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Q2

Trace the rise and growth of socio-religious reform movements with special reference to Young Bengal and Brahmo Samaj.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · GS I · 10 marks · World's Physical Geography

Salient features of world's physical geography.

Core demand of the question

- Trace the rise and growth of socio-religious reform movements with special reference to Young Bengal and Brahmo Samaj
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Colonial print and English education created a reform public in Calcutta.

Young Bengal under Derozio used reason to attack custom, but it stayed a brief student circle.

Brahmo Samaj from Rammohan through Debendranath and Keshab organised theistic Hindu reform.

It influenced marriage law, women's education, and later provincial samajs.

The two are spark and institution in the same nineteenth-century story.

Introduction

Nineteenth-century reform rose where colonial print, Christian critique, and an urban intelligentsia met older Hindu and Muslim conscience. Young Bengal and the Brahmo Samaj are two Calcutta chapters of that rise, different in temper but linked in the same public.

Body

Rise of the reform field

- Company rule, English education, and the press created a new audience that could argue scripture in public, as **Rammohan Roy** did against sati before the 1829 regulation.
- Missionary polemic and Orientalist recovery of texts both pushed Indians to answer with reform rather than only with revival.
- **Parallel streams grew: Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Aligarh, Singh Sabha**, and later **Theosophy** and **Ramakrishna-Vivekananda**. Calcutta was an early laboratory.

Young Bengal

- **Henry Derozio** at **Hindu College** (1820s-31) taught reason, liberty, and a sharp attack on custom. Students such as **Krishna Mohan Banerjee** and **Ramgopal Ghosh** formed the Young Bengal circle.
- They used debate, the Academic Association, and English essays more than a church-like organisation.

- **Growth was brief and socially thin:** they shocked caste Hindu Calcutta, then many were absorbed into law, teaching, or baptism. Their lasting gift was a habit of public criticism.

Brahmo Samaj

- **Rammohan** founded the **Brahmo Sabha (1828)**; **Debendranath Tagore** gave it a covenant and a theistic Hindu frame; **Keshab Chandra Sen** took it toward social reform, women's issues, and a more Christian-influenced worship, then split it.
- The Samaj opposed idolatry, sati, and child marriage in principle, and it fed the **Brahmo Marriage Act, 1872** lineage of **civil marriage**.
- It grew into a durable middle-class institution with branches, unlike Young Bengal's spark, but it remained urban and elite.

Together

- Young Bengal supplied iconoclasm. Brahmo Samaj supplied organisation, theistic reform, and a model other provinces copied.

Flow diagram

Print education critique -> Young Bengal Derozio
Print education critique -> Brahmo Roy Debendranath Keshab
Young Bengal Derozio -> Public reason
Brahmo Roy Debendranath Keshab -> Organised social reform

Conclusion

Reform rose from colonial public argument. Young Bengal was a short, radical student fire. The Brahmo Samaj was the organised theistic path that carried widow, marriage, and education questions into a lasting association.

Facts & figures

Sati Regulation 1829

Bengal regulation associated with Rammohan's campaign and Bentinck's government.

Hindu College

Calcutta college where Derozio taught the Young Bengal cohort.

Brahmo Sabha 1828

Rammohan's theistic association that became the Brahmo Samaj.

Keshab split

1866 onward divisions produced Adi Brahmo and Keshab's more radical social programme.

Civil marriage

Brahmo campaigns fed later special marriage law for those outside orthodox rites.

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