

Reformism vs Revivalism:

Reformists and revivalists both thought in terms of a great Indian civilization and the need for restoring the purity of this culture that had over time been contaminated. So, on one hand, there was an element of revivalism in the reform movements. And on the other hand, revivalism was not always blind faith or obscurantism. Thus, to distinguish very clearly between reformism and revivalism becomes difficult. Reformists were more inclined to accept the West without hesitation, while revivalists were less receptive to Western learning.

- While both reformists and revivalists **shared a fascination for ancient knowledge**, the ultimate distinction lay in the reformists' **greater willingness to blend Western knowledge with Indian traditions**. Revivalism argued that everything contributed by the West to Indian culture could be found in the Vedas and ancient traditions.

Revivalism manifested in various dimensions and featured multiple facets.

- **Religious Revivalism:** Those who thought that monotheism was an accepted practice in the Indian past and it now needed to be revived, notwithstanding the provocation by Christianity. This was a part of the cultural engagement that the Indian intellectuals.
- **Cultural Revivalism:** It involved efforts to rediscover and promote traditional Indian philosophies, art forms, literature, and customs, while also advocating for social and religious reforms. It played a significant role in reviving and promoting classical Indian music, dance forms, martial arts, Yoga, and classical languages etc. It also emphasized the importance of regional languages and literature. Prominent authors and poets emerged in various regional languages, such as Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali and Subramania Bharati in Tamil, who contributed to the revival and promotion of regional literature. Traditional Indian painting styles like Mughal, Rajput, and Tanjore paintings saw a resurgence during this period.
- **Political Revivalism:** The notion that India was inherently a divided nation compelled scholars and intellectuals to delve into the annals of history to uncover evidence of Indian unity and political cohesion in classical or ancient times. Some intellectuals went as far as suggesting that democratic institutions had flourished in ancient India, thus emphasizing the quest for democracy, and focusing on institutions such as assemblies and councils in Indian governance.

This aspect of revivalism was not simply a call to return to the past, but rather a re-evaluation of tradition in order to engage with modernity and embrace modern ideas, whether political, social, or religious. Its ultimate objective was the creation of a modern India. So, it was a modernist ideology couched in a language that would be reminiscent of certain revivalist ideas.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94)

- Bankim was impressed by the **Gaudiya Vaishnavism's** cultural efflorescence of the 14th and 15th c in Bengal. He was a **critique of the philosophy** in the sense of its emphasis on renunciation (vairagya) rather than political and social power.
- He **blended both Indian and Western culture**.
 - On the one hand, he believed in the superiority of Indian religion and culture, on the other hand, he appreciated the material and technical success of the West. According to him, both are necessary for the progress of India.
- His famous work titled **Anand Math** depicts the journey from Bengali Nationalism to Indian Nationalism. Drawing from the Shakti tradition of Bengal, he personified India as a Mother Goddess known as **Bharat Mata**. Another notable work on the Sanyasi rebellion authored by him is **Devi Chaudhurani**.



Ramkrishna Paramhansa (1836-86)

- He was a priest at Dakshineswar Temple of goddess Kali.
- Though, not educated, he learned Vedanta from Totapuri and philosophy of Sufism from Govind Das.
- He practiced **Universal Vedanta philosophy**, which was tolerant, inclusive, cosmopolitan, and progressive.
 - He did not condemn idol-worship unlike Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The essence of Ramkrishna's teachings was the realisation of God as the highest human ideal in whatever manner or mode of worship one liked.
 - He propagated the thought of Vedanta among the **common people** and explained it by giving examples from day-to-day life.
 - Although his teaching was based on ancient and traditional concept, it was very refreshing and modern because he made **humanism** as the theme of his philosophy. He did not discriminate man from man and religion from religion. He was not a revivalist, he preferred to use Hinduism for the progress of society by connecting it with humanism. He believed that to serve humanity is to serve the God. He said, **'Jiva is Siva'** (all living beings are God). Based on this precept, Swami Vivekanand, his disciple, laid the foundation of Ramakrishna mission.



His earlier name was Gadadhar. It was given to him by a Vedantic saint Totapuri.

