Q1)Write an essay on major streams/thought of Modern Indian Political Thought.

Ans: Modern Indian Political thought began with the advent of the Indian Renaissance in early nineteenth century. It includes the thought process of India after the British colonialism. Apart from the ideas concerning religious and social reform, modern Indian political thought includes the ideas evolved during India’s national movement,independence movement, and the vision of Indian intellectuals concerning its reconstruction. The basic features revolves around the process of imperialism and colonialism along with British administration.

Broadly speaking , modern Indian political thought can be classified into the following streams .

1. ***Liberal stream:***

The supporters of the liberal stream of modern Indian political thought were chiefly inspired by the tenets of British liberalism. They favoured a social order that would give maximum opportunities for the individual to develop his potentialities. According to them,progress of a society is directly related to the amount of freedom and self-determination available to the individual in that society.

The political thoughts of liberal stream do not talk about the political independence of India, rather , they talk about the greater representation of Indians in administration and politics of British India.

They do not blame the British for India’s subjugation i.e., poverty,backwardness for centuries, rather ,they believed that India’s subjugation is due to its social system in which caste,religion and patriarchy is dominant.

Most of the Indian liberals regard the advent of British rule in India as an opportunity of embarking on its social reconstruction and modernization through western education which is scientific,logical and rational. They sought British government’s help in eradicating the prevailing superstitions, evil practices,ignorance and poverty from the Indian society. They hoped to achieve the goal of social reconstruction in India by invoking the sense of justice of their British rulers.

The chief thinkers of the liberal stream are Raja Ram Mohan Roy,Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

1. ***Idealist stream:***

This stream of modern political thought was concerned with rediscovering cultural identity of India, and building a national movement on its foundation. But the Indian idealist thought was not directly inspired by the Western idealism. The logical structure was somewhat similar to the logic of Western idealism. So the ‘idea’,’consciousness’ or ‘spirit’ is the essence of the universe and all social institutions are the manifestations of the prevailing idea.They glorified the nation and argued that each nation is the result of consciousness of individuals who comprised it.

They talk about the Swaraj i.e., political independence from British rule ,rather than greater representation in British administration and were in favour of ‘Self-Rule.’

They are largely credited for arousing the feeling of nationalism among Indians,thus idealists are ardent champion of Indian nationalism.It advocates to focus and promote India’s national identity and to revive the glory of ancient Indian culture.

They focus on determining national identity of India and to revive the glory of ancient Indian culture.They sought to mobilize the Indians on the line of ‘Nationalism’ to achieve independence from foreign rule .They believed that it is foolish to expect the British government to enforce social and political reforms in India.

The leading Indian idealists include Swami Dayanand Saraswati,Lala Lajpat Rai,Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak,Sir Aurobindo, Bipin Chandra Pal and Veer Savarkar.

1. ***Humanist stream:***

Humanist stream believes in immense potential of human intellect and dignity i.e value of human life over any other advantage or value. It is similar to western humanism i.e it prefers critical thinking including rationalism and empiricism over the dogma and superstitions.

According to them,human being is capable of self-realization as they have the capacity of reasoning. Human beings are equal irrespective of variations in the race,religion and nation.

In modern Indian political thought,Swami Vivekanand and Rabindranath Tagore may be regarded as true representatives of humanist thought. M.N.Roy developed the idea of humanism into a new form called ‘new humanism’ or ‘scientific humanism’ or ‘radical humanism’. The keynote of Roy’s radical humanism is an urge for human freedom which implied the realization of his creative faculties. Ignorance is the biggest obstacle in the way of human freedom and scientific knowledge alone can help to restore this freedom.

Nehru argued further that power gained through the progress of science should be directed to the service of humanity and not towards private property.

Attainment of freedom is the keynote of Tagore’s humanism.He was an ardent humanist.

The leading thinkers were Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore,M.N.Roy,JL Nehru, E.V.Ram Swami Naicker’’Periyar’’.

1. **Islamic stream**: Many foreign people who had migrated to India before the arrival of the British colonialists ,permanently settled here .Hindus and Muslims were living here together peacefully and became a part of the composite culture of India.The Indians who had embraced Islam,particularly during the Muslim rule ,largely came from the poor and uneducated sections. They gained some social standing during the Muslim rule,but their economic condition was very poor. This was mainly because the high-caste Hindus dominated trade ,industry,higher education and official positions. Hence some measure of discontent among the Muslims was quite natural. The British tried to exploit this discontent in order to strengthen their imperial rule in India. They induced the Muslims to believe that Hindu community was responsible for their plight. This led to the rise of Muslim communalism.Its reaction was the rise of Hindu communalism. Confrontation between the two further intensified the Muslim communalism which resulted in the partition of India between India and Pakistan in 1947.

