Introduction

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Chapter 7 Cultural Change

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Chapter at Glance

Social Reform Movements In The 19th And Early 20th Century-

The social reform movements which emerged in India in the 19th century arose to the challenges that colonial Indian society faced.

The well-known issues are that of sati, child marriage, ban on widow remarriage and caste discrimination.

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Social Reform Movements In The 19th And Early 20th Century-

The attempts to fight social discrimination in pre- colonial India were central to Buddhism, to Bhakti and Sufi movements.

It was a creative combination of modern ideas of western liberalism and a new look on traditional literature.

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Ideas of Reformers:

Raja Ram Mohan Roy attacked the practice of sati on the basis of both appeals to humanitarian and natural rights doctrines as well as Hindu shastras.

Ranade's writings entitled The Texts of the Hindu Law on the Lawfulness of the Remarriage of Widows and Vedic Authorities for Widow Marriage elaborated the shastric sanction for remarriage of widows.

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Ideas of Reformers:

The content of new education was modernising and liberal. The literary content of the courses in the humanities and social sciences was drawn from the literature of the European Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment. Its themes were humanistic, secular and liberal.

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Ideas of Reformers:

Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan's interpretation of Islam emphasised the validity of free enquiry (ijtihad) and the alleged similarities between Koranic revelations and the laws of nature discovered by modern science.

Kandukiri Viresalingam's The Sources of Knowledge reflected his familiarity with navya- nyaya logic. At the same time he translated the works of Julius Huxley, an eminent biologist.

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Ideas of Reformers:

Sociologist Satish Saberwal elaborates upon the modern context through modern framework of change in colonial India:

Modes of communication

Forms of organisation, and

The nature of ideas

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Ideas of Reformers:

Role of Communication

New technologies speeded up various forms of communication.

The printing press, telegraph, and later the microphone, movement of people and goods through steamship and railways helped quick movement of new ideas.

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Ideas of Reformers:

Within India, social reformers from Punjab and Bengal exchanged ideas with reformers from Madras and Maharashtra. Keshav Chandra Sen of Bengal visited Madras in 1864.

Pandita Ramabai travelled to different corners of the country. Some of them went to other countries. Christian missionaries reached remote corners of present day Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya.

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Ideas of Reformers:

Modern social organisations like the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal and Arya Samaj in Punjab were set up. The All-India Muslim Ladies Conference (Anjuman- E-Khawatn-E-Islam) was founded in 1914.

Indian reformers debated not just in public meetings but through public media like newspapers and journals.

Translations of writings of social reformers from one Indian language to another took place.

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Ideas of Reformers:

      For instance, Vishnu Shastri published a Marathi translation of Vidyasagar's book in Indu Prakash in 1868.

      New ideas of liberalism and freedom, new ideas of homemaking and marriage, new roles for mothers and daughters, new ideas of self-conscious pride in culture and tradition emerged.

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Ideas of Reformers:

The idea of female education was debated intensely. Significantly, it was the social reformer Jotiba Phule who opened the first school for women in Pune, Jotiba Phule thus recalled the glory of preAryan age while others like Bal Gangadhar Tilak emphasised the glory of the Aryan period.

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Opposing the Reforms:

The varied social reform movements did have common themes. Yet there were also significant differences.

For some the concerns were confined to the problems that the upper caste, middle class women and men faced.

For others the injustices suffered by the discriminated castes were central questions. For some social evils had emerged because of a decline of the true spirit of Hinduism.

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Opposing the Reforms:

For others caste and gender oppression was intrinsic to the religion. Likewise Muslim social reformers actively debated the meaning of polygamy and purdah.

For example, a resolution against the evils of polygamy was proposed by Jahanara Shah Nawas at the All India Muslim Ladies Conference.

The resolution condemning polygamy caused considerable debate in the Muslim press. Tahsib e-Niswan, the leading journal for women in the Punjab, came out in favour of the resolve, but others disapproved.

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Opposing the Reforms:

Sati was opposed by the Brahmo Samaj. Orthodox members of the Hindu community in Bengal formed an organisation called Dharma Sabha and petitioned the British arguing that reformers had no right to interpret sacred texts. Yet another view increasingly voiced by Dalits was a complete rejection of the Hindu fold.

