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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. Indian nationalism grew partly as a result of colonial policies and partly as a reaction to colonial policies. Discuss. (250 words)

25 Sep, 2020 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Introduce with explaining the Indian model of nationalism.
- Discuss the factors that led to the rise of Indian nationalism especially focusing on colonial policies and Indian reaction to them.
- Conclude suitably on a positive note.

Introduction

- Indian Nationalist Movement was a grand and prolonged struggle launched against British imperialism. Nationalism was the main ideology and the instrument with whose help this struggle was launched.
- In the context of the Indian Nationalist Movement, Indian nationalism represented two major ideas: **anti-imperialism and national unity**. In other words, any person, movement or organisation that practised and upheld these two ideas, could be considered a nationalist.

Body

Factors that led to rise of Indian Nationalism:

Colonial Policies:

- **Western education:** When the British introduced Western education in India, they aimed at creating a class of educated Indians who could serve the British Interests. However, the English language helped nationalist leaders from different linguistic regions to communicate with each other and create a sense of national identity.
Modern western education also propagated the ideas of Nationalism, democracy, rights and freedom.
- **Socio- religious reforms:** These reform movements sought to remove social evils which divided the Indian society; this had the effect of bringing different sections together, and proved to be an important factor in the growth of Indian nationalism .
- **Modern press:** the second half of the nineteenth century saw the rise of modern press in India. It helped in often criticising the British policies and bringing together people from different backgrounds by spreading awareness.

- **Political unity:** The political unification of the country, necessitated by the convenience had a two fold effect:
 - The economic fate of the people of different regions got linked together; for instance, failure of crops in one region affected the prices and supply in another region.
 - Modern means of transport and communication (esp Railways) brought people, especially the leaders, from different regions together. This was important for the exchange of political ideas and for mobilisation and organisation of public opinion on political and economic issues.

Reaction to colonial policies:

- **Rediscovery of India's past:** The historical researches by European and Indian scholars created an entirely new picture of India's past.
 - The theory put forward by European scholars, that the Indo-Aryans belonged to the same ethnic group from which other nations of Europe had evolved, gave a psychological boost to the educated Indians.
 - The **self-respect and confidence** so gained helped the nationalists to demolish colonial myths that India had a long history of servility to foreign rulers.
- **Rise of middle class intelligentsia:** British administrative and economic innovations gave rise to a new urban middle class in towns. This class, prominent because of its education, new position and its close ties with the ruling class, came to the forefront. The leadership to the Indian National Congress in all its stages of growth was provided by this class.
- **Racial arrogance of rulers:** Racial myths of white superiority were sought to be perpetuated by the British through a deliberate policy of discrimination and segregation. Indians felt deeply hurt by this.
 - Example: Lytton's reactionary policies such as reduction of maximum age limit for the I.C.S. examination from 21 years to 19 years (1876)
 - It became clear to the nationalists that justice and fair play could not be expected where interests of the European Community were involved. However, the organised agitation by the Europeans to revoke the Ilbert Bill also taught the nationalists how to agitate for certain rights and demands.

Conclusion

- The British policies and the growing anger against the colonial government brought together different groups and classes of Indians into a common struggle for freedom.
- In a nutshell, we can say that Indian nationalism grew partly as a result of colonial policies and partly as a reaction to colonial policies.