



SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Give a brief life sketch of Laxmi Lakra.

Answer: Laxmi Lakra belongs to a poor tribal family in Jharkhand. She studied in a government school. She studied hard and did well and then went on to get a diploma in electronics. She then took the railway board exam and passed it on her first attempt. She became the first woman engine driver for Northern Railways. In this way she broke stereotype that engine drivers could be men only. She says “I have challenges and the moment somebody says it is not for girls. I make sure I go ahead and do it”. Laxmi has had to do this several times in her life—when she wanted to take electronics, when she rode motorcycles at the polytechnics and when she decided to become an engine driver.

2. Who set up a Mission in Khedgaon near Pune in 1898? How did the Mission prove beneficial for the women?

Ans. Pandita Ramabai setup a Mission in Khedgaon near Pune in 1898. This was the place where widows and poor women were encouraged not only to become literate but to be independent. They were taught a variety of skills from carpentry to running a printing press, skills that are considered male preserve. This Mission is still active today and does a lot for women's upliftment.

3. Was Rashsundari Devi a superstitious woman? If not, why not?

Answer: Rashsundari Devi was a housewife from a rich landlord's family in West Bengal. She was not allowed to learn to read and write. During her time, some 200 years ago, there was a prevalent belief that if a woman learnt to read and write, she would bring bad luck to her husband. Rashsundari Devi took this belief as false because she was not at all superstitious. She took strict decision and taught herself how to read and write in secret, well after her marriage. She even wrote her autobiography in Bangla at the age of 60. Her book titled *Amor Jiban* is the first known autobiography written by an Indian woman.

4. Although the literacy rates have increased since independence, what remains the worrying factor with respect to gender? [V. Imp.]

Answer: It is true that the literacy rates have increased since independence. According to the 1961 census, about 40% of all boys and men were literate compared to 15% of all girls and women. In the census of 2001, these figures have grown to 76% for boys and men and 54% for girls and women. This means that the proportion of both men and women who are able to read and have at least some amount of schooling has increased. But the worrying factor is that the percentage of male is still higher than the female group. The gap exists even today.

5. Why was Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain stopped from learning Bangla and English? How did she manage to learn these languages?

Answer: In those days, English was seen as a language that would expose girls to new ideas, which people thought were not correct for them. Therefore, it was mostly boys who were taught English. However, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain wished to learn these two languages in addition to Urdu. Fortunately, she got the support of

her elder brother and an elder sister and ultimately learnt to read and write Bangla and English.

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