- Despite being a Kali worshipper, he was **non-sectarian** in approach. He did not establish any new religious sect and tried to connect Hinduism with the idea of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.
- Policy of religious tolerance and non-eclecticism
 - He tried to perceive God not only through Hinduism but also through Christianity and Islam. He believed that the essence of all religions is one. For him Ram, Allah, Christ, Hari were different names for the same God. He emphasized that the different sects recommend the different path to reach the same goal. ('**Joto Mat, Tato Path**') He highlighted that the unity of human beings through the idea of unity of God.
- Sayings of Ramkrishna
 - *Taka mati, mati taka.*
 - *Women are, all of them, the veritable images of Shakti.*
 - *Knowledge leads to unity, but Ignorance to diversity.*
 - *Lovers of God do not belong to any caste.*
 - *Never get into your head that your faith alone is true and every other is false. Know for certain that God without form is real and that God with form is also real.*



Rani Rashmoni, a lady zamindar, inherited zamindari after her husband's death. With superior managerial skills and charitable works in the city of Calcutta, she impressed the people. She successfully resisted British in many cases like fishing tax in Ganga, restraints on Puja procession. She provided tacit support to Vidyasagar's campaign for widow remarriage. She also built **Dakshineswar Kali Temple** in 1855 and appointed Ramkrishna as its head priest.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) and Ramkrishna Mission

Narendra Nath Dutta, popularly known as Swami Vivekananda, emerged as the real spiritual successor of Ramkrishna. He was educated in an English school and had read the philosophies of John Stuart Mill, Rousseau, Hegel, Duma, Dante, etc. He was a 'rationalist' and Ramkrishna Param Hansa was a 'traditionalist', yet they came closer.

Vivekananda was a revivalist who recognized the greatness of ancient Hindu culture but saw how corruption had undermined it within Hinduism. He aimed to restore its original glory by removing unholy practices.



- **Philosophy: Neo-Vedantism**

- Basic ideas:

- Through Gyan (knowledge), Karma (action) and Bhakti (devotion) one can reach the God.
 - Social and religious customs can be acceptable only when they are rational.
 - He called all religions as true religions, so no purpose can be achieved through religious conversion.

- Vedanta philosophy gives emphasis over the unity between Brahma and soul. But Vivekananda modified this concept, and he saw Brahma on the face of millions of poor. For him, service of the poor was worship to the God. So, his Vedantism was pragmatic Vedantism as it linked religion with social work.
 - While he asserted that while spirituality and religions were the biggest strengths of the eastern culture, he also vehemently opposed the religious pomp and rituals. Making spiritualism practical was an important contribution of Vivekananda.

- **Visit to the West**

- He addressed the gathering as 'sisters and brothers of America', which instantly touched the heart, mind, and soul of the audience. His speech made headlines in the newspapers of U.S.A.
 - Vivekananda set up Vedanta Society in different cities of USA and made many Americans and English his disciples, including Margaret Nobel (Sister Nivedita).



Lectures from Colombo to Almora (1897) is a book of Swami Vivekananda based on the lectures he delivered in Sri Lanka and India after his return from the West.

- He also went to Paris, Vienna, Egypt and removed the misconception about Hinduism and Indian culture. When he returned to India, he was already a well-known figure in India, thanks to his warm reception in the west.

- **Man-making Mission:**

- He popularized the Sanskrit verse, “Arise, Awake and Stop Not till the Goal is Reached” from Katha Upanishad, the goal being to gain freedom from the foreign British yoke. He exhorted his countrymen to straighten their backs so no foreigner could ride on them. Time and again Vivekananda reminded Indians to be “mighty lions” and “not meek lambs.”
- “What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want.”
- “Before you read Geeta, make sure you are strong and to become strong you must play football.”

- **Nation-building:**

- He instilled in Indians the spirit of nationalistic pride and vigor based on unique **spiritual heritage** of the Vedas, Upanishads, and Vedanta (spiritualistic nationalism)
- **Modernisation:** He believed that for the development of India there should be a free exchange between western elements and oriental elements. Although it is true that India is far ahead of west in spiritual richness, but it had to learn something from west in the field of science and technology. Thus, he attempted to combine Indian spirituality with Western material progress, maintaining that the two supplemented and complemented one another.
- He considered social upliftment a necessary corollary to nation-building and **rejected religious and social division**. He rejected caste inequality and
- untouchability. Likewise, he rejected communal distinctions. He argued that until India overcomes caste, ethnic, and regional divisions, she cannot become a great power. He opposed superstitious beliefs, casteism and untouchability. Once he remarked, *“Our religion is confined to our kitchens, and we have become 'do not*



Two monasteries were founded by him, one at Belur and the other at Mayavati in Uttarakhand (Advaita Ashrama). These monasteries were meant to train young men who would eventually become sannyasis of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Belur Math is the heart of the Ramakrishna movement. It is notable for its architecture that fuses Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist, and Christian art and motifs as a symbol of unity of all religions.

touchist'. Our God is in our vessels and our religion is that I am pious, do not touch me."

