

Social and Religious Reform Movement in India

The 19th Century socio reform movement in India was reformist, revivalist, and other issue-based social movements. They systematically eliminated the evil practices of society. While a few movements focused on modernization, others worked to protect the ancient Indian culture.

- The 19th-century socio religious Reform Movement eradicated some of the worst evils of Indian society. Some of these prominent movements were the Aligarh movement, Brahmo samaj, and Young Bengal Movement.
- Numerous leaders fought for and influenced positive change. The most important of those were: Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Jyotirao Phule etc.
- Many of the 19th Century's Social and Religious Reform Movements faced initial resistance from conventional thinkers. But the founders were educated, intelligent, and forward-looking.

Social and Religious Reform Movements in the 19th Century

Many socio religious reform Movements were carried out throughout India in the 19th century in diverse regions. Through religious and social reforms, several institutions and organisations significantly contributed to establishing contemporary ideological trends in science and philosophy. The list of various social- religious reform movement in India is as follows:

Social reform Movement in India	Year
Brahmo Samaj	1828
Aligarh Movement	1875
Prarthana Samaj	1863
The Theosophical Movement	1875
Deoband Movement	1866
Ramakrishna Mission	1897
Satyashodhak Samaj	1873
Young Bengal Movement	1820
Widow Remarriage Association	1860

Socio Religious Reform Movement: Detailed Description

The **Social and Religious Reform Movements in India** enhanced religion and society. It also advanced education and literature, exposing people to new literary works and languages. Industrial development, science, and the arts all existed. The most important factor is that these changes also contributed to the emergence of nationalism, which means that this socio religious reform movement in India finally helped the country achieve independence. The social reform movement in India are explained in detail below:

Brahmo Samaj

It is one of the Socio Religious Reform Movements in India founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828. The movement came into action to oppose unnecessary rituals, idol worship, belief in more than 1 god, caste pressure, and other social evils like Sati, polygamy, the purdah system, child marriage, etc.

- The society also aimed to promote women's education and widow remarriage. The Brahmo Samaj was also against following old Hindu superstitions.
- Traditionalists like Raja Radhakant Deb, who organised the Dharma Sabha to combat Brahmo Samaj propaganda, strongly opposed Rammohan Roy's progressive beliefs. Rammohan Roy claimed that the [Vedas and Upanishads](#), two ancient Hindu writings, supported the monotheistic philosophy.
- He translated the Vedas and the five Upanishads into Bengali to support his argument. In 1823, he hosted a community banquet to commemorate the success of the Socio Religious Reform Movement in Spain.

Aligarh Movement

The Aligarh movement was another crucial Socio Religious Reform Movement in the 19th century. Sayyid Ahmed Khan founded it in 1875 at Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College. The movement got established in the city of Aligarh. The college later became Aligarh Muslim University.

- The main desire of launching this movement was to offer modern education to Muslims.
- The **Socio Religious Reform Movement** tried to harmonise Islam with contemporary liberal culture. Their worldview was founded on a liberal interpretation of the Quran.
- They aimed to give Muslims a distinctive sociocultural identity that followed contemporary norms.
- He feared that being actively involved in politics at the time would encourage hostility from the government toward the Muslim population. He disapproved of Muslim political activity as a result.
- Unfortunately, he let himself be utilized by the colonial government's offensive divide-and-rule approach to further Muslims' educational and employment interests.
- Later, he spread the idea that Muslims and Hindus have different interests. Through the publication of Tahdhib-ul-Akhlaq, Syed's progressive social ideas were disseminated (Improving Manners and Morals).

Prarthana Samaj

The third Socio Religious Reform Movement in India is Prarthana Samaj. The movement was established by Keshub Chandra Sen In 1863. The reform movement orated believing in only one god (monotheism) and condemned the domination of priests and caste supremacy in Bombay.

