

Q.1) What role did Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a key figure of the Bengal Renaissance, play for the emancipation of women? Discuss.

Introduction

- Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was a 19th century intellectual. He was a Sanskrit scholar, writer, academic educator, translator, humanist pundit, publisher, printer, entrepreneur, philanthropist and social reformer.
- He was a British Indian Bengali polymath and the main pillar of Bengali renaissance. He was perhaps the first Indian reformer to put forward the issues of women.

Body

- **Education:** He realized that the society could not develop if women denied the values of education. He personally met the parents of girls and requesting them to send their daughter to school for education. He donated his large portion of salary to educational reforms.
- **Schools:** In 1855 he was made special inspector of schools, he opened a number of new schools, including girls' schools, in the districts under his charge. He started the first school for girl's education in Calcutta in 1849.
- **Widow Remarriage:** He played a great role in the passing of the law which made the marriage of widows legal, The Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856. He argued, on the basis of scriptures and old commentaries, in favour of the remarriage of widows in the same way as Roy did for the abolition of Sati. He showed that there was no prohibition on widows remarrying in the entire body of 'Smriti' literature (the Sutras and the Shastras).
- **Child marriage:** He launched a powerful attack on the practice of marrying off girls aged 10 or even younger, pointing to social, ethical, and hygiene issues, and rejecting the validity of the Dharma Shastras that advocated it.
- **Awareness:** He wrote many articles for newspapers and associated with journalistic publications like Tattwabadhini Patrika, samprakash, sarbashubhankarr Patrika and Hindu patriot to bring social and educational reforms with regards to the women.
- **Vocational education:** He lobbied hard for opening of school for girls and even outlined suitable curriculum that not only did educate them, but also enabled them to be self-reliant through vocations like needlework.
- **Social status:** He campaigned against polygamy.
- **Tribal women:** Vidyasagar spent the last 18 years of his life living among Santhal tribals in present day Jharkhand, where he started what is possibly India's first school for Santhal girls.

Conclusion

- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was a true reformer who contributed his whole life for the betterment of the society, especially women.

Q.2) The British rule in India witnessed several peasant movements. Why did peasants rebel against the British? What were the most common underlying factors? How did peasants mobilize against the rule? Discuss.

Introduction:

- Agriculture being a very important source of revenue during the British Raj, peasants were the most exploited class in the Indian economy as a direct result of the transformation of the agrarian structure.
- The peasant movements proved to be a very important phase of Indian struggle against the oppressive British rule.

Background:

Indian peasantry was impoverished as a result of:

- Regressive taxation policies: Permanent settlement, Ryotwari systems etc.
- Ruin of traditional handicrafts leading to overcrowding of land
- Dominating interference in the forest acts, forest rights and traditional social fabric
- Distorted measures of land revenue collections etc.

Common underlying factors to the peasant movements include:

- Unreasonably high rents and protection to the landlords and moneylenders.
- Arbitrary evictions and unpaid labour.
- Exploitation of the already overburdened farmers by the Zamindars and moneylenders.
- Harsh systems of the British. E.g: Forced cultivations of Indigo crop, Sunset clause, seizure of cattle and crops due to non-payment of loans etc.,
- Transferability of land which deprived the traditional occupancy rights.
- Lack of awareness of clauses leading to sudden loss of land and work, leading to collective uprisings.

Mobilization of the peasants can be explained in 4 phases:

Peasant movements before 1857:

- The peasants during this phase organized themselves and elected their own leader.
- They collectively raised a huge army equipping themselves with primitive weapons.
- Peasants attacked courts and looted stores.
- Prominent places became the centres of mobilization.
- Examples of this phase are: The Rangpur Rebellion (1783)

Peasant movements after 1857:

- Mobilization of peasants in protests continued in some earlier forms but acquired new features in this phase.
- Greater awareness of colonial policies, laws and institutions helped the peasants protest in a prepared manner to some extent.
- There was growing involvement of educated middle class intelligentsia such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, RC Dutt etc., as spokespersons for the movements.
- The Deccan riots of 1875 were characterized with burning of deeds, bonds and looting the zamindar offices.

Movements in the 1920s:

- This phase saw the development of class consciousness, influenced by the Gandhian movement, Russian Movements etc.,
- Local issues integrated with the national cause of Swaraj
- Creation of Sabhas, Conferences and Co-operative movements to ensure fair systems of land revenue and tenancy.
- Example: creation of UP/Awadh Kisan Sabha (1918)

Peasant Movements after the WW2:

- Earlier movements were mostly non-violent with small fractions of violent surges, but this phase had increasingly violent uprisings.
- Examples: Telangana Movement (1946-51), Tebhaga Movement where the peasants revolted using mass struggle with the support of Bengal Province Kisan Sabha.

Conclusion:

The Peasant movements created an atmosphere and led to many immediate and post-independence agrarian reforms. Though in diverse areas, the revolts indulged on the broad ideology of nationalism.

Q.3) The freedom fighters were infatuated by the ideals of socialism. How did it reflect upon the freedom struggle? Comment.

Introduction:

- 1917 onward, The Great October Socialist Revolution of Russia has infatuated freedom fighters of India during freedom struggle.
- Right from political parties to masses, from revolutionaries to trade unions were affected in one way or the other and all were striving for class less society.

Body:

The leaders of the Indian national movement, inspired by Russian revolution and ethos of socialism radicalised the movement and moved towards the mass mobilization tactics of the Indian people's struggle.

