



Be Mains Ready

The Self-Respect Movement played a significant role in the social and religious life of the people of South India. Discuss the objectives and success of the Self Respect Movement in liberation of the lower caste. (250 words)

01 Dec 2020 | GS Paper 1 | History

Approach / Explanation / Answer

- Introduce the answer by writing about the status of lower caste people and the purpose or significance of the movement.
- Enumerate the objectives of the movement.
- Give the achievements of the movement along with criticism.
- Conclude the answer by giving its relevance in today's society.

Introduction

- The Self-Respect Movement was a dynamic social movement aimed at replacing the contemporary Hindu social order in its totality with a new, rational society without caste, religion and god.
- The Self-Respect Movement was started by E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker in Tamil Nadu in 1925. It was an egalitarian movement that propagated the ideologies of breaking down the Brahminical hegemony, equal rights for the backward classes and women in the society and revitalization of the Dravidian languages like Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam.

Body

Key Objectives:

The objectives of the Self-Respect Movement have been outlined and stated in two pamphlets "**Namathu Kurikkol**" and "**Tiravitakkalaka Lateiyam**" which have been given below:

- The movement aims to do away with such social structure of the society where one class of people claim to be superior to others and some men claim to be of higher birth than others.
- It aims to work for getting equal opportunities for all people, irrespective of their communities it will strive to secure equal status for women along with men in life and according to law.
- All people should be given equal opportunities for growth and development.
- It aims to completely eradicate untouchability and to establish a united society based on brotherhood and sisterhood.
- Friendship and fellow feelings should be natural among all the people.
- To establish and maintain homes for orphans and widows and to run educational institutions.

- To discourage people from building new temples, mutts, chlorites or Vedic Schools. People should drop the caste titles in their names. Common funds should be utilized for educational purposes and for creating employment opportunities for the unemployed.

The Self-Respect Movement played a significant role in the political, social and religious life of the people of South India. It brought the message of the **Tamil Nationalism** to the masses.

- The monopoly of power and influence enjoyed by the Brahmins was slowly lost due to E.V.R.'s unceasing propaganda against orthodoxy. It filled with the sense of self-respect and above all self-confidence, to fight against social injustice perpetrated by the Brahmins of the day.
- It led to the promotion of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages and legalization of marriages without Brahman priests. Post independence, Tamil Nadu passed a law and became the first state to legalise Hindu marriage without a Brahmin priest.
- The system of allotting separate places for Harijan members in the Municipal Councils was also discontinued.
- Due to relentless fighting of supporters of the movement, the name boards of the hotels were changed from "Brahmins Hotel" to "Vegetarian Hotel".
- People started taking pride in giving up their caste name.

However, the movement **failed to liberate women as well as the lower caste and secured equal rights for them**. It failed to strengthen the economic condition of the poor and depressed classes. Since, the movement was limited to Tamil Nadu, it had very limited influence.

Conclusion

The Self-Respect Movement asked many questions: is political freedom true freedom? Will it lead to an equal society? Will it allow for women to be treated with dignity? The sad truth is that we do not have the answers to these questions even today. It is now the responsibility of the educated and enlightened youth of the nation to take responsibility to eradicate social evils and fulfill the ideals of self respect movement.

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