In late 19th and early 20th centuries ,many social reformers,intellectuals and political leaders from the Muslim community sought to give a new direction to Islamic thought and showed the way to progress.

The chief exponents of Islamic thought of modern India include: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan,Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

1. ***Socialist stream:***

This stream is inspired by the idea of socialism.Socialism refers to a principle of politics as well as to a form of economic organization.It is also closely linked with the philosophy of Marxism.

Like socialism,the socialist stream believed in the dignity of society. According to them society is the end and individual is the means to serve the needs of the society. Their chief concern was the protection of interests of working class. They advocated social ownership and control of major means of production to facilitate socio-economic reconstruction.

However, there is a difference in the perspective of European and Indian socialist thinkers. European socialist thinkers were only concerned with material well-being of working class. But the Indian socialist thinkers were concerned with material as well as spiritual emancipation of the working classes ,peasants and other poor sections of society. Spiritual well-being includes love,kindness,trust among workers and industrialists.

The prominent socialist thinkers of modern India were Acharya Narendra Dev,Jayaprakash Narayan,Ram Manohar Lohia and Jawaharlal Nehru.

1. ***Feminist stream:***

Feminist stream of social and political thought is concerned with the issues of feminism. Broadly speaking, feminism refers to a social movement which aims at the removal of discrimination against women in terms of their rights,opportunities for self-development and share in political power. The philosophy behind this movement is also called feminism. The three major perspectives on feminism are art and literature,sociology and politics.

In the history of modern Indian political thought,concern with the plight of women and the demand for their emancipation arose since the advent of the Indian Renaissance. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first major thinker and social reformer of modern India who created awareness about ,and fought against various forms of injustice suffered by women. Thus the Brahmo Samaj was founded by him in 1828.

Mahatma Gandhi,the father of the nation, incessantly worked for the regeneration of women and encouraged their extensive participation in public life. The prominent feminist thinkers also includes Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar,Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule,Mahadev Govind Ranade,Rabindranath Tagore etc.

1. **Critics of the caste system**:Caste system has remained a basic feature of Hinduism for many generations. It implied the division of labour in society which was conventionally linked with individual’s social status.The Hindu society was divided into four major castes on a descending scale of social status:a) Brahmans(the priests),b)Kshatriyas(the soldiers),c)Vaishyas(the traders) and d) Shudras(the labourers).Initially, individual’s caste was determined by his character,action and temperament but later on by birth. The division of labour came to be recognized as the basis of higher and lower social ranks which led to social stagnation in society.

Then under the rigid caste system of Hindu society, those who rendered invaluable service to society by physical labour,were placed in the lower ranks described as the depressed classes or Dalits . They were treated as outcaste and thought to be untouchables. They were refused entry into temples,and were not allowed to use common wells,ponds,inns and other common services like common bathing or eating places. These inhuman practices were sanctified by custom,popular beliefs and religious dogma. The depressed classes were also deprived of the opportunities of education and professional development.

In the modern age of industrialization,urbanization and expansion of education , an effective leadership emerged from within the depressed classes. These thinkers include Mahatma Jyotiba Phule,Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, and Periyar(E.V.Ramaswami Naicker) ,who brilliantly analysed their problems and also outlined concrete steps to restore social justice.

1. ***Gandhian stream:***

Mahatma Gandhi was a great Indian leader,thinker and social reformer. He was one of the most influential personality during Indian freedom struggle and was widely known for his political ideas. His ideas and methods took the shape of a distinct stream in modern Indian political thought.

Gandhi launched several protest movements against the British rulers in India and demanded full freedom for India. Some of such prominent movements include: the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement.

Gandhian way of thinking has not only a distinct identity ,but it embodies a full-fledged worldview.Gandhism is concerned with a number of issues. The features or tenets of Gandhian stream includes his ideas of non-violence, Swaraj, Satyagraha,Sarvodaya etc.

The chief thinkers are Acharya Vinoba Bhave, J.P.Kriplani etc.

Thus ‘Modern’ in Modern Indian Political Thought represents the time, the time of India’s struggle for its independence. During this period of time certain set of ideas were produced by our leaders those were leading the struggle. These leaders challenged the dominant perspective of the west by constructing or producing new ideas or perspectives which challenged the western ideas.Thus, it can be said that the origin of modern Indian political thought lies in the responses of Indian intellectuals to the processes of colonization and modernization of their society under British rule, which can be understood as a response to colonial modernity.