

KESHAV CHANDRA SEN AND SANGAT SABHA

By

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(iii) Keshav Chandra Sen and Sangat Sabha

- In Devendranath's absence Keshav Chandra Sen joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1857 and became full-time missionary of the Samaj.
- Under the combined influence of Devendranath and Keshab Chandra Sen, the **Brahmo Samaj entered into a new phase** of unusual activity.
- Young Keshab drew around him a number of earnest enthusiasts, mostly young men with whom he established in **1859** a small society known as Sangat Sabha ('Friendly Association').
- Its main objective was *to discuss the spiritual and social problems of the day.*

- **Keshab Chandra Sen** believed that the renaissance and regeneration of Indian society should start simultaneously in all fields of life.
- The Sangat Sabha had its predecessor in the Raja's **Atmiya Sabha**.
- At various meetings of the Sangat Sabha, members decided to give up their caste, to discard the sacred thread, to accept no invitation to any idolatrous festival, to give no countenance to the dancing of public women, to practise temperance, to give their wives and sisters
- The advantages of the light they had themselves received and to be strictly truthful, honest and just in all their dealings with their fellowmen.

- In the **weekly meetings**, the problem of **sacraments (*sanskaras*) celebrated** in Hindu homes on the occasion of births, marriages, naming festivals, funerals and othrer family events were discussed.
- These Brahmoic rites and their idolatrous character stood out so clearly that members came to the conclusion that the Brahmos could not conscientiously take part in them.
- **Devendranath remodelled the ceremonies**, from which everything idolatrous was eliminated. These Brahmo rites are mentioned in the ***Amtshthana Paddhati***.

- In **1861**, a fortnightly journal named the ***Indian Mirror*** was started with **Keshab Chandra Sen** as editor.
- The ***Mirror*** had a distinguished career, becoming the **first Indian daily paper in English**. Later on it became a **forceful organ of the Brahmo Samaj**.
- Under the auspices of the *Sangat .Sabha*, Keshav Chandra Sen also launched **humanitarian and philanthropic activities**, such as providing help during famines and epidemics.

- He tried to make the **Brahmo Samaj** an **all-India movement**, for which he extensively toured various parts of the country.
- As a result of his mission ***Ved Samaj*** was established in **Madras** and ***Prarthana Samaj*** in **Maharashtra**.
- He strove for radical social changes and emerged as a staunch supporter of **emancipation of women, female education; inter-caste marriages** and launched an organised campaign against **child marriage**.

The First Schism:

- These radical reforms led to the **first schism** in the **Brahmo Samaj** in **1866**, when **Devendranath's group**, calling itself ***Adi Bhrahmo Samaj***, separated from **Keshav Chandra's group**, which assumed the name of **Brahmo Samaj of India or the New Dispensation or Convention (*Nav Vidhana*)**.
- While the slogan of **Adi Brahmo Samaj** was **"Brahmoism is Hinduism"**, the slogan of **Nav Vidhana** was **"Brahmoism is Catholic and Universal"**.

After 1st schism

- After this schism, Keshav Chandra Sen freshly resolved to revitalise the Samaj with deeper spiritual intent and greater reforming zeal.
- The most marked **features of his Nav Vidhana** were:
- **(i) emphasis on the mystic aspects of religion, and**
- **(ii) an attempt to combine Christian and Hindu ideals and practices, marking a distinct break with Hinduism.**

- In **1870**, he visited **England** and returned with redoubled enthusiasm for **social reform and social welfare work**.
- In **1872**, he persuaded the Government to place on the statute book the **Brahmo Marriage Act**, which legalised marriage According to Brahmo rites.
- He also established the **Indian Reform Association**, which greatly worked for the spread of western education, emancipation of women, female education and social work.

Second Schism

- **Keshav Chandra, however, failed the organisation in the end.** He had his daughter married to the Maharaja of Cooch-Behar in 1878, both the bride and bridegroom being under-age.
- To boot, the marriage was conducted in accordance with Hindu rites and in violation of the Brahmo Marriage Act of 1872.
- Infuriated at this development, many in the Nav Vidhana seceded in a body.

- Membership of their new organisation, the *Sadharana Brahmo Samaj*, was open only to those who refrained from **idolatrous practices**, **repudiated the caste system**, **supported the emancipation of women**, **followed Brahmo rites in all domestic ceremonies**, and adhered to the new creed formulated by the Samaj.
- The second split dealt a fatal blow to the Brahmo movement. After Keshav Chandra's death in 1884, no leader of his grand stature arose

***SADHARANA BRAHMO
SAMAJ***

Sadharana Brahmo Samaj

- The constitution of the **Sadharana Brahmo Samaj**, drafted by **Anand Mohan Bose**, was based on democratic principles and gave equal rights to all members in the management of the Samaj.
- By this time political consciousness had sprouted and important members of the Samaj like Sivnath Sastri, Anand Mohan Bose, Bipin Chandra Pal, Dwarka Nath Ganguly and Sir Surendra Nath Bannerjee, were in the forefront of the movement and contributed immensely to the growth of the spirit of nationalism in India.

Social reforms

- Social reforms, viz, *female education, organising famine relief funds, establishment of orphanages, starting schools for deaf and dumb and such other charitable institutions*, were always the primary functions of the new samaj.

Education

- To educate the masses, it started many new journals such as ***Tattva-Kaumudi, Brahmo Public Opinion, Indian Messenger, Sanjibani, Nabyabharat, Modern Review*** and ***Prabase***.
- These journalistic activities kept the flame of national awakening burning, and enriched the Bengali language and its literature.

