement inspired a radical transformation of Kerala society, especially among the Ezhavas.
- Thinkers and writers such as **Kumaran Asan and Dr Palpu** were influenced by his ideas and carried forward the movement.

Ayyankali

- Nineteenth century Kerala region was plagued by caste discriminations of worst kind. Certain social groups were not only considered untouchable but also un-seeable.
- However, the strident campaigns by thinkers such as **Narayana Guru and Ayyankali (1863–1941)** in the context of larger political and economic changes ushered in tremendous social changes, especially in the caste structure.
- **Ayyankali was born in 1863 at Venganoor in Thiruvananthapuram** then in the princely state of Travancore.
- The discrimination he faced as a child turned him into a leader of an anti-caste movement and who later fought for basic rights including access to public spaces and entry to schools.
- Ayyankali challenged many caste conventions such as clothing style; he wore clothes associated with upper castes that were prohibited for lower castes.
- He rode on an ox-cart challenging the 'ban' on untouchables from accessing public roads used by caste Hindus.
- Inspired by Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali founded the **Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam (Association for the Protection of the Poor)** in 1907 which campaigned and raised funds to educate the lower caste Pulaya people.

Islamic Reforms

- After the suppression of great revolt of **1857** Indian Muslims looked to Western culture with suspicion.
- The community feared that Western education, Western culture and Western ideas would endanger their religion.
- Therefore only a small section of Muslims accepted the new avenues for modern education.
- Consequently, Indian Muslims as a community lagged behind in comparison to the Hindu elite of various parts of India.

Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan

- As Indian Muslims steadily lost ground in education, in the public services and in general leadership in India, there was a realization that there was no alternative but to accept modern education if the community was to go on the path of progress.
- The man who gave life and soul to it was **Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817–1898)**. Born in Delhi into a noble Muslim family, Sayyid Ahmed Khan thought that lack of education, especially modern education, had harmed the Muslims greatly and kept them backward.
- He exhorted the Muslims to accept Western science and take up government services. He founded a scientific society and translated many English books, especially **science books into Urdu**.
- He believed that the interest of the Muslims would be best served if they bonded with the British Government rather than pitch in with the rising nationalist movement.
- So he advised the Muslims to take to English education and to concentrate on it.

Aligarh Movement

- Sayyid Ahmed Khan's movement, the "**Aligarh movement**," is so called because it was centred around the **Aligarh Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental college founded by him in 1875**, which is a landmark in the history of Indian Muslim education.
- The college was raised to the status of a university in **1920**. Aligarh produced a huge body of intelligentsia over successive generations who played a key role in public life.

Deoband Movement

- Deoband was a revivalist movement organized by the orthodox Muslim Ulema with the twin objectives of propagating the pure teachings of the Quran and the Hadith as well as encouraging the spirit of Jihad against the foreign and un-Islamic elements.
- The Ulema under the leadership of **Muhammad Qasim Watanotavi (1832-80)** and **Rashid Ahmad Gangotri (1828-1905)** founded the school at Deoband in the Saharanpur district of the U.P in 1866.
- The school curricula shut out English education and western culture. The instruction imparted was in original Islamic religion and the aim was moral and religious regeneration of the Muslim community.
- The Deoband School did not prepare its students for government jobs but for the preaching of Islamic faith. In politics, the Deoband School welcomed the formation of the **Indian National Congress in 1885**.
- In **1888** the **Deoband Ulema** issued a religious decree (fatwa) against Syed Ahmed Khan's Organisation called "**The United Patriotic Association**" and "**The Muhammeden Anglo – Oriental Association.**"
- It is said the Deoband Ulema were mainly influenced by their determination to oppose Sir Syed Ahmed's activities.
- **Maulana Mahmud-ul-Hassan became the new Deoband leader**. The **Jamait-Ul-Ulema (council of theologians)** led by him gave a concrete shape to Hassan's ideas of protection of the religious and political rights of the Muslims in the overall context of Indian unity.

