
UNIT 3 INTRODUCTION TO THE IDEOLOGY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL REFORM IN 19TH CENTURY INDIA

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to introduce you to the theme of socio-political reform in 19th century India and to acquaint you with the broad contours of the ideology underlying the socio-political reform movement and its legacy to modern India.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The dominant feature of socio-political thought in Colonial India were liberalism and nationalism. The liberal phase was characterized by attempts to rationalize and democratize the social and religious institutions. If it focused primarily on religious reform, it was only because of the belief that unless religion was first freed from dogma and superstition, unless the people discarded their age-old practices like sati, untouchability, and other caste discriminations sanctified by religion, there was no hope for social progress. The liberals of the 19th century were convinced that if religious and social reforms were first achieved, they would in due course lead to political and economic freedom. This belief informed the thinking of not only the three most renowned reformers of this period, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahadeo Govind Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale whom you will study in separate lessons or units, but also several others not included in your course.

3.2 CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT

The Indian Social Reform Movement was largely, though not exclusively a product of the Western impact on Indian society. The Indian Society in the 18th century was