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Q3

Examine the linkages between the nineteenth century's 'Indian Renaissance' and the emergence of national identity.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · GS I · 10 marks · World's Physical Geography

Salient features of world's physical geography.

Core demand of the question

- Examine the linkages between the nineteenth century's 'Indian Renaissance' and the emergence of national identity
- Show how social-religious reform linked to a shared national self
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

The Indian Renaissance was reform, print, and history work across several provinces.

Sati abolition, widow remarriage, and samaj movements made social life a public Indian question.

Recovered past and songs such as Vande Mataram gave emotional symbols of the nation.

The Indian Association and Congress (1885) turned that culture into political identity.

The link was real but uneven, because large rural and subaltern groups stood at the edge of this public.

Introduction

The nineteenth-century Indian Renaissance was a set of reform, print, and history projects, strongest first in Bengal and then in Bombay, Madras, Punjab, and the United Provinces. It did not create a finished nation, but it taught educated Indians to speak of one people with a past, a public, and a claim to self-rule.

Body**Reform as a public Indian self**

- Rammohan Roy's Brahmo work, the campaign against sati (abolished in 1829), and later Vidyasagar's widow-remarriage law of 1856 treated social wrongs as questions for an Indian public, not only for a caste sabha.
- Young Bengal, Prarthana Samaj, **Arya Samaj (1875)**, the Aligarh movement of Syed Ahmad Khan, and the Ramakrishna-**Vivekananda** current argued over scripture and custom in print, which made a shared debate across regions.
- Jyotirao **Phule**'s Satyashodhak work and Pandita Ramabai's critique showed that the new public also had caste and gender fractures, which later nationalism could not ignore.
- English and vernacular colleges, and societies such as the Asiatic Society's Indian successors, trained a class that could petition the Raj in the name of India.

History, language, and symbols

- Recovery of **Ashoka**, the Gupta age, and Vedic and Bhakti texts, through Indian scholars as well as Orientalists, gave a usable golden past against colonial contempt.
- Bankim Chandra's Anandamath and Vande Mataram, Bharat Mata images, and later **Vivekananda**'s Chicago speech of 1893 turned culture into a national emotion.
- Newspapers, the **Indian Association (1876)**, and the **Indian National Congress (1885)** moved renaissance talk from the salon to an all-India platform of demands.
- **Regional renaissances in Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, and Urdu still fed a common claim:** Indians were a historical nation, not a mere Company population.

Limits of the link

- The renaissance was uneven, urban, and often high-caste; Muslim, Dalit, and peasant majorities entered national identity on other tracks as well.
- Even so, without reform, print, and the rediscovered past, the later Swadeshi and Gandhian nation would have lacked a language of self-respect.

Flow diagram

Reform print colleges -> Indian public
Past symbols vernacular -> National identity
Indian public -> National identity
Congress petitions 1885 -> National identity
Caste region gaps -> National identity

Conclusion

Nineteenth-century reform and cultural revival created an Indian public that could imagine a shared past and a shared future. National identity grew from that public, even while caste, region, and religion kept pulling it apart.

Facts & figures

Sati Regulation, 1829

Bengal regulation associated with Rammohan Roy's campaign, a landmark of the reform public.

Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856

Law pushed by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar that treated marriage custom as a national social issue.

Arya Samaj, 1875

Dayananda's movement that used Vedic revival to build a confident Hindu public across north India.

Indian National Congress, 1885

All-India body that grew out of the educated renaissance public and its associations.

Vande Mataram / Anandamath

Bankim's hymn and novel that supplied a cultural emblem later used in nationalist politics.

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