



Socio-Religious Reform Movements (PDF)

Socio -Religious Reform Movements

Famous Social and Religious Movement and Organizations with their Founders

Founder/ Personality Associated	Reform	Starting Year	Description
Raja ram Mohan Roy	Brahmo Samaj	1815	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1815, Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the Atmiya Sabha in Calcutta to promote monotheism and reform in Hindu culture. Atmiya Sabha was renamed Brahmo Samaj in 1828.
Debendranath Tagore	Tattavabodhini Sabha	1839	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1859, the Tattvabodhini Sabha merged with the Brahmo Samaj.
Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He brought Western thinking studies to the Sanskrit College and extended its doors to non-Brahmin students. He committed his entire life to the unique societal issue of widow re-marriage and female emancipation
Dadoba Pandurang	Paramhansa Sabha	1840	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major goal off Paramhansa Sabha was to eliminate all caste differences.
Mahadev Gobind Ranade	Prarthana Samaj		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Atmaram Pandurang and Mahadev Gobind Ranade co-founded Prarthana Samaj. The Vedas and Upanishads were not rejected by the Prarthana Samaj. It did, however, place a greater focus on Bhakti (devotion)



K Sridharalu Naidu	Veda Samaj	1864	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-founded Veda Samaj in Madras with Keshab Chandra Sen.• In 1871, it was renamed the Brahma Samaj of Southern India.• It also opposes the use of dancing females, child marriage, & polygamy.
Swami Dayanand Saraswati	Suddhi Movement		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• He founded the Suddhi Movement to reintroduce Hindus who had converted to other religions, and he played a part in the rise of communalism in the twentieth century.• It played a constructive role in national awakening by opposing religious superstitions, polytheism, and Brahmin dominance.• Work of Dayanand Saraswati:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Satyarth Prakash○ Veda-Bhasya Bhumika○ Veda-Bhashya
Swami Vivekananda	Ram Krishna Mission	1896	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The mission's main goal was to give humanitarian services to people, promote the essence of Vedantic spiritualism, and seek for unity among different religions and cults.



H P Blavastsky	Theosophical Movement	1875	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Started Theosophical movement in New York with Col HS Olcott (American) in 1875. The study of eastern classics, particularly the Upanishads and Bhagwat Gita, was popularised by theosophists.
Annie Besant	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> joined Theosophical Society in 1889
Swami Sahajanad	Swami Narain Sect (Gujarat)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sect's major goal was societal unification and peace. It promoted widow remarriage while discouraging the practise of Sati, female infanticide, and other such practises.
Behramii M Malabari	Seva Sadon	1885	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This humanitarian organization was dedicated to the well-being of the socially disadvantaged, particularly women.
Radhkant Deb	Dharma Sabha	1830	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In opposition to the principles of Brahamo Samaj, they campaigned for the status quo and opposed the elimination of Sati.
Henry Louis Vivian Derozio	Young Bengal Movement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdated traditional and decadent traditions were criticised by this movement It fought for women's rights and educated the public on socioeconomic and political issues.



Rahanumai Mazdayasanan Sabha	Rahanumai Mazdayasanan Sabha or religious reform association	1851	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cofounded Rahanumai Mazdayasanan Sabha with Dadabhai Naoroji along with his Western educated, progressive Parsis like Sorabjee Bengali, JB Wacha, KR Cama, Naoroji Furdonji etc, • The goals of Rahanumai Mazdayasanan Sabha were social regeneration of Parsis, to abolish the purdah tradition, raise the marriage age, and educate women.
Shah Waliullah	Wahabi Movement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a revivalist movement calling for a return to true Islam Jihad was launched with the primary goal of turning Dar-UL-Harb (land of unbelievers) into Dar-UL-Islam (land of Islam) (land of Islam).
Haji Shariat Ullah	Farazi Movement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement advocated for a restoration to Faraid (Islamic required obligations) such as names, Zakat, Haj, Ramzan fasting, and so on
Sir Ayed Ahmed Khan	Aligarh Movement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim of the movement was to modernize Muslims • In 1875, he established the Aligarh School, which was later renamed Mohammodan-Anglo Oriental College and served as the foundation for the establishment of Aligarh Muslim University in 1920.



Mirza Ghulam Ahmed	Ahmadiya Movement	1889	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aim of Ahmadiya Movement to liberalise Islamic beliefs in the context of contemporary enlightenment.
Balak Singh	Namdhari movement	1857	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Namdhari Movement pushed for the prohibition of studying English and working for the government.
Jyotirao Phule	Satyashodhak Samaj	24 September 1873	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal was to liberate the Shundra and Untouchable castes from exploitation and tyranny.• He also confronts the Brahmins' superiority and dominance complex.

