

Socio-Religious Reform Movements and Reformers in India

The process of reawakening, sometimes, but not always follow the intended as the 'Renaissance', did not always follow the intended line and gave rise to some undesirable by-products as well, which have become as much a part daily existence in the whole of the Indian subcontinent as have the fruits of these reform movements.

Although, the majority of reformation associated with religious beliefs and therefore most of the movement of the 19th century were socio-religious character. Here, we are giving a complete overview on the Socio-Religious Reform Movements and Reformers in India that will enhance the knowledge of readers to understand, how Indian Society transformed after reform movements.

Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833)

He was the founder of **Atmiya Sabha** in Calcutta in 1815 to propagate monotheism and reform in the Hindu society. In 1828, **Atmiya Sabha** was named **Brahmo Samaj**. It believed in one universal God and prayer, meditation, reading from Upanishads was used as a medium to worship God. There was no place for temple, rituals, sacrifices, priest, etc. in the Samaj. It believed in progressive social practices. He launched a movement for the abolition of sitting through his journal **Sambad Koumudi** (1819).

Debendranath Tagore

He founded **Tattvabodhini Sabha** (1839) and also published **Tattvabodhini Patrika**. Tattvabodhini Sabha amalgamated with the Brahmo Samaj in 1859. He also compiled selected passage from the Upanishads, which known as **Brahma Dharma**.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

He introduced the study of Western thought in the Sanskrit College and opened its gates to non-Brahmin students. His greatest contribution lay in the field of female emancipation. Widow re-marriage was the specific social issue he devoted his entire life to.

Mahadev Gobind Ranade

He founded **Prarthana Samaj** along with **Dr. Atmaram Pandurang**. Two other social reformers who work with Ranade were Vishnu Shastri and DK Karue. Karue launched the Widow Remarriage Movement. Prarthana Samaj did not reject the Vedas or Upanishads. However, it paid more emphasis on Bhakti (devotion).

Swami Dayanand Saraswati

He started the **Suddhi Movement** to bring back the Hindu converted to other religions and played some role in the growth of communalism in the 20th century. It played a progressive role in the field of national awakening by attacking religious superstitions, polytheism and the supremacy of Brahmins.

He condemns idolatry, polytheism, Brahmin sponsored religious rites and superstitious practices. He advocated social equality improvement in the status of women and denounced untouchability, caste rigidities and encouraged rationality. He disregarded authority of later Hindu scriptures like Puranas.

He published his views in his famous work **Satyartha Prakash** (the true expositions in Hindi). He also wrote **Veda-Bhasya Bhumika** (partly in Hindi and partly in Sanskrit) and **Veda-Bhashya** (in Sanskrit). He accepted the doctrine of karma, but rejected the **theory of Niyati** (fatalism). He was the first man to advocate the **concept of Swaraj**.

Swami Vivekananda

He was a one of the greatest thinkers of India founded the Ramakrishna Mission in 1896. The headquarter was established at Bellur near Calcutta to carry out humanitarian and social work to all without any distinction, especially to help poor and destitute. The basic motto of the mission was to provide social service people, spread the meaning of Vedantic spiritualism and strive for harmony among various faiths and cults.

HP Blavatsky

She started **Theosophical movement** (Literally means all inclusive) in New York with Col HS Olcott (American) in 1875. They arrived in India in 1879 and established the headquarters of the society at Adyar near Madras in 1882. Theosophist popularised the study of oriental classics, especially Upanishads and Bhagwat Gita.

Annie Besant

She joined the **Theosophical Society** in England in 1889 and came to India in 1893. She became President of the society after death of Olcott in 1907. She translated the Bhagwad Gita in English. She laid the foundation of the Central Hindu College at Banaras in 1898 that later became nucleus for the formation of Banaras Hindu University in 1916.