- He emphasized **social work**. He believed that the majority of educated people of India should work for eradicating poverty and hunger.
 - He travelled extensively in different parts of India and experienced the real India-the illiterate and poverty-stricken India.
 - Initially his mission was involved in helping the famine-affected people, later the mission broadened its horizon and set up orphanages, hospitals, libraries, etc. Thus, Vivekananda's movement was basically a humanitarian and social service movement rather than a social reform movement. Instead of challenging rituals or idol worship, he gave emphasis on removing poverty and illiteracy.
 - He emphasised the fact that till the millions of poor are not given basic amenities by the state, India could never emerge to be a modern nation.
 - The spirit of 'Daridranarayana' also suited socialist ideology. He made every educated person responsible for illiteracy in India, who after receiving education, forgets his brothers and sisters.
- He himself laid foundation of the **Ramakrishna Mission** (1896). He inspired the Sanyasis to work for mankind instead of renouncing the world.
 - Mystical movement of Ramkrishna ultimately acquired the character of a kind of a monastic order under Vivekananda. Its objective was making India stronger again; culturally, intellectually, socially.
 - *"Give me 100 energetic young men and I shall transform India"*
- Vivekananda edited **Prabuddha Bharat** (in English) and **Prabodhini** (in Bengali)

He inspired thousands of educated Indians, especially Hindus and helped them in developing self-confidence. No other social reformer inspired the educated Hindus so much as Vivekananda. He died long ago (1902) but his movement is alive. "Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom." – C Rajagopalachari



Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble, 1867-1911) was an Irish disciple of Swami Vivekananda. She ran girls' school in Calcutta and engaged herself in famine relief activity. She took an active interest in promoting Indian history, culture, and science. She toured India to appeal to the youth to spend life selflessly in the service of nation. She was closely associated with Anushilan Samiti revolutionaries and Aurobindo. She inspired artists like Abanindranath Tagore, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Nandalal Bose and E. B. Havell to develop a pure Indian school of art. She encouraged Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose to pursue pure science. She introduced Vande Mataram song as a school prayer.

Speech delivered by Swami Vivekananda on September 11, 1893, at the first World's Parliament of Religions.

Sisters and Brothers of America,

It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world, I thank you in the name of the mother of religions, and I thank you in the name of millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects.

My thanks, also, to some of the speakers on this platform who, referring to the delegates from the Orient, have told you that these men from far-off nations may well claim the honor of bearing to different lands the idea of toleration. I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: "As the different streams having their sources in different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee."

The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling

through paths which in the end lead to me.” Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) and Arya Samaj

- His childhood name was **Mulshankar**. He was born in Morbi, Gujarat in 1824.
 - He strongly argued for the **infallibility of Vedas** as the true foundation of Hinduism. He considered them the fountainhead of all knowledge and full of scientific thinking. He gave slogan of **Go Back to Vedas**, but he endorsed the Varna system of the Vedas. But his approach was not revivalist. He criticized all the social evils based on the Vedic system. He made an attack on religious ritualism like idol worship, temple cult, clericalism etc, and rejected social evils like Sati system, untouchability, caste system, child marriage etc. He supported women's education and inter-caste marriages.
 - His motto, 'Go back to the Vedas' threatened to rout the vested interests of priests and they even conspired to assassinate him. In 1863, he hoisted the **Pakhand Khandini** flag.
- **Satyartha Prakash** (Hindi, Benaras, 1875)
 - The central theme of Dayanand's exposition was his **dualist doctrine** of mind and matter. To him, God and the human soul were two absolutely separate forces in the creation and functioning of the universe. According to him, every man must take full responsibility of his action. Nevertheless, he accepted the traditional Hindu doctrines of **transmigration of soul** and **karma**.
- Though he promoted revivalism & traditionalism, he was also influenced by the west.
 - In certain matters he was impressed with the achievement of the west. He praised **discipline & dedication** among western people to their religion.
 - Like Christianity, which is based on a **single text**, Dayanand also made similar attempt to make the whole of Hinduism based completely on Vedas.
 - He applied the **western scientific temper and rationalism** against the west itself.



- When Dayanand Saraswati came to Bombay in 1874, he met Mahadev Govind Ranade, and with his help the **Arya Samaj** was founded in **1875** at Bombay.
 - The Arya Samaj movement was basically a **revivalist movement**, which wanted to revive the ancient Aryan tradition in modern times because the Samaj felt that these principles were not time-bound. There was **no room for idol worship** in Arya Samaj. Rather, Vedic sacrifices were given central position. **Welfare of entire mankind** was the objective and in social matters there was belief in the fatherhood of God, brotherhood of man, equality of gender, social justice to all.
 - It started as a reaction against Islam, Christianity, and Western thought. It attempted to **defend Hindu culture and wanted to reform it from within**.
 - Earlier Arya Samaj was active in Maharashtra, but it gained wider acceptance in Punjab and UP. He shifted the HQ to **Lahore** in 1877.
 - In the early years, Dayanand Saraswati tried to come to terms with Brahmo Samaj and even arranged a conference in Calcutta in 1869. But the attempt failed. Soon, Arya Samaj **surpassed Brahmo Samaj in Punjab**.