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Different Kinds Of Social Change:

The term sanskritisation was coined by M.N. Srinivas. It may be briefly defined as the process by which a 'low' caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, ritual, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a "twice-born (dwija) caste'.

The impact of Sanskritisation is many-sided. Its influence can be seen in language, literature, ideology, music, dance, drama, style of life and ritual.

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Different Kinds Of Social Change:

It is primarily a process that takes place within the Hindu space though Srinivas argued that it was visible even in sects and religious groups outside Hinduism. Studies of different areas, however, show that it operated differently in different parts of the country.

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Different Kinds Of Social Change:

In those areas where a highly Sanskritised caste was dominant, the culture of the entire region underwent a certain amount of Sanskritisation.

In regions where the non-Sanskritic castes were dominant, it was their influence that was stronger. This can be termed the process of 'de- Sanskritisation'.

Sanskritisation suggests a process whereby people want to improve their status through adoption of names and customs of culturally high- placed groups.

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Sanskritisation as a Concept has been Criticised at Different Levels:

It has been criticised for exaggerating social mobility or the scope of 'lower castes' to move up the social ladder.

It has been pointed out that the ideology of sanskritisation accepts the ways of the 'upper caste' as superior and that of the 'lower caste' as inferior. Therefore, the desire to imitate the 'upper caste' is seen as natural and desirable.

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Sanskritisation as a Concept has been Criticised at Different Levels:

'Sanskritisation' seems to justify a model that rests on inequality and exclusion. It appears to suggest that to believe in pollution and purity of groups of people is justifiable or all right.

Since sanskritisation results in the adoption of upper caste rites and rituals it leads to practices of secluding girls and women, adopting dowry practices instead of bride-price and practising caste discrimination against other groups, etc.

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Sanskritisation as a Concept has been Criticised at Different Levels:

The effect of such a trend is that the key characteristics of dalit culture and society are eroded. For example the very worth of labour which 'lower castes' do is degraded and rendered 'shameful'.

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Westernization:

M.N. Srinivas defines westernisation as "the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, the term subsuming changes occurring at different levels...technology, institutions, ideology and values".

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Different kinds of Westernization:

> **One kind refers to the emergence of a westemised sub-cultural pattern through a minority section of Indians who first came in contact with Western culture.**

> **This included the sub culture of Indian intellectuals who not only adopted many cognitive patterns, or ways of thinking, and styles of life, but supported its expansion.**

> **Westernisation does involve the imitation of external forms of culture. It does not necessarily mean that people adopt modern values of democracy and equality.**

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Different kinds of Westernization:

There were, therefore, small sections of people who adopted western life styles or were affected by western ways of thinking.

Apart from this there has been also the general spread of Western cultural traits, such as the use of new technology, dress, food, and changes in the habits and styles of people in general.

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Influence of Westernization:

Apart from ways of life and thinking the west influenced Indian art and literature.

Artists like Ravi Varma, Abanindranath Tagore, Chandu Menon and Bankimchandra Chattopadhya were all grappling with the colonial encounter.

The style, technique and the very theme of Ravi Varma were shaped by western and indigeneous traditions.

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Influence of Westernization:

It discusses the portrait of a family in a matrilineal community of Kerala but one that significantly resembles the very typical patrilineal nuclear family of the modem west consisting of the father, mother and children.

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Influence of Westernization:

In the contemporary context often conflicts between generations are seen as cultural conflicts resulting from westernization.

Srinivas suggested that while 'lower castes' sought to be Sanskritised, 'upper castes' sought to be Westernised.

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Modernisation And Secularisation:

The term modernisation has a long history. From the 19th and more so the 20th century the term began to be associated with positive and desirable values.

In the early years, modernisation referred to improvement in technology and production processes.

It referred to the path of development that much of west Europe or North America has taken.

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Modernisation And Secularisation:

And suggested that other societies both have to and ought to follow the same path of development. The story of our modernisation and secularisation is, therefore, quite distinct from their growth in the west.

In the modern west, secularisation has usually meant a process of decline in the influence of religion.

It has been an assumption of all theorists of modernisation that modern societies become increasingly secular.

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Modernisation And Secularisation:

Indicators of secularisation have referred to levels of involvement with religious organisations (such as rates of church attendance), the social and material influence of religious organisations, and the degree to which people hold religious beliefs, Recent years have seen an unprecedented growth of religious consciousness and conflict world over.

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