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Q2(a)

The main objective of socio- religious movement during the colonial rule in India were reforming and synthesizing Hinduism. Write any two such important movements

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Social Movements in Modern India

Social Movements in Modern India: Peasants and farmers movements; Women's movement; Backward classes and Dalit movement; Environmental movements; Ethnicity and Identity movements.

Core demand of the question

- The main objective of socio-religious movements during the colonial rule in India was reforming and synthesizing Hinduism. Write any two such important movements
- Treat as a 20-mark answer with two cases and a short critique

Revision summary

Colonial pressure named Hinduism as a religion that needed reform and a creed.

Brahmo Samaj offered theistic worship, sati reform, and an elite synthesis with reason.

Arya Samaj offered Vedic purification, social reform, and **shuddhi** as boundary synthesis.

Both were modernising traditions in Singh's sense.

Neither fully confronted caste as **Ambedkar** later defined it.

Introduction

Colonial socio-religious movements tried to reform Hindu practice and to synthesise a public Hinduism that could face Christian mission, census, and the colonial state. Two important cases are the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj. Both recast scripture, worship, and social rules; they did so in different directions.

Body

Why reform and synthesis

- Mission, print, and law made 'Hinduism' a named religion that needed a creed, not only local custom.
- **Yogendra Singh** would call this an orthogenetic modernisation of tradition under heterogenetic pressure.
- Reform targeted sati, widowhood, idolatry, and caste excess. Synthesis tried to hold a civilisational whole against conversion and fragmentation.

Brahmo Samaj

- **Rammohan Roy** and later Debendranath **Tagore** and Keshab Chandra Sen sought a theistic, often anti-idol, public worship.
- Sati campaign and a turn to Upanishadic reason were the reform face. The synthesis was a purified, scriptural Hindu theism that could speak to Unitarian Christianity without becoming it.

- **Limit:** it remained largely an urban, upper-caste, Bengal-centred elite. Village caste and women's labour barely moved.

Arya Samaj

- Swami Dayanand's return to the Vedas rejected Puranic idolatry, child marriage, and some caste rigidity, while claiming a purified Aryan Hindu core.
- **Shuddhi** and cow protection were synthesis as reconversion and boundary-making, not only liberal ethics.
- Punjab and the United Provinces gave it a wider social base than the Brahmo church, including a new middle class of clerks and traders.

Comparison and critique

- Brahmo synthesis leaned toward a universal theism. Arya synthesis leaned toward a Vedic nation.
- G. S. Ghurye's civilisational Hindu frame is closer to Arya language. **Ambedkar** later judged both as inadequate against graded inequality.
- Peasant India, as in Champaran later, was not the main theatre of these samajs.

Flow diagram

Colonial mission census -> Reform and synthesis
Reform and synthesis -> Brahmo theistic reform
Reform and synthesis -> Arya Vedic shuddhi
Brahmo theistic reform -> Public Hinduism
Arya Vedic shuddhi -> Public Hinduism

Conclusion

- **Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj show colonial Hindu reform as creed-making:** one ethical-theistic, one Vedic-national. They synthesised a public Hinduism for print and politics. They left caste's material spine only partly touched.

Facts & figures

Rammohan Roy

Brahmo pioneer associated with the campaign against sati and with scriptural theism.

Dayanand Saraswati

Arya Samaj founder who made the Vedas the sole authority and promoted shuddhi.

Shuddhi

Reconversion and purification that turned reform into community defence.

Yogendra Singh

Reads such movements as modernisation of tradition under colonial contact.

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