Parsi Reform Movement

- In the middle of the nineteenth century the reform activities of the educated Parsis (the Zoroastrians who had fled from Iran in the tenth century in the face of religious persecution) began in Mumbai.
- **Furdunji Naoroji founded the Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Sabha (Parsis' Reform Society) in 1851**.
- **Rast Goftar (The Truth Teller)** was the main voice of the movement. The leaders of the Sabha criticized elaborate ceremonies at betrothals, marriages and funerals. They opposed both infant marriage and the use of astrology.
- **Behrramji Malabari** organized a campaign for legislation against the practice of child marriage.
- The community produced many leaders such as **Pherozeshah Mehta and Dinshaw Wacha** who played a big role in the early Congress.

Sikh Reform Movement (Nirankaris and Namdharis)

- The wave of reform movements did not leave any community untouched. Among the Sikhs of Punjab too there were attempts to reform. **Baba Dayal Das, founder of the Nirankari Movement**, stressed the worship of god as **Nirankar (formless)**.
- **Rejection** of idols, rejection of rituals associated with idolatry, reverence for the authority of Guru Nanak and of the Adi Granth formed the essence of his teachings.
- He reiterated the prohibition on meat-eating, and liquor consumption. The Namdhari Movement, founded by Baba Ram Singh, was another socio-religious movement among the Sikhs.
- The Namdharis insisted on wearing the symbols of Sikhism except the **kirpan (sword)**. Instead Baba Ram Singh wanted his followers to carry a lathi.
- It considered both men and women equal and accepted widow remarriage. It prohibited the dowry system and child marriage.
- In the wake of the gathering influence of Arya Samaj and the Christian missionaries, the Singh Sabha of Amritsar was established.
- Its main objective was to restore the purity of Sikhism. With the support of British, it established **Khalsa College for the Sikhs in Amritsar**.
- **Singh Sabha was a forerunner of Akali Movement.**

Social Reformers of Tamilnadu

Ramalinga Swamigal

- Popularly known as **Vallalar, Ramalinga Swamigal or Ramalinga Adigal (1823–1874)**, was born in **Marudhur**, a village near Chidambaram.
- After his father's death, his family moved to his brother's house at Chennai. Despite having no formal education he gained immense scholarship.
- Ramalinga emphasised the bonds of responsibility and compassion between living beings. He expressed the view that **'those who lack compassion for suffering beings are hardhearted, their wisdom clouded'**.
- He showed his compassion and mercy on all living beings including plants. This he called **jeevakarunya**.
- He established the **Samarasa Vedha Sanmarga Sangam in 1865** and it was renamed "**Samarasa Suddha Sanmarga Satya Sanga**" which means "**Society for Pure Truth in Universal self-hood**".
- Ramalinga also established a free feeding house for everyone irrespective of caste at Vadalur (1867), in the wake of a terrible famine in south India in 1866.
- His voluminous songs were compiled and published under the title **Thiruvartuppa (Songs of Grace)**.
- His radical views deeply disturbed Saiva orthodoxy, who condemned his writings as **Marutpa (songs of ignorance)**.

Vaikunda Swamikal

- **Vaikunda Swami (1809–1851)**, one of the earliest crusaders for social justice in south India was born at **Sasthan Koil Vilai**, the present Samithoppu, a village near Kanyakumari.
- His original name **Mudichudum Perumal** was changed to **Muthukutty** by his parents due to objection raised by the upper caste Hindus.
- Muthukutti had no opportunity to have any systematic school education but acquired knowledge of various religious texts.
- He preached the ideas of equality and advocated the rights of depressed class people in the face of stiff opposition from upper castes as well as the princely state of Travancore.
- He visited Tiruchendur temple and experienced a new vision. **Calling himself Vaikundar**, he requested the people to give up all the irrelevant rites and rituals in their worship. His preaching's against the prevailing religious order brought about a considerable change in the attitude of the lower caste people.
- In 1833, **Vaikundar commenced his meditation at Samithoppu for the abolition of caste differences** and social integration of the society. During this period, he led a life of a hermit.
- In south Travancore, there were many restrictions on lower caste people such as what they could wear and not wear.
- At a time when there was prohibition on certain sections on wearing headgear he advocated the wearing of a turban in protest.
- It gave a sense of honour to the oppressed people and offered a spirit of self-respect. A new confidence was installed in the minds of his followers.
- Like the other contemporary reform movements of India in the 19 th century, Vaikunda Swamikal condemned the worship of idols.
- The low caste people had no temples for their gods, they erected small pyramids of mud or bricks in their honor, plastered and white-washed. He considered this kind of worship as an uncivilized custom.
- The people sacrificed goats, cocks and hens. He condemned these religious customs and campaigned against animal sacrifice.
- **Vaikunda Swamikal founded Samathuva Samajam** to unite all the people of various castes. He organized inter-dining to accomplish it.
- Even though he was imprisoned by the Maharajah of Travancore, he never gave up his principles. His followers called him respectfully as **Ayya (father)**.
- His cult was also known as **Ayya Vazhi (The Path of Ayya)**. His message emancipated the people from the unjust social customs and superstitious beliefs.
- His ideas are collected into a text called **Akila Thirattu**.

