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Question 1: What was the basis for the Socio–Cultural Reform Movements of the 19th century? Discuss the significance of these movements in modern India. (250 Words)

Question 2: Socio-cultural reform movements and their leaders challenged traditional societal norms. Give example of any two personalities and explain their contributions. (250 Words)

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Approach / Explaination / Answer

Answer 1

Approach

- Introduce the nature of Socio-cultural Reform movement.
- Discuss the basis for the Socio-Cultural Reform Movements and the significance of these movements in modern India.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

- The socio-cultural reform movements of the 19th century in India were based on the idea of social reform and aimed to bring about change in various aspects of society, including education, women's rights, and the caste system.
- These reforms were inspired by a variety of ideologies, including western liberalism, nationalism, and traditional Hindu thought. Many of the leaders of these movements were influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. They believed that India needed to modernize and adopt many of the values and institutions of the west in order to progress.

Body

Basis for the Socio–Cultural Reform Movements:

- **Middle-Class Base:** The social base of the regeneration seen in the 19th century was the newly emerging middle class and the educated (both traditionally educated and the Western educated) intellectuals and brought the great transformation in the West from medieval to modern times through movements like the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and democratic

revolution or reform.

- **The Intellectual Criteria:** Ideological unity to these movements were given by rationalism, religious universalism, and humanism. Rationalism was brought to judge social relevance. Raja Rammohan Roy firmly believed in the principle of causality linking the whole phenomenal universe and demonstrability as the sole criterion of truth.
    - Akshay Kumar Dutt used a rational approach to study tradition; they evaluated the contemporary socioreligious practices from the standpoint of social utility and to replace faith with rationality.
    - Syed Ahmed Khan went to the extent of emphasising that religious tenets were not immutable.
    - Many of the intellectuals set aside the authority of religion and evaluated truth in any religion by the criteria of logic, reason, or science. A
- The reform movements could broadly be classified into two categories (the only difference between them is the degree to which it relied on tradition or on reason and conscience) -
    - The reformist movements like the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Aligarh Movement, and
    - the revivalist movements like the Arya Samaj movement and the Deobandi movement.
- **Direction of Social Reform**: The humanistic ideals of social equality and the equal worth of all individuals which inspired the newly educated middle class influenced the field of social reform in a major way.
    - The social reform movements were linked to the religious reforms primarily because nearly all social ills like untouchability and gender-based inequity derived legitimacy from religion in one way or the other.
    - In later years, though, the social reform movement gradually dissociated itself from religion and adopted a secular approach.
        - Earlier the reform movements had a rather narrow social base, being limited to the upper and middle classes and upper castes who tried to balance their modernised views and the existing social conditions.
        - But later on, the social reform movements penetrated the lower strata of society to revolutionise and reconstruct the social sphere.
        - To reach the masses, the reformers used the Indian languages to propagate their views. They used a variety of media—novels, dramas, poetry, short stories, the press, and, in the 1930s and later on, the cinema—to spread their opinions.

Significance of these movements in modern India:

- **Fight for Betterment of Position of Women:** Women were generally accorded a low status and were considered to be inferior adjuncts to men, with no identity of their own. Their glorification as wives and mothers was the only way in which society recognised the contribution of women as members of society.
- The reformers basically appealed to the doctrines of individualism and equality, and argued, to bolster their appeal, that true religion did not sanction an inferior status to women.
- Because of the indefatigable efforts of the reformers, a number of administrative measures were adopted by the government to improve the condition of women.
- **Abolition of Sati:** Governor-General William Bentinck, due to Influence of Raja Rammohan Roy, declared the practice of sati illegal and punishable by criminal courts as culpable homicide by the regulation of 1829 (Regulation XVII, A.D. 1829 of the Bengal Code).
- **Preventing Female Infanticide:** The Bengal regulations of 1795 and 1804 declared infanticide illegal and equivalent to murder.
- **Widow Remarriage:** Due to the efforts of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820–91), the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856, was passed; it legalised marriage of widows and declared issues from such marriages as legitimate.
- **Controlling Child Marriage:** The Native Marriage Act (or Civil Marriage Act), 1872 signified legislative action in prohibiting child marriage.