YOUNG BENGAL MOVEMENT

Young Bengal Movement

- The **Young Bengal Movement** owed its origin to a most remarkable personality of the **9th century-Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831)** who came to Calcutta in 1826 and was appointed in the **Hindu College** as a **teacher of English literature and History**.
- Besides this he edited ***Hesperus*** and ***Calcutta Literary Gazette***. He was connected with ***India Gazette*** as well.
- **Derozio** drew round him students of the **Hindu College** and exercised unprecedented influence **over his pupils** both in and outside the class.

- He urged them to live and die for truth to cultivate and practise all the virtues, shunning vice in every shape.
- He gave the greatest impetus to free discussion on all subjects —social, moral and religious.

- Derozio was one of those rare teachers whose attachment to knowledge, love of truth, and hatred of evil made a profound impression upon those who came in contact with him.
- Like Socrates, he pursued what was right and was accused of misguiding the youth. Some influential Hindus had him removed from service and shortly thereafter he died.
- But **the Derozian influence continued and it was known as the Young Bengal Movement.** All the leading movements of the period were connected with it.

PRARTHANA SAMAJ

Prarthana Samaj

- As a result of Keshav Chandra Sen's visit to Maharashtra, the Prarthana Samaj ('Prayer Society') was founded in 1867.
- Its chief architect was Mahadev Govind Ranade, described as "the prophet of cultural renaissance in western India".
- Its two other prominent leaders were Dr. Atmaram Pandurang and R.G. Bhandarkar.
- The two main planks of the Samaj were worship and social reform.

- Ranade pointed out that most of the prevailing evil customs ran counter to the practices observed in earlier times and cited, as instances, the dependent status of women, child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, narrow subcaste based endogamy, ignorance and seclusion of women, prohibition of foreign travel, various kinds of abstentions enforced upon women, restrictions on interdining among various castes, untouchability, etc.

- **Ranade also launched a Purity Movement comprising anti-dancing and temperance agitation, admission of converts from other faiths and reduction in extravagant marriage expenses.**
- Ranade's movement soon assumed an all-India character.

- **Hinduism was Ranade's chosen faith**, but it was a Hinduism purified of dross and reinterpreted in the light of modern theistic philosophy.
- His views regarding the ism are set out in 39 articles which he drew up under the title "**A Theist's Confession of Faith**".
- Ranade's philosophy of religion and society was deeply steeped in **western ideology**.

- Ranade's social reform movement was successfully continued through out the century. **Two other champions** of social reform with him were **Dhondo Keshav Karve and Vishnu Shastri**.
- Ranade and Karve launched the widow remarriage movement and started Widows' Home Association, to provide education to widows.

- The Widows' Home aimed at making widows self-supporting by giving them training as teachers, midwives or nurses.
- In no other part of India did the social reform movement work so successfully and create so profound an influence as in Maharashtra under the auspices of the Prarthana Samaj

SATYASHODHAK SAMAJ AND JYOTIBA PHULE

Satyashodhak Samaj and Jyotiba Phule

- Jyotiba Phule belonged to the Mali (gardener) community and organized a powerful movement against upper caste domination and brahminical supremacy.
- he was born in 1828 in a Mali family.
- His education, his personal experiences and association with the Christian missionaries, made him critical of the prevailing Hindu religion and custom.
- In 1854, he opened a school for the 'untouchables' and started a private orphanage to help widows.
- Jyotiba Phule had a violent dislike of the Brahmin priesthood.
- He made no distinction between non-Brahmins and untouchables.

Satyashodhak Samaj and Jyotiba Phule

- Phule founded the Satyashodhak Samaj (Truth Seekers' Society) in 1873, with the leadership of the Samaj coming from the backward classes, Malis, Telis, Kunbis, Saris and Dhangars.
- To liberate the depressed classes and make them conscious of their rights by educating them, he founded the Satya Shodhak Samaj in 1873.

The main aims of the movement were

- (i) social service, and
- (ii) spread of education among women and lower caste people.

Phule's works

- Phule's works, Sarvajanic Satyadharma Pustak and Gulamgiri, became sources of inspiration for the common masses.

- Phule used the symbol of Rajah Bali as opposed to the, brahmins' symbol of Rama.
- Phule aimed at the **complete abolition of the caste system and socio-economic inequalities**; he was against Sanskrit Hinduism.
- This movement gave a sense of identity to the depressed communities as a class against the brahmins, who were seen as the exploiters.
- Phule opened, with the help of his wife, a girls' school at Poona and was a pioneer of, widow remarriage movement in Maharashtra.

VEDA SAMAJ

VEDA SAMAJ

Veda Samaj

- Keshav Chandra Sen during his visit to Madras in 1864 persuaded the people to establish the Veda Samaj.
- The founder of the, organisation was the young K. Sridharalu Naidu, who visited Calcutta to study the Brahmo Samaj movement.
- On his return to Madras, he changed the Veda Samaj into the Brahmo Samaj of Southern India in 1871.
- He translated the books of Brahmo Dharma into Tamil and Telugu and undertook missionary tours to propagate the faith.

- Naidu's untimely death in 1874 in an accident was followed by dissensions within the Samaj.
- Some members remained true to his faith but the majority formed a society of their own on the lines of the Sadharana Brahmo Samaj.

Thank you