



Mains Practice Question

Q. Analyze the socio-political, economic, and cultural factors contributing to the emergence of reform movements in modern India. (250 Words)

12 Feb, 2024 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Write a brief introduction about the reform movements in modern India.
- Mention the Socio-political, Economic and Cultural factors contributing to the emergence of the reform movement in modern India.
- Write a conclusion.

Introduction

The reform movements in modern India, spanning the **19th** and early **20th** centuries, were driven by influences like **colonial rule, social injustices, education spread,** and **nationalist fervor.** They are aiming to modernize religions by **discarding rituals and social ills,** and seeking to revive the **purity of Indian religions** by returning to **original scriptures.**

Body

Some of the socio-political, economic and cultural factors that contributed to the emergence of the reform movement in modern India are:

- **Socio-political factors**
 - The british introduced the **english language** and modern ideas of **liberty, democracy,** and **justice.** For example, **Raja Ram Mohan Roy,** the founder of the **Brahmo Samaj,** was influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment and the **French Revolution,** and advocated for **social** and **religious reforms** based on reason and humanism. He also opposed the oppressive policies of the British, such as the imposition of taxes and restrictions on the press.
 - The **religious and social ills** that plagued Indian society, such as **superstitions, caste system,** and the **oppression of women.** For example, **Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar,** a prominent leader of the **Young Bengal Movement,** fought for the abolition of **child marriage** and the **legalization of widow remarriage,** and also established **schools for girls** and **lower castes.**
 - The growth of nationalist sentiments and the emergence of new economic forces, which challenged British rule and demanded more rights and representation for the Indians. For example, **Bal Gangadhar Tilak,** a prominent leader of the **Home Rule Movement,** advocated for **self-rule** and **swaraj,** and also supported the peasant and **worker movements** against British exploitation .
- **Economic factors**
 - The impact of **British economic policies,** which led to the decline of Indian industries, agriculture, and trade. For example, **Dadabhai Naoroji,** a prominent leader of the **Indian National Congress,** calculated the **economic drain of wealth** from India to Britain, and exposed the British exploitation and impoverishment of India .

- The exploitation of Indian resources and labor by the British, which resulted in **poverty, famines, and indebtedness**. For example, **Mahatma Gandhi**, the leader of the **Indian National Movement**, launched the **Champaran Satyagraha** and the **Kheda Satyagraha** to protest against the oppressive taxation and land revenue policies of the British, and to support the peasants and farmers who were suffering from famine and drought .
- The emergence of a new middle class, which was **educated, urban, and professional**, and **sought social and economic reforms**. For example, **Gopal Krishna Gokhale**, a prominent leader of the **Indian National Congress**, advocated for moderate and constitutional reforms, and also founded the **Servants of India Society** to train and educate the Indians for **public service and social welfare**.
- **Cultural factors**
 - The spread of **education and increased awareness** of the world, which provided a **sense of pride in India's past glory** and a desire to reform its present condition. For example, **Swami Vivekananda**, the founder of the **Ramakrishna Mission**, propagated the message of **Vedanta** and **Hinduism**, and also emphasized the need for social service and national regeneration .
 - The influence of **modern Western ideas and culture**, which challenged the traditional values and customs of Indian society. For example, **Rabindranath Tagore**, the founder of the Shantiniketan, introduced a new system of education that was based on the **principles of freedom, creativity**, and harmony, and also blended the best elements of the East and the West.
 - The **revival of ancient Indian traditions and thoughts**, which inspired the reformers to restore the **purity and authenticity** of the Indian religions. For example, **Dayanand Saraswati**, the founder of the **Arya Samaj**, advocated for the **reform and revival of Hinduism** by going back to the **Vedas**, and also opposed the **idolatry, casteism**, and **ritualism** that had polluted Hinduism . Similarly, **Syed Ahmed Khan**, the founder of the **Aligarh Movement**, advocated for the reform and revival of Islam by going back to the Quran.

Conclusion

The reform movements in modern India were instrumental in addressing societal injustices, promoting rationality, and fostering national identity. They were pivotal in laying the foundation for India's struggle for independence and continue to inspire social change and progress in contemporary times.