

CHAPTER-7

WOMEN, CASTE AND REFORM

EXERCISES

1.How did the knowledge of ancient texts help the reformers promote new laws?

Answer:

The reformers tried to convince people that widow burning, caste distinctions, child marriage, etc had no sanction in ancient texts. Their knowledge of ancient texts gave them immense confidence and moral support which they utilised in promoting new laws. They did not get feared when people raised voice against the reforms they had brought.

2.What were the different reasons people had for not sending girls to school?

Answer:

Vidyasagar in Calcutta (now Kolkata) and many other reformers in Bombay. (now Mumbai) set up schools for girls.

- When the first schools were opened in the mid-nineteenth century, many people were afraid of them.
- They feared that schools would take girls away from home.
- They would prevent them from doing their domestic duties.
- Girls had to travel through public places in order to reach school. This would have a corrupting influence on them.
- GMs should stay away from public spaces.

3.Why were Christian missionaries attacked by many people in the country? Would some people have supported them too? If so, for what reasons?

Answer:

Christian Missionaries were attacked in the country by many people because they suspected that they were involved in forced conversion and conversion using money power of poor and tribal people from Hinduism to Christianity. If some people supported them, that was because they felt this might improve the economical condition and education of the poor and tribals.

4. In the British period, what new opportunities opened up for people who came from castes that were regarded as “low”?

Answer:

With the expansion of cities, new demands of labor created. Drains had to be dug, roads laid, buildings constructed and cities cleaned. This required coolies, diggers, carriers, bricklayers, sweepers, rickshaw pullers, etc. This labour came from people who belonged to the “low” caste. They left their villages and small towns and shifted to the cities to get work. Some went to work in plantations in Assam, Mauritius, Trinidad, and Indonesia. Although it was not easy to work in the new locations, poor people saw this an opportunity to get away from the exploitations of the upper-caste.

5. How did Jyotirao, the reformer, justify their criticism of caste inequality in society?

Answer:

Jyotirao Phule, born in 1827, was the most vocal amongst the “Low-caste” leaders.

- He attacked the Brahmans’ claim of their superiority to others. He argued the Aryans were foreigners, who came from outside the subcontinent.
- They defeated and subjugated the true children of the country and looked at the defeated population as inferior.
- According to Phule, the “upper” castes had no right to their land and power. In reality, the land belonged to the so-called low castes.
- Phule opined that there existed a golden age when warrior-peasants tilled the land and ruled the Maratha countryside in just and fairways.
- He proposed that the Shudras (labouring castes) and Ati Shudras (untouchables) should unite to challenge caste discrimination.
- The Satyashodhak Samaj association founded by Phule propagated caste equality.

6. Why did Phule dedicate his book Gulamgiri to the American movement to free slaves?

Answer:

Jyotirao Phule wrote a book in 1873. He named the book Gulamgiri meaning slavery. Some ten years before this, the American Civil War had been fought, leading to the end of slavery in America. Phule dedicated his book to all those Americans who had fought to free slaves. He did this in order to establish a link between the conditions of the lower castes in India and the black slaves in America.

7.What did Ambedkar want to achieve through the temple entry movement?

Answer:

Ambedkar was born into a Mahar family. In childhood, he experienced various forms of caste prejudices in his everyday life.

- Ambedkar led three such movements for temple entry between 1927 and 1935.
- His aim was to make everyone see the power of caste prejudices within society.

8.Why were Jyotirao Phule and Ramaswami Naicker critical of the national movement? Did their criticism help the national struggle in any way?

Answer:

- Both Jyoti Rao Phule and Naicker were critical of national movement in their own times.
- Jyoti Rao Phule was critical of nationalism preached by upper castes. He wrote that they give advice to Shudra, Muslim and Parsi youth to forget their differences and come together for progress of nation, later it will be “Me here and you over there” all over again.
- E V Ramaswamy Naicker became member of Congress. But left it in disgust when he found out that at a feast, organised by nationalists, seating arrangement was based on caste distinctions.
- Their assertions, forceful speeches and writings did lead to rethink and self-criticism among the upper caste nationalist leaders.

1 Mark Questions

1.Why are social reformers described so?

Answer:

Social reformers are described so because they felt that some changes were essential in society and unjust practices needed to be rooted out.

2.How did reformers bring changes in society?

Answer:

They brought changes in society by persuading people to give up old practices and adopt a new way of life. .

3.What do you mean by ‘sad’?

Answer:

Widows who chose death by burning themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands were known as ‘sati’, meaning virtuous woman.

4.Who was known as Vaishyas?

Answer:

Traders and moneylenders were known as Vaishyas.

5.Who was Raja Rammohun Roy?

Answer:

Raja Rammohun Roy was a learned social reformer. He was well versed in Sanskrit, Persian, and several other Indian and European languages. He raised voice against the practice of Sati and got it rooted out.