- Veeresalingam, a Telugu reformer, spread the movement's activities in South India. Another social reformer was a philosopher known as Chandavarka, who encouraged Prarthana Samaj.
- This Social and Religious Reform Movement in India opposed child marriage and the purdah system, advocated widow remarriage, and strongly emphasised female education. It also targeted the caste system and the Brahmin majority.
- Ranade founded the Deccan Education Society and the Widow Remarriage Association to reform Hinduism. Ranade established the National Social Conference in 1887 to bring about social reforms across the nation. One of the founding members of the Indian National Congress was Ranade.

The Theosophical Movement

The next Socio Religious Reform Movement was launched by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott in New York (later moved to Madras) in 1875. Annie Besant is one of India's most popular social reformers associated with the Theosophical Movement.

- It facilitated the concept of universal brotherhood, as explained in the Vedas and Upanishads. The Social reform movement in India also promoted the study of [Buddhism](#), Zoroastrian, and Hindu ideologies and emphasized the influence of supernatural powers, known as occultism.
- This **Socio Religious Reform Movement** was distinctive because it was led by foreigners who exalted Indian philosophical and religious traditions. The Central Hindu College in Banaras, which eventually became the Banaras Hindu University, was founded by Annie Besant.
- Annie Besant, a famous figure in Indian politics, established herself permanently in India. She was chosen as the Indian National Congress's president in 1917.

Deoband Movement

The orthodox branch of Muslim ulema was responsible for organising the Deoband Movement. The Socio Religious Reform Movement was a revivalist movement with the dual objectives of preserving the spirit of warfare against foreign rulers and disseminating the clear teachings of the Quran and Hadis among Muslims.

The new Deoband head, Mahmud-ul-Hasan (1851–1920), aimed to give the school's theological teachings some political and intellectual substance. The liberalization of Islam led to a political awakening among its followers.

Ramakrishna Mission

The next Socio Religious Reform Movement in the 19th century was the Ramakrishna Mission, founded in 1897 by Swami Vivekananda. The main motive of this movement was to spread the teachings of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda's Guru, in Belur near Calcutta.

- The mission aimed to resist untouchability and the caste system. It propagated Vedanta and concentrated on the fact that all religions are universal.
- This culture worked hard to eradicate caste systems, rituals, priesthood, animal sacrifice, idolatry, and polytheism. Additionally, it promotes the transfer of western scientific knowledge.
- The **Socio Religious Reform Movement** fought for social equality, improved women's conditions, and opposed untouchability and caste rigidities.

Satyashodhak Samaj

On September 24, 1873, in Maharashtra, Jyotirao Govindrao Phule described the idea of the Socio Religious Reform Movement, also known as Satyashodhak Samaj. The caste system and idol worship were both targets of the reform movement's campaigns. It defended using reason rather than blindly following the priesthood. Govindrao Phule specifically used the term "Dalit" to refer to those from lower castes.

Young Bengal Movement

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio founded the Young Bengal movement in the 1820s. Louis was an Anglo-Indian professor in college in Calcutta. He inspired his students to think freely and analytically.

- Derozio spread the spirit of freedom, equality, and liberty among all. This **Socio Religious Reform Movement** was the one to criticize the dominant practices of religion and interrupted changing the Hindu orthodox beliefs.
- Derozian's ideas significantly impacted the Socio Religious Reform Movement, or Bengal Renaissance, in early nineteenth-century Bengal.
- This movement was loud and logical but could not acquire any traction. Nevertheless, it was a significant advancement since it motivated and produced a generation of activists and reformers.

Widow Remarriage Association

Another Socio Religious Reform Movement was the Widow Remarriage Association. It was started by Pandit Vishnu Shastri, founded in 1860.

- The most well-known campaigner for the cause was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.
- He sent a petition to the Legislative Council, but Radhakanta Deb and the Dharma Sabha responded with a counterpetition that had nearly four times as many signatures.

