

General Studies-History of Modern India

Model Answer

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1. Freed from the shackles of age, gender and religion, Indian women remained in the forefront of India's freedom struggle. Discuss. (UPSC-2013)

Answer- Indian independence movement was all-inclusive and multi-dimensional in its nature. Women from different backgrounds, age groups and regions participated in the national movement. Despite family and social restrictions, women actively participated in the freedom movement.

In the midst of Great Rebellion of 1857, a Hindu Rani Lakshmi Bai was at the helm of Jhansi's rebellion and on other hand Zeenat Mahal led the rebellion in Awadh region. Further, some other Muslim women also participated in the national movement and women upliftment programme, such as Qudsia Rasul, Sharifa Hamid Ali, Kulsum Sayani, Hazra Ahmed etc. Similarly Aruna, who rejected the communal divide and married to Asaf Ali, a Muslim leader, was a devoted nationalist.

Women of different ages participated in the national movement. Students like Shanti Chowdhary and Suniti Chowdhary listed their names in the ranks of revolutionary nationalists by firing at the British District Magistrate in Bengal. On other hand, there are elderly women like Basanti Devi, Urmila Devi, Mohini Devi who participated in the national movement at different times. Matangi Hazara, who was a woman farmer, not only participated in the 'Quit India Movement' at the age of 72, but also led a battalion in this movement.

Apart from this, we come to know that women, who participated in the national struggle, came from different regions and nature of their participation was also different. Matangi Hazara remained active in Midnapore, Usha Mehta in Bombay and Rukmini Lakshmi in Madras. Different types of political tools were adopted by different women nationalists. Mrs. Annie Besant adopted liberal political method while Sarojini Naidu followed Gandhian method and Kalpana Dutt and Pritilata Bader joined revolutionary group.

Thus the role of women parallel to men in the national movement cannot be overlooked. Their participation in the freedom struggle also affected the constitution-making process and social condition of women in post-independence era.

2. Many foreigners settled in India and participated in various movements. Analyze their role in the Indian independence movement. (UPSC-2013)

Answer- Many European and American intellectuals had given ideological support to the Indian freedom movement. Some of them came to India and actively participated in the national movement. Although their number was few and far between, but their

protest proved much effective as the criticism of British rule by western intellectuals and political-social activists created a kind of psychological pressure on the government. In his recently published book 'Rebels against the Raj' Ramchandra Guha highlighted those renegades who fought for the cause of India. According to Guha, they were not disloyal to the people of their origin rather they believed that if imperialism was immoral and unjust then ending it was in the interest of the coloniser and colonised both.

As we know, the Congress, first significant all-India organization associated with modern politics, was founded by A.O. Hume, a retired British officer. However, Hume did not get the opportunity to work in India for long and he soon returned to London. Then he, along with his other colleagues in London, organized public opinion in favour of India.

Further, Mrs. Annie Besant, an important Irish female activist took part actively in the Congress. She became the President of the Congress and revived the Congress by organizing the Home Rule Movement in India.

A British missionary and great humanitarian, C. F. Andrews devoted himself to the cause of India. He took an active part in the social and political movements. He raised the issue of rights for workers, artisans and untouchables. Gandhi called him 'Deenbandhu'.

Nalini Sen Gupta was also a female intellectual of British origin. She actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement and boycott movement in India. She also became the President of Congress. Similarly an American intellectual, Samuel Evans Stokes not only participated in social reform in India but also showed interest in political affairs. He participated in the Nagpur session in 1920.

The list of people of foreign origin who took part in the Indian National Movement, does not end here. Talented women like Miraben and Sarla Ben worked with Gandhi. Sister Nivedita was associated with Swami Vivekananda in the Ramakrishna Mission. A French woman named Mira Alphonse served as Aurobindo's associate in Pondicherry.

In this way, we see that the Indian National Movement attracted not only Indians but foreigners also who had humanistic approach.

3. In what ways did the naval mutiny prove to be the last nail in the coffin of British colonial ambitions in India? Elucidate (UPSC-2014)

Answer- By the Second World War, the Indian National Movement had gained momentum. Spirit of nationalism was spreading mostly in all sectors like civil services, army, navy etc. On other hand, Britain as an economic empire lost its power. So, the

naval mutiny in February 1946 at Bombay coast proved that British departure from India was now just a matter of days and months.

After losing its economic empire, it became difficult for the British to rule over India effectively. On other hand, by 1940s, presence of Indians in the civil services had increased considerably. Then in 1945, trial on Indian National Army proved that the army, an important pillar of British rule in India, was no longer credible.

Finally, the naval mutiny, 1946 left no scope for the British. The mutiny spread like fire to 22 ships at Bombay coast. Above all, there was a kind of communal unity among Hindus, Muslims and communists were seen during the rebellion as all the flags were unfurled on the ships. That's why this incident shook the British government.