6.What was the hook swinging festival?

Answer:

It was a popular festival in which devotees underwent a peculiar form of suffering as part of ritual worship. With hooks pierced through their skin, they swung themselves on a wheel.

7.Who was Mumtaz Ali?

Answer:

Mumtaz Ali was a social reformer who reinterpreted verses from the Koran to argue for the education of women.

8.Who published the book named Stripurushtulna? What is it about?

Answer:

Tarabai Shinde published Stripuru-shtulna. It is about the social differences between men and women.

9.How did the widow’s home at Poona help the widows?

Answer:

It trained them so that they could manage financial support for themselves.

10.What was the contribution of Christian missionaries in spreading education among tribal groups and lower castes?

Answer:

These missionaries set up schools for tribal groups and lower caste children. Here, they were equipped with some skills to make their way into a new world.

11.Why do people view leather workers with contempt?

Answer:

Leatherworkers work with dead animals which are seen as dirty and polluting. Hence, people see them with contempt.

12.Who was Madigas?

Answer:

They were experts at cleaning hides, tanning them for use, and sewing sandals.

13.Who were Shudras?

Answer:

They belonged to laboring castes.

14.Who was Ati Shudras?

Answer:

They were untouchables.

15.What was the Satyashodhak Samaj? Who founded it?

Answer:

The Satyashodhak Samaj was an association that propagated caste equality. It was founded by Jyotirao Phule.

16.Why did E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker leave the Congress?

Answer:

He left the congress because he found nationalists adhering to caste distinctions. At a feast organised by them, the lower castes were made to sit at a distance from the upper castes.

17.Name the Hindu scriptures which were criticized by Periyar.

Answer:

The codes of Manu, the ancient lawgiver and the Bhgavad Gita and the Ramayana.

18. Why were untouchable students not allowed to enter the classrooms where upper-caste boys were taught?

Answer:

There was a false notion among the upper-caste that untouchables would pollute the rooms where their children were taught.

2 Mark Questions

1. What was the plight of Indian women 200 years ago?

Answer:

200 years ago most girl children in India were married off at an early age. In those days both Hindu and Muslim men could marry more than one wife. Widows were expected to jump into the funeral pyre of their husbands and perform 'sati'. Women did not have any right to the family property and had no access to education

2. Mention the caste system that was prevalent in those days in India.

Answer:

Four main castes were prevalent in India in those days- Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Shudras.

Brahmins and Kshatriyas considered themselves as "upper castes". Traders and moneylenders were called Vaisyas. Peasants, weavers and potters were called Shudras.

At the lowest rung were people who laboured to keep cities and villages clean. They were treated as "untouchable". They were not allowed to enter temples, draw water from the wells used by the upper castes, or bathe in ponds where upper castes bathed. They were seen as inferior human beings.

3. What were the reasons for the awareness among women?

Answer:

Awareness was created among women and the society in general as people started reading more and more. People started reading books, newspapers, magazines, leaflets and pamphlets as they were much cheaper now. There were debates and discussions about social customs and practices which also helped in creating awareness among the women.

4. Who was Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar?

Answer:

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was a Bengali scholar and a pillar of the Bengal Renaissance. He was an academic, philosopher, educator, printer, entrepreneur, writer, translator, reformer and philanthropist. His efforts to simplify and modernize Bangla prose were significant. He also rationalised and simplified the Bengali alphabet.

5.What were the changes that could be seen as women became actively involved in reforms?

Answer:

The whole scenario changed as women became actively involved in reforms. They wrote books and started schools. They started training centres, and set up women's associations. Women formed political pressure groups to push through laws for the right for females to vote. They fought for better health care and education for women. They joined various nationalist and socialist movements from the 1920s.

4 Mark Questions

1.What did Raja Rammohun Roy do to end the practice of sati?

Answer:

Raja Rammohun Roy was a great social reformer. He moved to see the tyranny of old practices that were deeply rooted in Indian society. Burning of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands was one such old practice which, Rammohun Roy felt, needed to be rooted out immediately. He began a campaign against this.

As he had a deep knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian, and several other Indian and European languages, he tried to show through his writings that the practice of sati had no sanction in ancient texts. He got support from the British officials who had also begun to criticise Indian traditions and customs by the early 19th century. Finally, in 1829, the practice of Sati was banned.

2.Give an account of the movement that spread in different parts of the country in favour of widow remarriage. Did the movement get success?

Answer:

The movement in favour of widow remarriage spread in different parts of the country by the second half of the 19th century. Veerasalingam Pantulu formed

an association for widow remarriage in the Telugu- speaking areas of the Madras Presidency. Around the same time young intellectuals and reformers in Bombay pledged themselves to work for the same cause.