Brahmo Samaj

- Raja Rammohan Roy established the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta in 1828 in order to purify Hinduism and to preach monotheism.
- He is considered the first 'modern man of India'.
- In 1815, he established the Atmiya Sabha.
- Later, it was developed into the Brahmo Sabha in August 1828.
- He preached that there is only one God.
- He combined the teachings of the Upanishads, the Bible and the Quran in developing unity among the people of different religions.
- The work of the Atmiya Sabha was carried on by Maharishi Debendranath Tagore (father of Rabindranath Tagore), who renamed it as Brahmo Samaj.
- Raja Rammohan Roy is most remembered for helping Lord William Bentinck to declare the practice of Sati a punishable offence in 1829.
- He also protested against the child marriage and female infanticide.
- He felt that the caste system was the greatest hurdle to Indian unity.
- He favoured inter-caste marriages. He himself adopted a Muslim boy.
- In 1817, he founded the Hindu College (now Presidency College, Calcutta) along with David Hare, a missionary.
- Rammohan Roy started the first Bengali weekly Samvad Kaumudi.
- Edited a Persian weekly Mirat-ul-Akhbar.
- He stood for the freedom of the press. Rammohan died in Bristol in England in 1833.



Young Bengal Movement

- Henry Vivian Derozio was the founder of the Young Bengal Movement.
- He was born in Calcutta in 1809 and taught in the Hindu College, Calcutta.
- His followers were known as the Derozians and their movement the Young Bengal Movement.
- They attacked old traditions and decadent customs.
- They also advocated women's rights and education.
- They founded associations and organized debates against idol worship, casteism and superstitions

Arya Samaj

- The Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswathi at Bombay in 1875.
- Born in Kathiawar in Gujarat, Swami Dayanand (1824-83) was a scholar, a patriot, a social reformer and a revivalist.
- He believed the Vedas were the source of true knowledge.
- His motto was "Back to the Vedas".
- He was against idol worship, Child marriage and the caste system based on birth.
- He encouraged inter-caste marriages and widow remarriage
- He started the Suddhi movement to bring back those Hindus who had converted to other religions to its fold.
- He wrote the book Satyarth Prakash which contains his ideas.
- The Arya Samaj, though founded in Bombay, became very powerful in Punjab and spread its influence to other parts of India.
- The first Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) School was founded in 1886 at Lahore.

Prarthana Samaj

- The Prarthana Samaj was founded in 1867 in Bombay by Dr Atmaram Pandurang
- It was an off-shoot of Brahmo Samaj
- It was a reform movement within Hinduism and concentrated on social reforms like interdining, inter-marriage, widow remarriage and uplift of women and depressed classes.
- Justice M.G. Ranade and R.G. Bhandarkar joined it in 1870 and infused new strength to it.
- Justice Ranade promoted the Deccan Education Society.



Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Mission

- The original name of Swami Vivekananda was Narendranath Dutta (1863-1902)
- He became the most famous disciple of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa
- In 1886 Narendranath took the vow of Sanyasa and was given the name, Vivekananda.
- He preached Vedantic Philosophy
- Swami Vivekananda participated at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago (USA) in September 1893 and raised the prestige of India and Hinduism very high.
- Vivekananda preached the message of strength and self-reliance.
- He asked the people to improve the lives of the poor and depressed classes.
- He founded the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur in Howrah in 1897.
- It is a social service and charitable society.
- The objectives of this Mission are providing humanitarian relief and social work through the establishment of schools, colleges, hospitals and orphanages.

Theosophical Society

- The Theosophical Society was founded in New York (USA) in 1875 by Madam H.P. Blavatsky, a Russian lady, and Henry Steel Olcott, an American colonel
- Their main objectives were to form a universal brotherhood of man without any distinction of race, colour or creed and to promote the study of ancient religions and philosophies.
- They arrived in India and established their headquarters at Adyar in Madras in 1882.
- Later in 1893, Mrs Annie Besant arrived in India and took over the leadership of the Society after the death of Olcott.
- Mrs Annie Besant founded the Central Hindu School along with Madan Mohan Malaviya at Benaras which later developed into the Banaras Hindu University.

Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

- Pandit Ishwar Chandra was a great educator, humanist and social reformer
- He rose to be the Head Pandit of the Bengali Department of Fort William College.
- Vidyasagar founded many schools for girls
- He helped J.D. Bethune to establish the Bethune School.
- He founded the Metropolitan Institution in Calcutta
- He protested against child marriage and favoured widow
- Remarriage which was legalised by the Widow Remarriage Act (1856).
- It was due to his great support for the spread of education that he was given the title of Vidyasagar.



Jyotiba Phule

- Jyotiba Phule belonged to a low caste family in Maharashtra
- He waged a life-long struggle against upper caste domination and Brahmanical supremacy.
- In 1873 he founded the Satyashodak Samaj to fight against the caste system.
- He pioneered the widow remarriage movement in Maharashtra and worked for the education for women.
- Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savitri Bai Phule established the first girls' school at Poona in 1848

Muslim Reform Movements

The Muslim reform movements started a little later because they had avoided western education in the beginning. The first effort was in 1863 when the Muhammad Literary Society was set up in Calcutta.