Lala Lajpat Rai, presiding over the first session of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920, advocated for organized labour as the antidote of capitalism and imperialism.

Mahatma Gandhi, a firm believer of non-violence, while writing in his journal Young India on Bolshevism, also advocated for the sacrifices of many for the just and equal society.

Bhagat Singh and his fellow revolutionaries were deeply influenced by the October Revolution when they gradually learnt about it.

Jawaharlal Nehru was fascinated by his visit to Russia in the late 1920s , was convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism.

On the lines of Socialism, was formed **Communist party of India** in 1925, which played crucial role in the freedom struggle with its peasant and workers movements. Prominent leaders like **Maulana Hasrat Mohani** and **M. N. Roy** were associated with

it. So profound was the impact of the formation of the Communist Party under the direct inspiration of the October Revolution that the British Crown panicked at the possibility of a Bolshevik revolt in India!

Furthermore, leaders like **Acharya Narendra Deva** and **J P Narayan** and many others, who were inspired by Marxism-Leninism, formed **Congress Socialist party** in 1934.

C.S Bose was also a strong believer of socialism. His forward bloc and INA give new directions to the freedom struggle.

Such changes in political leaders and freedom fighters has Energized social movements and freedom struggles. Many working class struggles broke out in India in 1919 and onwards

Thousands of workers went on strikes in various working class centers such as Calcutta, Bombay and Ahmadabad.

The **All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)** was, thus, established in March 1920 giving shape to organized working class trade union movement in India.

Armed Telangana peasant struggle in the late 1940s brought on to the agenda of the Indian freedom movement the question of abolishing landlordism in independent India.

The Socialist wave motivated various **revolutionary groups** operating both within India and from abroad owing to British persecution to come together and strive for the freedom struggle. These Indian revolutionaries were operating from various locations in Canada, the U.S., Afghanistan, Germany, Singapore and some other places.

Conclusion:

- Socialism, therefore, must be seen as an event that profoundly changed the character of the Indian people's struggle for freedom and transformed the struggle of the political independence of the country.

Q.4) How did Gandhi's arrival change the discourse of the nationalist movement? Did it make the movement more inclusive and representative? Critically comment.

Introduction:

- Mahatma Gandhi's arrival to India provided the right direction and strong foundation for the nationalist movement by involving and giving due importance to all sections of the society.

Body:

The movements organized and participated by Gandhi made it more inclusive and representative such as:

- **Champan Movement or Satyagraha (1917):** First active involvement of Gandhi in Indian freedom struggle involved **indigo cultivators** and farmers of all castes in Bihar.
- **Ahmedabad workers protest:** Involved **workers** of the Ahmedabad Mill against Mill owners.
- **Kheda Movement (1918):** Under the leadership of Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhai Patel against financial atrocities of British on **farmers** of Gujarat.
- **Khilafat Movement (1919):** Gandhi received the political support of **Muslim community** and a notable spokesperson of All India Muslim Conference made him a national leader in no time.
- **Non-Cooperation Movement (1920):** Gandhi received the support of **Congress, Lawyers, teachers, students and also government servants** by boycotting establishments.
- **Civil Disobedience Movement (1930):** **Women** actively participated which involved Sarojini Naidu who lead the movement along with Gandhi.
- **Quit India Movement (1942):** Every Indian under the leadership of Gandhi participated in this movement which lead to eliminating British from India.

Conclusion:

- So the movements organized and participated by Gandhi involved and represented all sections of Indian society which made him a National Hero and Mahatma in no time.

Q.5) The ideological moorings of the freedom movement derived its intellectual fodder from Bengal. Elucidate.

Introduction:

- An Ideology specifically means a system of ideas or ideals on which one bases his or her political or economic policy.
- Moorings generally mean any belief or familiar ways of thinking which provides a kind of psychological stability.

Body:

The Indian national movement brought people from all classes and ideologies into one frame of political action.

- Bengal rose into national consciousness on the back of Swadeshi movement and also further became the hub of leftist, socialist elements predominantly the Bengal Intelligentsia (The Bhadraklok).
- The freedom struggle was also a movement of economic liberation which had its roots in the Bengal Swadeshi movement which followed the Partition of Bengal.
- The social and religious reform movements of the 19th century also contributed to the feeling of Nationalism. Swami Vivekananda, Annie Besant, Henry Derozio and many others. They revived the glory of ancient India, created faith among the people in their religion and culture and thus gave the message of love for their motherland.
- The intellectual and spiritual side of Nationalism was voiced by persons like Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Aurobindo Ghosh. Bankim Chandra's hymn to the Motherland, 'Vande Matram' became the rallying cry of patriotic nationalists. It inspired generations to supreme self-sacrifice.
- The role of Institutional struggle also had its roots in the Bengal Movement with the formation of many associations like the Anushilan Samiti, Bengal British India society, Indian Association etc.
- The leftists under MN Roy also influenced the development of Democratic, civic libertarian polity with socialist policy that the Indian state finally developed itself into.
- Farmers also became the key stake holders in the freedom struggle as the National Movement took upon itself the ideology of Radical Agrarian Reform as one of its core principles which was also influenced by the Communist struggles in Bengal.

Conclusion:

- Thus the Indian freedom movement was one of the best examples of creation of Pan Nation movement where in diverse political and ideological currents co-existed and worked simultaneously towards ending colonial rule.

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