In the north the founder of the Arya Samaj Swami Dayanand Saraswati also supported widow remarriage. However, the movement did not get much success. The number of widows who actually remarried remained low. Those who remarried were not easily accepted in the society. The conservative people never approved the new law.

3.What do you know about Tarabai Shinde and Pandita Ramabai? What did they do for improving the condition of women?

Answer:

Tarabai Shinde was a woman who got an education at home at Poona. She is better known for publishing a book named Stripurushtulna meaning a comparison between women and men. She, in this book, criticises the social differences between men and women. Pandita Ramabai was a great scholar of Sanskrit.

She found Hinduism very oppressive towards women and wrote a book about the pathetic condition of Hindu women belonging to the upper caste. She started a widow's home at Poona to provide shelter to widows who had been maltreated by their husband's relatives. Here women were given the training to make them self-dependent.

4.Write about Raja Rammohun Roy and his reforms

Answer:

Raja Rammohun Roy was a social reformer. He started the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta.

Rammohun Roy strongly felt that unjust practices against women had to end. He also felt that there were many changes that were necessary for the Indian society to develop.

Rammohun Roy and members of his Samaj felt that the best way to ensure such changes was by persuading people to give up old practices and adopt a new way of life.

He wanted to spread the knowledge of Western education in the country and bring about greater freedom and equality for women.

He wrote about the way women were forced to bear the burden of domestic work, confined to the home and the kitchen, and not allowed to move out and become educated.

Rammohun Roy was well versed in Sanskrit, Persian and several other Indian

and European languages. Roy pointed out to the people that 'sati' was not practiced during the olden days. Through his writings he condemned the practice of 'sati'. As the British were also opposed to the practice of 'sati' they supported Roy and a law was passed banning 'sati' in the year 1829.

5. Give a brief description of movements that were organised by people from within the lower castes against caste discrimination.

Answer:

By the second half of the 19th century, people from within the lower castes began to raise voice against caste discrimination. They organised movements against this practice and demanded social equality and justice. The Satnami movement became famous in Central India. It was initiated by Ghasidas, who came from a low caste, worked among the leather workers, and organised a movement to improve their social status. In Eastern Bengal, Haridas Thakur's Matua sect worked among low caste Chandala cultivators. Haridas questioned Brahmanical texts that supported caste discrimination. Shri Narayana Guru belonged to Ezhavas, a low caste in present-day Kerala. He proclaimed the ideals unity of all people within one sect, a single caste and one god. By organising these movements the leaders coming from low-caste tried to create awareness amongst the lower castes.

6. Who was E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker? What, did he do to improve the condition of the untouchables?

Answer:

E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker belonged to a middle-class family. He had been an ascetic in his early life and had studied Sanskrit scriptures carefully. Afterward, he became a member of Congress but quit it when he found that at a feast organised by nationalists, seating arrangements followed caste discrimination, i.e. the lower castes were made to sit at a distance from the upper-castes. He founded the Self Respect Movement which inspired untouchables to fight for their dignity. He argued that untouchables were the true upholders of an original Tamil and Dravidian culture which had been subjugated by Brahmans. He felt that all religious authorities saw social divisions and inequality as God-given. Untouchables had to free themselves from all religions to achieve equal social status.

5 Mark Questions

1. Why were changes necessary in Indian society?

Answer:

Indian society had been a prey to many evil practices for a long time. Men and women were treated differently. Women were subjected to many restrictions. They were not allowed to go to schools. They were not allowed to choose their husbands. Child-marriage was an established custom in the society. Most children were married off at an early age. Both Hindu and Muslim men could have many more than one wife. In some parts of the country, sati was in practice. Those widows were praised who chose death by burning themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands. Women's rights to property were also restricted.

One more evil practice that had crippled Indian society was that all people did not enjoy equal status. The upper-caste consisted of Brahmans and Kshatriyas, availed all privileges. But other than these people were subjected to exploitation. The untouchables, who did menial works, were considered polluting. They were not allowed to enter temples, draw water from the well used by the upper castes. They were seen as inferior human beings.

These evil customs and practices had eclipsed the progress of society. Hence, debates and discussions began to take place from the early 19th century, with the development of new forms of communications. For the first time, books, newspapers, magazines, leaflets and pamphlets were printed. They spread awareness among the common mass.

Social reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwarchander Vidyasagar, came forward and took initiatives to bring changes in society by abolishing the evil practices one after Another.

2. How did women involve themselves in their upliftment?

Answer:

By the end of the 19th century, Indian women themselves began to work for their upliftment. They began to get higher education in universities. Some of them trained to be doctors, some became teachers. Many women began to write and publish their critical views on the status of women in society. The name of Tarabai Shinde is worth mentioning here. She got an education at home at Poona. She published a book, Stripurushtulna, meaning a comparison between men and women. She criticised the social differences between men and women. Another woman, Pandita Ramabai, was a great scholar of Sanskrit.