Aligarh Movement

- The Aligarh Movement was started by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-98) for the social and educational advancement of the Muslims in India
- In 1866, he started the Mohammadan Educational Conference as a general forum for spreading liberal ideas among the Muslims.
- In 1875, he founded a modern school at Aligarh to promote English education among the Muslims.
- This had later grown into the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College and then into the Aligarh Muslim University.

The Deoband School

- The orthodox section among the Muslim ulema organised the Deoband Movement.
- It was a revivalist movement whose twin objectives were
- To propagate among the Muslims the pure teachings of the Koran and the Hadi
- To keep the spirit of jihad against the foreign rulers.
- The new Deoband leader Mahmud-ul-Hasan (1851-1920) sought to impart political and intellectual content to the religious ideas of the school.

Sikh Reform Movement

- Baba Dayal Das founded the Nirankari Movement
- He insisted on the worship of God as nirankar (formless).
- The Namdhari Movement was founded by Baba Ram Singh.
- His followers wore white clothes and gave up meat-eating.
- The Singh Sabhas started in Lahore and Amritsar in 1870 were aimed at reforming Sikh society.



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- They helped to set up the Khalsa College at Amritsar in 1892.
- They also encouraged Gurmukhi and Punjabi literature.
- In 1920, the Akalis started a movement to remove the corrupt Mahants (priests) from the Sikh gurudwaras
- Later, the Akalis organised themselves into a political party.

Lokhitawadi :

- Started by Gopal Hari Deshmukh. Advocated western education and a rational outlook. He advocated female education for the upliftment of women.

Indian (National) Social Conference :

- Founded by M.G. Ranade and Raghunath Rao. It held its first session in 1887.
- Its main focus was on the abolition of polygamy and kulhinism and it encouraged inter-caste marriages. It also pledged to fight child marriages.
- The Conference is sometimes referred to as the social reform cell of the Indian National Congress.

Servants of India Society :

- Formed by Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1905.
- It did notable work in providing famine relief and in improving the condition of the tribal.

The Justice Party Movement :

- T.M. Nair, Sir Pitti Theagaraja Chettiar and the Raja of Panagal formed the South Indian Liberal Federation (SILF) in 1916 to protest against the domination of Brahmins in government service, education and in the political field.
- The newspaper, Justice, was their main organ for expressing views and opinions.
- The SILF came to be called the Justice Party later on.

Positive Aspect of Socio-Religious Reform Movements

The orthodox segments of society were unable to accept the socio-religious rebels' scientific ideological attack. As a result, the reactionaries insulted, persecuted, issued fatwas against, and even attempted to kill the reformers. Despite opposition, these organizations were successful in assisting people in breaking free from fear-based submission and uncritical submission to exploitation by priests and other classes.

Worship became a more intimate experience with the translation of religious texts into common languages, the focus on each person's right to interpret the scriptures, and the simplicity of ceremonies. The movements placed a strong emphasis on humans' ability to think and reason. The reformers enabled their supporters to respond to official criticism that their faiths and culture were decadent and inferior by eliminating corrupt elements, religious beliefs, and habits.



The reform movements provided the emerging middle-classes with the cultural roots they so desperately needed, as well as a means of alleviating the humiliation they felt as a result of being annexed by a foreign country. Recognizing the peculiar demands of modern times, particularly in terms of scientific knowledge, and advocating for a modern, this-worldly, secular, and rational mindset were critical contributions of these reform initiatives.

Socially, this mindset was reflected in a major change in the ideas of "purity and pollution." Although the primary targets of the reformers' criticisms were old beliefs and customs, the reformers actually desired modernization rather than complete westernization based on the mindless replication of foreign Western cultural norms. Indeed, reform movements sought to create a social environment that was conducive to modernization.

Negative Aspect of Socio-Religious Reform Movements

The vast majority of peasants and urban poor were disregarded in favour of a limited social base, especially the educated and middle classes, which was one of the main drawbacks of religious reform movements. The reformers' penchant for extolling the virtues of the past and relying on scriptural authority fostered new forms of mysticism and promoted pseudo-scientific thinking, all while preventing complete acceptance of the need for a contemporary scientific approach.

These tendencies were primarily responsible for the compartmentalization of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Parsis, as well as the separation of high-caste Hindus from low-caste Hindus. The rise of communal and national awareness among the middle classes appeared to be impeding the emergence of a composite culture, which had been evident throughout Indian history.

The character of religious reform organizations also played a role in the revival of communalism in modern times, but there were undoubtedly many other factors at play. Whatever the overall outcome of these reform initiatives, it was through this conflict that a new society arose in India.



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