Helped to Mitigate Caste-based Discrimination:

- British rule, perhaps without intention, created certain conditions that undermined caste consciousness to an extent. For instance, the creation of private property in land and free sale of

land upset caste equations.

- The social reform movements also strove to undermine caste-based exploitation.
- The national movement took inspiration from the principles of liberty and equality against the forces which tended to divide the society.
- With increasing opportunities of education and general awakening, there were stirrings among the lower castes themselves.
- The Constitution of free India has made equality and non-discrimination on the basis of caste imperative.

Conclusion

- These reform movements were significant in modern India for several reasons. Firstly, they laid the foundation for the independence movement by bringing about a sense of national consciousness and promoting the idea of a united India.
- Secondly, they contributed to the process of social modernization by challenging traditional customs and promoting the values of rationality, equality, and justice.
- Finally, they played a crucial role in shaping the country's political and social landscape, influencing the formation of laws, policies, and institutions that continue to impact India today.

Answer 2

Approach

- Introduce the vision of Socio-cultural reform movements.
- Give example of any two personalities related to Socio-cultural reform movements and explain their contributions.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

- The dawn of the 19th century witnessed the birth of a new vision—a modern vision among some enlightened sections of the Indian society. This enlightened vision was to shape the course of events for decades to come and even beyond. This process of reawakening, sometimes, defined as the 'Renaissance'.

Body

There were various leaders and personalities who had started the movement to bring liberal change on the ground. Like:

- **Raja Ram Mohan Roy**: Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a pioneering social reformer in India in the early 19th century. He is considered the **father of modern India**, and his efforts to reform and modernize Indian society had a significant impact on the social and cultural developments of the time.
    - Ram Mohan Roy was the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, a monotheistic Hindu reform movement that rejected the authority of the Vedas, the caste system, and idol worship, and instead advocated for a more rational and progressive interpretation of Hinduism.
    - He believed in the unity of all religions and sought to reconcile traditional Hinduism with modern western ideas of democracy, equality, and justice. Ram Mohan Roy was also a vocal critic of sati, the practice of widows immolating themselves on their husband's funeral pyres, and played a key role in its abolition in 1829.
    - His efforts to reform and modernize Indian society challenged traditional societal norms and laid the foundations for the independence movement and the creation of a modern, democratic nation.
- **Swami Dayananda Saraswati:** Swami Dayananda Saraswati was a Hindu spiritual leader and social reformer in India in the late 19th century. His ideas had a significant influence on the social and political developments of the time.
    - Swami Dayananda Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj, a reform movement that sought to

purify and reform Hinduism by rejecting the caste system and idol worship. He believed that the caste system was a corrupt and oppressive social institution that violated the principles of Hinduism and advocated for the education and upliftment of the lower castes. Dayananda Saraswati also believed in the essential unity of all religions and sought to promote a universal message of spiritual enlightenment and human brotherhood.
- Swami Dayananda Saraswati's contributions to the sociocultural reform movement in India were significant and far-reaching. He is remembered as one of the leading figures in the Indian independence movement, and his legacy continues to inspire social reformers and activists today.
- Apart from these leaders and their movement, the other movements were also started by the personalities like:
  - Prarthana Samaj by Atmaram Pandurang, Theosophical Society of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, and Young Bengal movement of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio also contributed their efforts Socio-cultural reform movements.

Conclusion

These reform movements and their leaders challenged traditional societal norms by advocating for the modernization and secularization of Indian society, the abolition of orthodox and derogatory practices and the promoted education, rationalism, and equality. Their efforts contributed significantly and laid the foundations for the independence movement and the creation of a modern, democratic nation.