Iyothee Thassar Pandithar

- **Iyothee Thassar (1845–1914)** was a radical Tamil scholar, writer, siddha medicine practitioner, journalist and sociopolitical activist.

- Born in Chennai, he was fluent in **Tamil, English, Sanskrit and Pali languages**.
- He initiated a new knowledge practice by using journalism as a tool to make inroads into the print public sphere, which, was hitherto an upper caste domain.
- He campaigned for social justice and worked for the emancipation of the “**untouchables**” from the caste clutches.
- He worked for the construction of a casteless identity and castigated caste hegemony and untouchability.
- He considered education as an important tool for empowerment and became the driving force behind the establishment of several schools for the “untouchables” in Tamil Nadu.
- **Pandithar Iyothee Thassar founded the Advaidananda Sabha to raise the voice for the temple entry of the “untouchables”.**
- In 1882, **John Rathinam and Iyothee Thassar** established a movement called, **Dravida Kazhagam** and launched a magazine called **Dravida Pandian** in 1885.
- He founded the **Dravida Mahajana Sabha** in 1891 and organised the **First Conference of the association at Nilgiris**.
- He started a weekly journal, **Oru Paisa Tamilan**, in 1907 and published it until his demise in 1914.
- Pandithar Iyothee Thassar was disappointed with the Hindu dharma, which served as the basis for propagating and validating caste in Hindu society.
- Influenced by the Theosophist organizer, **Colonel H.S. Olcott**, he went to **Sri Lanka** in 1898 and converted to Buddhism.
- In the same year, he founded the **Sakya Buddhist Society** at Madras to construct the rational religious philosophy through Buddhist religion.
- He argued that the so-called untouchables were originally Buddhists who were stigmatized by Brahminism.
- He further constructed an alternative history through the interpretation of Tamil literature and folk traditions of Tamil from a Buddhist standpoint.
- In addition, he stated that the revival of Buddhism could liberate the people from the evil of caste that afflicted the Hindu society.
- He called the “**untouchables**” **Sathi Petham Atra Dravidar (Casteless Dravidians)** and urged them to register as casteless Dravidians in the Census.

More to Know:

1. Vaikunda Swamikal criticised the rule of the British and the rule of **Rajah of Travancore** as the rule of White devils and Black devils respectively.

2. **Ramalinga** bore witness to **hunger and poverty** in the country: “I saw poor people, emaciated with hunger and terribly weary, going to every house, yet their hunger was not removed, and my heart suffered intensely. Those who suffer with relentless disease, I saw them in front of me and my heart trembled. I saw those people, poor and of unmatched honor, their hearts weary, and I grew weak.”

3. In **1893 Arya Samaj** split over the question of doctrinal purity. **Swami Shraddhananda (1857–1926)**, a charismatic figure after Dayananda, accused the group running the DAV School of being too Westernized and thereby ignoring the founder's ideology. From 1900 onward, he established his own network of schools, the **Gurukulas, which were outwardly modelled after ancient Hindu seats of learning, emphasising the study of the Vedas.**

4. It was also to the credit of Vidyasagar that the **first age of consent Act was enacted in 1860**. The age for marriage was fixed as ten years. It was raised **to twelve and thirteen years in 1891 and 1925 respectively**. Sadly, as reported in the **Age of Consent Committee (1929)**, the law remained on paper and the knowledge of it was confined to judges, lawyers and a few educated men.