She criticised Hinduism which was so oppressive towards women. She wrote a book about the miserable lives of upper-caste Hindu women. She established a widow home at Poona to provide shelter to widows who had been ill-treated in their families. From the early 20 th century, Muslim women such the Begums of Bhopal and Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain played an active role in spreading education among Muslim girls. They founded schools for them. Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossairi fearlessly criticised the conservative ideas. She argued that religious leaders of every faith accorded an inferior position to women.

The orthodox Hindus and Muslims got alarmed to see all this. Several Hindu nationalists felt that Hindu women were adopting Western ways which would corrupt Hindu culture and erode family values. Orthodox Muslims were equally worried about the impact of these changes. Unaware of all these, women, from the early 20th century, began to form political associations, pressure groups to push through laws for female suffrage and better health care and education for them. Some of them even joined various kinds of nationalist and socialist movements from the 1920s.

Fill in the blanks

1. According to the Child Marriage Restraint of and woman below the age of could marry.
2. were an important Act no man below the age untouchable caste of present-day Andhra Pradesh.
3. Tarabai Shinde Published a book named
4. Raja Rammohun Roy was well versed in, and several other Indian and European languages.
5. The Satnami movement was founded by who belonged to a low caste family.
6. In 1873, Jyotirao Phule wrote a Book Gulamgiri meaning
7. The Begums of..... played a vital role in promoting education among women.

Answer:

1. 18, 16
2. Madigas
3. Stripurushtulna
4. Sanskrit, Persian
5. Ghasidas

- 6. Slavery
- 7. Bhopal

Multiple Choice Questions

- (i) The Brahmo Samaj was founded by
 - (a) Dayanand Saraswati
 - (b) Raja Rammohun Roy
 - (c) Vivekananda
 - (d) Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

- (ii) The practice of Sati was banned in the year
 - (a) 1800
 - (b) 1821
 - (c) 1827
 - (d) 1829

- (iii) A widow home was established at Poona by
 - (a) Tarabai Shinde
 - (b) Pandita Ramabai
 - (c) Mumtaz Ali
 - (d) Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

- (iv) Peasants and artisans were referred to as
 - (a) Vaishyas
 - (b) Shudras
 - (c) Untouchables
 - (d) Kshatriyas

- (v) Periyar founded
 - (a) Self Respect Movement
 - (b) Temple Entry Movement
 - (c) Paramhans Mandali
 - (d) Dalit Movement

- (vi) The Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College was opened by
 - (a) Khizr Khan
 - (b) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
 - (c) Sayyid Ahmed Khan
 - (d) Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan

Answer:

(i) (b), (ii) (d), (iii) (b), (iv) (b), (v) (a), (vi) (c).

State whether each of the following statements is True or False:

1. Raja Rammohun Roy founded the Arya Samaj in 1875.
2. Pandita Ramabai was a great scholar of Sanskrit and she founded a widow's home at Poona to provide shelter to widows.
3. The Begums of Bhopal started schools for Muslim girls in Patna.
4. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar strongly criticized widow remarriage.
5. The Arya Samaj was an association that attempted to reform Hinduism.
6. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker continued the movement for caste reform in the 20th century.
7. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar is popularly known as Periyar.

Answer:

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. True
7. False

State whether true or false:

1. When the British captured Bengal they framed many new laws to regulate the rules regarding marriage, adoption, the inheritance of property, etc.
2. Social reformers had to discard the ancient texts in order to argue for reform in social practices.
3. Reformers got full support from all sections of the people of the country.
4. The Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed in 1929.

Answer:

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True

Match the items given in Column A correctly with those given in Column B.

Column A	Column B
(i)The prarthana Samaj	(a)Madras
(ii)The veda samaj	(b)Calcutta
(iii)The singh subhas	(c)Bombay
(iv)The brahma Samaj	(d)Bengal
(v)The brahman Sabha	(e)Amritsar

Answer:

(i) (c), (ii) (a), (iii) (e), (iv) (b), (v) (d)

SUMMARY

Chapter 7 of NCERT Our Pasts-III deals with reforms in favour of women, anti-casteism and other related topics. The nature and history of gender inequality in Indian society are discussed in the chapter. Students will read about the historical plight of widows in India, illiteracy among girl children and the desperate conditions of the lower caste people. The role of social reformists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyotirao Phule and others are discussed.

The students will also get to know about the following topics:

1.

1. Working Towards Change

- a. Changing the lives of widows
- b. Girls begin going to school
- c. Women write about women

2.

2. Caste and Social Reform

- a. Demands for equality and justice
- b. Gulamgiri
- c. Who could enter temples?
- d. The Non-Brahman movement