4. Highlight the reaction of Gandhi, Nehru and Maulana Azad on the partition of India.

Answer- Different leaders had different views on partition, but most of the leaders had accepted that partition was inevitable. Initially, it was said that the Congress leaders compelled Gandhi to accept the partition. But in fact Gandhi also knew very well that the partition could not be averted. He put forward an optimistic option that soon after partition he would visit Pakistan and launch a movement to re-unite India and Pakistan.

Gandhi's disciple, Nehru understood it clearly that alternative to partition would be witness of widespread bloodshed and violence and was therefore no longer possible in his view to maintain unity especially the security system was in the hands of British. Thus, Nehru felt inevitability of partition. Among Congress leaders, Patel was the first who realized inevitability of partition. He believed that the partition had already taken place in Punjab, Bengal and Interim Government. Therefore, if India did not get partitioned, then India would be divided into several parts.

Maulana Azad had a different view in this context. He believed that the British were in a hurry to leave India. That's why the British imposed partition on India. In his view, if Indian independence could be postponed for some time, then it was possible to find an alternative to the partition.

5. Describe the reaction of Congress Socialist Party and Communist Party on the partition of India.

Answer- Leaders of the Congress Socialist Party had reservation against partition. They were not ready to accept partition under any circumstances. Therefore, they boycotted the session of the Congress Working Committee and opposed the partition.

On other hand, the Communist Party of India took a completely opposite stand. It not only accepted the possibility of partition in 1942 itself, but also divided India into 16

nations and then further, number of nations increased to 17 in 1948. Now the question is why did the Communist Party of India take such a stand?

First, it was influenced by Lenin's Soviet model and on the lines of Soviet Russia, it considered India as a country of different races, whereas India's situation was different from Soviet Russia. In India, there was cultural diversity, not racial division.

Secondly, the Communist Party of India preferred to appease the Muslim League and Muhammad Ali Jinnah by accepting the principle of self-determination, but Jinnah was also dissatisfied with its proposal.

6. Critically analyse the objective of Bhoodan and Gramdan movements of Acharya Vinoba Bhave and assess the success of these movements.

Answer- Bhoodan and Gramdan movement was a land reform programme based on class-collaboration. This movement had its positive and negative sides. Vinoba Bhave founded the Sarvodaya Samaj for peaceful social transformation. Big landowners were persuaded to donate at least one-sixth of their land. This movement started in 1951 from Pochampally village in Telangana. In 1955, it was known as Gramdan. Ideal behind Bhoodan and Gramdan was that all land belonged to God and should be freely granted.

If we look at the purpose of Bhoodan and Gramdan, then we can see two types of objectives: overt and covert. Overt objective was economic redistribution through peaceful means. If this model was to be successful, then it could become a new model of economic redistribution. At the same time, its covert objective was to avert any kind of class struggle in an economically divided society. It is also worth to note that this movement started from Telangana, where the communist party was leading a fierce leftist movement.

Apart from this, there is also a belief that this movement was trying to prevent migration from the rural areas by distributing land among rural landless people through Bhoodan, so that the landlords could get sufficient number of agricultural labour.

Now as far as the assessment of its success is concerned, we should keep in mind that the Bhoodan movement was not successful as a whole. It was relatively more effective in Orissa, but remained ineffective in other areas. The received 4 million acres of land grant was either barren or disputed land. The failure of this movement proved that land reform required strong political will.

7. Critically write a note on the origin and importance of the slogan 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan'.

Answer- Slogan 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan' given by Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1965 highlights the link between national security and food security. At the same time, this slogan also indicates that both military strength and self-reliance in food grains are necessary for leading an independent foreign policy.

This slogan became the basis of Green Revolution in India. In 1960s, India depended over American food aid under PL 480, but during the 1965 war and after, Lyndon Johnson's government tried to influence India's foreign policy, then Indian government took a lesson that food security is essential for conducting of an independent foreign policy. Therefore, firstly, Lal Bahadur Shastri and then his successor tried to enhance India's food production through Green Revolution. Between 1966 and 1973, its spread was visible in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh. Hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizer, adequate amount of irrigation, pesticides and advanced agricultural technology like tractors etc. contributed a lot in bringing this revolution.

Green Revolution brought drastic change and India benefitted through it many ways. India became self-sufficient in food grains as the production of food grains increased from 50 million tonnes to 180 million tonnes. Then new industries producing chemical pesticides and agricultural equipments were established in India. Purchasing power of Indian farmers also increased and India's weightage in the international forum boosted up. But the Green Revolution also had its limitations. All sections of farmers and all regions did not get benefits equally. Therefore, where the Green Revolution failed, the Red Revolution started. Pesticides and chemical fertilizer adversely affected ecology and biodiversity.