- But despite the opposition and the measure being deemed a flagrant violation of then-prevailing norms, Lord Dalhousie finished it.

Social Reformers of India in 19th Century

For Indian society to meet the challenges of the West, certain progressive Indians, including Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar, and many others, formed various **Socio Religious Reform Movements**. The list of notable Social Reformers of India is as follows:

Serial No.	Social Reformers of India
1	Ramakrishna Paramhansa
2	Swami Vivekananda
3	Prabodhankar Thackeray
4	Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar
5	Kandukuri Veeresalingam
6	Ramalinga Swamigal
7	Shishunala Sharif
8	Shahu of Kolhapur
9	Keshub Chandra Sen
10	Kirity Roy
11	Sahajanand Saraswati
12	Mahadev Govind Ranade
13	Anurag Chauhan
14	T. K. Madhavan
15	Subhash Chandra Bose
16	Savitribai Phule
17	Begum Rokeya
18	Raja Ram Mohan Roy
19	Virchand Gandhi
20	Vitthal Ramji Shinde
21	Dayananda Saraswati

22	Dhondo Keshav Karve
23	Gopal Hari Deshmukh
24	Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar
25	BR Ambedkar
26	Subramanya Bharathiyar
27	Basavanna
28	Narayana Guru
29	Gopal Ganesh Agarkar
30	Debendranath Tagore
31	Dwarkanath Ganguly
32	Kazi Nazrul Islam
33	Kuriakose Elias Chavara
34	Vinayak Damodar Savarkar
35	Acharya Balshastri Jambhekar
36	Rabindranath Tagore
37	Baba Amte
38	Periyar E. V. Ramasamy
39	Pandurang Shastri Athavale
40	Jyotiba Phule
41	Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar
42	Vinoba Bhave
43	Javid Rahi
44	Pandita Ramabai
45	Mahatma Gandhi

Causes of Social and Religious Reform Movements in India

Now we will address the leading cause of these **Social and Religious Reform Movements in India**. English and other contemporary concepts were introduced to India by the British when they arrived.

- These concepts, which had a significant influence on Indian society, were liberty, social and economic equality, democracy, fraternity, and justice. Indian culture in the nineteenth century was entangled in a web of social obscurantism and religious superstition.
- The study of the history, philosophy, science, religions, and literature of ancient India began in the late 19th century by several European and Indian academics.
- The Indian people felt a sense of pride in their civilization due to their expanding understanding of India's former splendor. Additionally, it aided the Socio Religious Reform Movement in its fight against all kinds of barbaric customs and superstitions.

Impact of Social and Religious Reform Movements in India

The scientific, and intellectual assault of the **Social and Religious Reform Movement** rebels was unacceptable to the orthodox segments of society. So, the reactionaries insulted, persecuted, issued fatwas against the reformers, and even attempted to kill them. Despite the opposition, these organizations were able to aid in the liberation of the person from frightened submission and uncritical submission to the exploitation by priests and other classes.

- With the translation of religious texts into everyday languages, the emphasis on each person's right to interpret the scriptures, and the simplicity of ceremonies, worship became a more intimate experience. T
- The Socio Religious Reform Movement placed a strong emphasis on the capacity of human reason and intelligence. By eliminating corrupt elements, religious beliefs, and practices, the reformers gave their followers a chance to respond to official criticism that their religions and cultures were decadent and inferior.
- The Socio Religious Reform Movement gave the developing middle classes the much-needed cultural roots they could cling to and a way to lessen the humiliation they felt from being annexed by a foreign force. Recognizing the peculiar demands of modern times, notably scientific knowledge, and supporting a contemporary, this-worldly, secular, and rational mindset was essential to these reform initiatives.

Socially, this mindset was reflected in a significant change in the ideas of "purity and pollution." Although the reformers' criticisms primarily targeted old beliefs and customs, the reformers desired modernization rather than complete westernization based on the mindless replication of foreign Western cultural norms.