

4. Socio-Religious Reform Movements: General Features

- **Factors Giving Rise to Desire for Reform:**
 - **Impact of British Rule** - The British conquest was different. It came at a time when India, in contrast to an enlightened Europe of the eighteenth century affected in every aspect by science and scientific outlook, presented the picture of a stagnant civilisation and a static and decadent society.
 - **Social Conditions Ripe for Reform** –
 - **Religious and Social Ills:** Idolatry and polytheism, superstitions etc.,
 - **Depressing Position of Women:** Sati, polygamy, child marriage etc.,
 - Caste Problem
 - Opposition to western culture
 - New Awareness among Enlightened Indians
 - **Social and Ideological Bases of Reform:**
 - **Middle Class Base:** The social base of the regeneration seen in the nineteenth century was the newly emerging middle class
 - The Intellectual Criteria
 - **Steps taken to ameliorate Women's position:**
 - **Abolition of Sati:** The regulation of 1829 by William Bentick
 - **Preventing Female Infanticide:** An Act passed in 1870 made it compulsory for parents to register the birth of all babies.
 - **Widow Remarriage:** Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856, was passed.
 - **Controlling Child Marriage:** The Native Marriage Act (or Civil Marriage Act), 1872 signified legislative action in prohibiting child marriage.
 - **Education of Women:** The Christian missionaries were the first to set up the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society in 1819.
 - **Factors that Helped to Mitigate Caste-based Discrimination:**
 - British rule, perhaps without intention, created certain conditions that undermined caste consciousness to an extent.
 - The social reform movements also strove to undermine caste-based exploitation.
 - The national movement took inspiration from the principles of liberty and equality against the forces which tended to divide the society.
 - With increasing opportunities of education and general awakening, there were stirrings among the lower castes themselves
 - The Constitution of free India has made equality and non-discrimination on basis of caste imperative.
 - **Two Concerns of socio-religious reforms in India:**
 1. The evolution of an alternative cultural-ideological system.
 2. The regeneration of traditional institutions.
- These concerns were manifested through the attempts to reconstruct traditional knowledge, the use and development of vernacular languages, creation of an alternative system of education, defence of religion, efforts to regenerate Indian art and literature, the emphasis on Indian dress and food, attempts to revitalise the Indian systems of medicine and to research the pre-colonial technology for its potential.

▪ **Two Streams in the Socio-Religious Reform Movement:**

- The reformist like the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Aligarh Movement.
- The revivalist like Arya Samaj and the Deoband movement.

Major difference between the two was, varying degree of reliance on traditions, reasons and conscience.

▪ **Education of Women:**

Year	Founder	Name/Number of organisations	Educational streams
1819	Christian missionaries	Calcutta Female Juvenile Society	General Education
1849	J.E.D. Bethune	The Bethune School	
1850s	Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar	No less than 35 girls' schools in Bengal	
1914		Women's Medical Service	Training nurses and mid-wives
1916	D. K. Karve	Indian Women's University	Higher Education
1916	Lady Hardinge	Lady Hardinge Medical College, Delhi	Medical Education.

Charles Wood's Despatch on Education (1854)

laid great stress on the need for female education. Health facilities began to be provided to women with the opening of Dufferin Hospitals in the 1880s.

▪ **Limitations of Socio-Religious Reform Movement:**

- Main target was middle class
- They used religion to support them
- Based on colonial legislation
- Not unified; in different area the priority of reform was different
- Led to religious revivalism.

Awakening among Lower castes due to new Opportunities

Name	Organization/Movements	Work	Result
Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule	✓ Satyashodhak Samaj	1. Movement against the brahminical domination 2. Education of lower castes, especially girls	1. Savitribai Phule-First female teacher. 2. Opened several Schools for Women.
Babasaheb Ambedkar	✓ All India Scheduled Castes Federation ✓ All India Depressed Classes Association. ✓ Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha in	Annihilation of the institution of caste, Mahad Satyagraha 1927 for consumption of water from public water pond and	Provision of special representation for lower classes in the Government of India Act, 1935.

	1924- motto was: 'Educate, Agitate and Organise.	temple movements.	
E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker	✓ Self-Respect Movement	Setup with the aim of achieving a society where backward castes have equal human rights	The movement was extremely influential not just in Tamil Nadu, but also overseas in countries with large Tamil population, such as Malaysia and Singapore.
Sri Narayana Guru, Kerala	✓ "One religion, one caste, one God for mankind"	Entry of lower castes into temples.	Temples were opened up in South Indian states.