

- **Separate Electorates:** The British government created separate electorates for Muslims, in 1909 and expanded them in 1919, which was crucial in shaping the nature of communal politics. Religious identities thus acquired a functional use within a modern political system; and the logic of electoral politics deepened and hardened these identities.
- **Symbols used during the National movement:** Symbols such as supporting Tilak, taking dip in Ganga, celebrating Ganesh Utsav and Shivaji Jayanti, etc. used by Congress in active politics alienated Muslims.
- **Revivalist movements:** During 1920s and 1930s, Tabligh (propaganda) and Tanzim (organization) were organized by the Muslims, while Hindus started cow protection movement and Shuddhi (re-conversion) movements. Communal identities were consolidated through these series of events, which were further exploited by politics.
- **The Khilafat question:** The mainstream popularity of the religious question by the nationalist leaders paved the way for orthodox religious schools to gain widespread acceptance. A secularist and modernist leadership were replaced by a theocratic orthodoxy among the Muslims.

So, the communal politics ensured that community identities no longer indicated simple difference in faith and belief; they came to mean active opposition and hostility between communities.

However, it has been argued that various forms of communal discord happened before 1947 but it had never led to the uprooting of millions from their homes. The two communities had coexisted with a long history of sharing, and of mutual cultural exchange. Therefore, it was not just the communal politics but also the British arrangements for transfer of power that finally led to the partition of India.

9. ***How did the socio-religious reform movements during the colonial period contribute to the emancipation of women?***

Approach:

- Briefly discuss the socio-religious movements, which led to the restructuring of the Indian society along modern lines.
- State the impact of the socio-religious movements on the emancipation of women in the 19th century with relevant examples.
- Conclude on the basis of above points.

Answer:

The socio-religious reform movements of the 19th century aimed to restructure the Indian society by abolishing the old decadent customs, rituals and traditions and adopting the doctrines of reason, humanism, human dignity and social equality. These movements targeted socio-religious practices as well as personal laws, which oppressed and subordinated women and that resulted in social, administrative and legal changes.

Contribution of the movements to the emancipation of women:

- **Abolition of Sati practice:** Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy agitated against the inhuman custom of Sati and gathered support to put an end to the system. These efforts resulted in the passing of the **Bengal Sati Regulation or Regulation XVII in 1829**.
- **Prevention of female infanticide:** Various movements by social reformers and reports by Jonathan Duncan related to infanticide led to the **Bengal Regulations of 1795 and 1804** and later **Prevention of Female Infanticide Act, 1870**.
- **Prevention of child marriage:** Organisations like Brahmo and Arya Samaj, Madras Mahajan Sabha and missionaries created public pressure to increase the age of marriage. Their consistent efforts resulted in the enactment of the **Age of Consent Act, 1891**, which forbade the marriage of girls below the age of 12. Later, the **Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929**, popularly known as the **Sarda Act**, further increased the marriage age to 18 and 14 for boys and girls respectively.
- **Widow remarriage:** Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's vigorous agitation for widow remarriage led to the enactment of the **Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856 or Act XV, 1856**.