

Indian National Social Conference, Background, Major Social Reforms

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The **Indian National Social Conference (INSC)** was established in 1887 by **M.G. Ranade** and **Raghunath Rao** to promote social reform in colonial India. It was created when the Indian National Congress chose to focus mainly on political issues and avoid sensitive social matters. The Indian National Social Conference acted as a parallel platform to address social evils while remaining closely associated with the Congress.

Indian National Social Conference Background

The Indian National Social Conference was founded in 1887 by M.G. Ranade and Raghunath Rao to promote social reforms after the Indian National Congress decided to focus mainly on political issues.

- The Indian National Congress, formed in 1885, was initially expected to work on political as well as social reforms.
- Many leaders, including Ranade, believed that India's progress required the elimination of social evils like **child marriage, caste discrimination, and polygamy**.
- However, a strong section within Congress argued that social reforms were **controversial and divisive** and could weaken political unity.

- Due to this difference of opinion, **social issues were excluded** from the Congress agenda.
- To fill this gap, M.G. Ranade and Raghunath Rao founded the **Indian National Social Conference in 1887**.
- Its **first session was held in Madras** alongside the Congress session.
- From then onwards, it met **every year at the same venue and time as the Congress**, making it a social reform wing of the national movement.
- The Conference aimed to bring together **reformers, intellectuals, and progressive leaders** to fight social backwardness in India.

Major Social Reforms Promoted by Indian National Social Conference

The Indian National Social Conference worked actively to remove social evils and promote progressive values in Indian society. It aimed to create a modern, just, and inclusive social order alongside the national movement.

- **Opposition to Child Marriage:** The Conference strongly criticized early marriages and promoted the Pledge Movement to encourage people to vow against child marriage.
- **Support for Inter-Caste Marriages:** It encouraged marriages across caste boundaries to reduce caste discrimination and promote social equality.
- **Condemnation of Polygamy:** The Conference opposed the practice of having multiple wives, especially highlighting its negative impact on women.
- **Fight Against Kulinism:** It condemned the **kulin system in Bengal**, which allowed upper-caste men to have several wives for social prestige.
- **Promotion of Women's Rights:** It supported women's education, widow remarriage, and better social status for women.
- **Social Awareness Campaigns:** The Conference organized discussions, speeches, and resolutions to spread awareness against social evils across India.

Indian National Social Conference Decline

- The Indian National Social Conference gradually lost importance after **1900** as political nationalism became the main focus of the freedom movement.
- The rise of **extremist leaders** in the Indian National Congress shifted attention away from social reform to **direct political struggle against British rule**.
- Many Congress leaders began to believe that **political freedom should come before social reform**, reducing support for the Conference.
- The Conference depended heavily on the **Indian National Congress**, and as Congress priorities changed, the Social Conference weakened.
- The death of **M.G. Ranade in 1901** was a major setback, as he was the main driving force behind the movement.
- Social reform activities started being taken over by **regional and community-based organizations**, reducing the national role of the Conference.
- Growing **religious and communal politics** also made unified social reform more difficult.
- By the early 20th century, the Indian National Social Conference had **lost its influence and relevance** in national public life.

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