

4. SOCIAL REFORMS

Dastur-al-amal Mohyali

As Arya Samajis, the Founding Fathers were seriously engaged in reforms in the Hindu society. They seriously looked at the needs of their own community also. One of the three Guiding Principles (Assool) was:

To give practical shape to those principles and customs which were laid down by the Mohyal elders on the occasion of establishing the Community and to reform such (unhealthy) customs as have been adopted from other communities.

They examined the rituals and practices being followed from birth till death), examined their flaws, decided corrective action needed to be taken by the Mohyal community in respect of unhealthy practices and tabulated this data. It was circulated widely through Mohyal Mitter, for comments by the community, which were discussed. Finally, in the Mohyal Conference held at Rawal Pindi, in 1905, *Dastur-al-Amal Mohyali* (Code of Mohyal Practices) was promulgated. It had a wide ranging effect. The issues were already being talked about in the community when the draft was circulated. When promulgated, the ladies reportedly said: *lai neen, hun te likhtaan pai gayan neen* (now the things have been reduced to writing: i.e., have reached finality). Because of the writ of the General Mohyal Sabha, which was highly respected, this had a great reformatory effect among the community.

Certain practices were strictly forbidden: Double marriage; Dancing by Dancing Girls; Indecent Songs; Serving liquor by either party during marriage: the bride being made to cross from under the mare; Shagan Tabalbaaj (?); Gharaa/Ghrolee (?); Thaaliyaan (?); Manwana; Teeldiyaan: the girls symbolically hitting the groom on his first arrival; Ladies giving bath to the groom etc. were strictly forbidden. Since these have gone out of vogue, we are unable to understand some of these rituals.

Reduced rates for offerings to relatives and Lagis and the number of invitees, were prescribed in many rituals.

Shaadee bilaa Itlaa (Marriage without declaration): There was a system among Mohyals, that if a marriage was not proclaimed, through singling or beating of drums, the parties were exempted from traditional offerings. Through the Dastur, the Lagis (Bhatt, Mirasi etc.) were strictly forbidden, at the pain of severe penalties, to refrain from presenting themselves on such venue.

Contributing to certain Funds of GMS (Education Fund and Sabha Fund) was made mandatory during the marriage function (Mooheen and Chotee)

Marriageable age for the boys and girls were prescribed, which like some other items, came up for review from time to time. Finally, in 1926 these were fixed at 25 and 16years, for boys and girls respectively.

We shall try to post a copy of *Dastur-al-Amal Mohyali*. *The original is in urdu.*

In the Conference in 1906, it was decided that "*Datur-ul-Mohyali* should be translated into Hindi and Panjabi, and it should be implemented with the help of local sabhas *and through preachers and delegates*. Persons who follow the the *Dasur* should be published in Mohyal Mitter.

Dastur brought out by the Mohyal community received great publicity, outside also. The Secretary, All India Social Conference held in South India in the year 1905, declared that "it is only Mohyals of Punjab, who have practically stopped child marriage in their community.

Social issues came up for discussion, at almost each Conference and matters relating to women also received attention. For example, the Conference held at Amritsar, in 1909, decided that (i) A person marrying a second time, when his first wife is alive, and anybody giving his daughter to such a person should both be boycotted. (ii) Pamphlets should be prepared and distributed defining rights and duties of Mothers-in-law and Daughters-in-law to avoid confrontations in families. (iii) Girls should be encouraged and assisted to get higher education. They should also be encouraged to learn crafts like knitting, crocheting, sewing etc. and exhibition of such crafts should be held at the time of Conferences. (iv) Ladies should be encouraged to attend Conferences. The issue of marriage of widows and deserted women was considered in the Conference held in 1911.

Social Reforms were an important component of GMS's agenda and they continued to pursue it with a missionary zeal.

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