Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, founded the Arya Samaj in 1875. The influence of the Brahma Samaj leaders Debendranath Tagore and Keshub Chandra Sen undoubtedly affected him. Many of the Brahma Samaj were known for social service. This possibly affected the development of the ten articles of the creed of the Arya Samaj. Prominent among these is the goal of service for all:

The primary object of the Samaj is to do good to the world, by improving the physical, spiritual and social condition of mankind.

No one ought to be contented with his own good alone, but everyone ought to regard his prosperity as included in that of others (J. H. Parquebar, Modern Religious Movements in India, p. 120, quoted by Albert Schweitzer, Modern Indian Thought, p. 214).

In principle the Arya Samaj is thus more ethical and has a greater social consciousness than most Indian Schools of Thought. His Aryas included noble-minded men of every caste, and not simply Brahmins. Saraswati believed the four original Vedas to be the source of all truth, in fact, of all true knowledge. He went so far as to claim that all scientific discoveries, past, present and future are indicated in the Vedas. He found agreement between the revelation of God in the Vedas and that found in Nature (Albert Schweitzer, Modern Indian Thought, p. 215).

Observers regard the Arya Samaj as chiefly a social reform movement, much more so than a religious one. Much of its religious activity is directed toward reclaiming former Hindus who have accepted Christianity or Islam.

Because of its belief in transmigration it was opposed by Brahmabhhandav (Shawawi Charan Janerji) and others as not really being consistent, in that rebirth is not taught in the Vedas.