As 19th century drew to the close, the intonation began to change. From the intellectual revivalism of Dayanand Saraswati it became more preoccupied with the question of proselytization (Shuddhi). After Dayananda, this movement was **divided into two factions** in 1893:

College faction	Moderate and more progressive	Lala Lajpat Rai, Lala Hansraj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrated on setting up Dayanand Anglo-Vedic Colleges. First one setup in Lahore in 1886.
Gurukul faction	More revivalist in nature	Lala Lekhram, Lala Munshiram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on Brahmacharya and Vedas. • Founded Gurukul in Haridwar in 1902. • Raised issues like adoption of Devnagari script and ban on cow slaughter. • Encouraged Shuddhi reconversion and Sanghathan movement.

- **Limitations:**

- Among Indian scholars, Dayanand was different in the sense that he never came in touch with western education. While reacting to the cultural invasion of Christianity, he came to be excessively hostile to the western elements.

- He tried to reform Hinduism, but he found all collective wisdom in Vedas only. So, Arya Samaj over time became a revivalist movement. He gave a slogan 'Back to the Vedas', but the belief in varna system didn't inspire lower class Hindus for whom Vedas couldn't provide a respectable place.
- Although, even other Hindu reformers gave emphasis to the glory of ancient India, Arya Samaj gave too much emphasis to the achievements of ancient India while drawing a line of demarcation between ancient & medieval India. One was identified with Hindus and another with Muslims. So, it indirectly encouraged a degree of communal consciousness.
- Above all, the Shuddhi movement started by Swami Dayanand became a major factor behind rise of pan-Indian Hindutva later. Lala Munshiram (**Swami Shraddhanand**) played a key role in Shuddhi and Sanghathan movement in 1920s. He was assassinated by Abdul Rashid.



Arya Samaj as a social reform and social service movement is still alive. In post-independent India, it was more involved in organizing/arranging inter-caste marriage and freeing the bonded labour. The work done by Swami Agnivesh in this field is truly commendable.



Shiv Narayan Agnihotri (1850-1929) founded the **Dev Samaj** in 1886 in Lahore, rejecting Brahmo rationalism and drawing on the concept of the Guru as an enlightened soul as its central tenet. He still retained elements of Brahmo reformism/radicalism.

Theosophical Society

- The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 at New York by **Madam H.P. Blavatsky** (1831-1891), a Russian-German lady, and **Col. H.S. Olcott** (1832-1907), an American. These were some western scholars who were influenced by Indian culture and thinking.
- Basic idea
 - To **revive the ancient religions of Asia**, mainly Hinduism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. The Theosophy did not believe in differences between these religions.
 - To attain knowledge of God by spiritual ecstasy, direct intuition, propagating Hindu beliefs, reincarnation and karma; drawing inspiration from the philosophy of the Upanishads-Samkhya, Yoga and Vedanta school of thought.
 - A theosophist could be of any religion and without giving up his earlier faith could become a Theosophist. In its meetings, prayers of all religions were organised.
 - However, Madame Blavatsky's main emphasis had been on the occult than spiritual. She composed a text, *Isis Unvelied*. It became the key text of the movement.
- Though **Adyar** (near Madras) became its headquarters in 1882, Blavatsky lived mostly in London and Olcott in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) where he propagated Buddhism. The Theosophical society flourished with the arrival of Madame Annie Besant, an Irish lady. She joined the Theosophical Society in 1882 and came to India in 1893 after the death of Madam Blavatsky. Dr. Besant became the **President of The Theosophical Society in 1907**, after the death of O.S. Olcott.
 - She was impressed by the Hindu culture and adopted Hindu way of life – its dress, food and social manners. She **preached Bhagvad Gita**, wrote a commentary on the Ramayana and Mahabharata.
 - She founded the **Central Hindu School** in **Banares** in **1898** with the purpose of teaching Hinduism to Hindus and giving Hinduism a spearhead thus ensuring its future. Later, in 1915, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya developed the same school into a **BHU** in 1916.
- Though this society could not influence the masses, it gave a sense of confidence among the Indians regarding their culture.





Political Activities of Annie Besant

- She dedicated herself in politics in later part of her life.
- She joined Indian National Congress in 1915 and became its first woman **President in 1917** (Calcutta).
- She was also instrumental in **bringing Tilak back into Congress** at Lucknow session (1916).
- She also started the **Home Rule League** in 1916 on the pattern of the Irish Home Rule League and propagated progressive views through her newspaper '**New India**' and '**Common Weal**'.