

# 9

## Women's Upliftment and Social Reform under the British Rule

### Lesson Plan

#### Contents

- ▶ An overview of status of women in India during British Rule and the changes that took place
- ▶ Understanding the efforts of reformers to improve the status of women in India

#### Objectives

- ▶ To understand the status of women in India during the 18th and 19th centuries
- ▶ To learn about the changes brought in by reformers, education and the law
- ▶ To know about some of the leading influencers of the period
- ▶ To appreciate the changes in the status of Indian women

#### Teacher's Aids

- ▶ Globe
- ▶ Pictures, charts, atlas and wall maps
- ▶ Blackboard
- ▶ Internet

#### Tips for Teacher

- ▶ Explain the status of women through the ages and the transformations that occurred over time with different cultural influences.
- ▶ Talk about the similarities with the past status and the differences that are seen in society today.
- ▶ Brush up those who are not mentioned in the textbook like Sarat Chandra Chatterjee [1876- 1937] – his books were centred largely on women; Anandibai Joshi [1865-1887] – first qualified medical doctor; Dr Rakhmabai Raut – first practising woman doctor and activist for women's rights – studied at London School of Medicine in 1891 – returned to practise in 1894.
- ▶ Students should be encouraged to know people, places, locations and their placement on the maps.

## ■ Background and Reading

- ▶ Read the lesson aloud and explain, sharing the aids, etc., pausing to examine and explain the data in the boxes.
- ▶ Particularly focus on the changes brought in by western influences, education and social and cultural reforms.

### The Status of Women in the 18th Century

- ▶ British efforts to introduce education and western culture–led to renaissance in Indian society–British set up administrative system to maintain law and order–promised not to interfere in religious matters.
- ▶ Spread of humanism, rationalism and liberalism in England–changed attitude of the British towards India–new ideas made British and Indians take steps to reform society–educated Indians realised reason for backwardness of society–began preaching against social evils and superstitions.
- ▶ Social evils like the caste system, sati, purdah, polygamy, female infanticide, child marriage, restriction on widow remarriage and illiteracy.
- ▶ Second half of 19th century–apart from British administrators–Indian reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dayanand Saraswati–efforts to eradicate social evils.

### The Status of Women in the 19th Century

- ▶ Women had to follow customs and traditions of society–her duty was to bear children and look after the household–forced into difficult situation if widowed–social reformers influenced by humanism and liberalism–worked for women’s upliftment.

### Some Eminent Social Reformers

- ▶ Raja Ram Mohan Roy: Pioneer of reform movement–supported women’s education and widow remarriage–opposed child marriage and polygamy–enabled Act to abolish Sati in 1829–His brother’s wife forced to commit sati–realised it was due to ignorance and low status of women–began to arouse people–persistent efforts–Governor General Lord Bentinck banned Sati in 1829–also abolished polygamy–stressed on women inheriting property.
- ▶ Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar: Upliftment of women and girls’ education–made British pass Widow Remarriage Act of 1856–participated in a widow remarriage at Calcutta that year, orthodox Hindus attacked him–in 1855 he was made special inspector of schools–concentrated on opening many schools, especially for girls–authorities resented this so he resigned.
- ▶ Keshab Chandra Sen: Follower of Raja Ram Mohan Roy–fought against social evils–opposed purdah system and performed intercaste marriages.
- ▶ Dadabhai Naoroji: From Bombay–tried to get a Uniform Law of Inheritance and Marriage for Parsees.
- ▶ Jyotiba Phule: Opened schools for girls in 1848–his wife was educated–helped him to teach others.

- ▶ Ramabai Ranade: Dedicated her life for the cause of women.
- ▶ Kandakuri Veerasalingam: In 1878 founded the Rajahmundry Association which tried to bring equality of all human beings—known as Vidyasagar of the South.

### Improvement in Women’s Status

- ▶ Status of women improved—started playing an important role in national movement—this participation made them break social bondage—took part in Home Rule Movement started by Annie Besant—All India Women’s Conference founded in 1927—after this women’s movement began.

### Right to Property

- ▶ British enacted Hindu Women’s Right to Property Act XVIII of 1937—women to get a share in ancestral property.

### Impact of Literature

- ▶ Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Premchand—great poets and writers of the period—expressed need for reforms for women.
- ▶ Swami Dayanand Saraswati—founder of Arya Samaj—supported female education—started kanya gurukuls for education of girls/women.
- ▶ Aligarh movement led by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan—supported cause of women’s education.
- ▶ Sarojini Naidu—social worker, fought for women’s rights—worked with All India Women’s Conference in 1927.
- ▶ Many women became good teachers and started organisations and institutions.
- ▶ These efforts led to the growth of various associations that helped emancipation of women.

## Assessment Corner

### Oral Assignment

- Ask for answers at random from the students. Confirm the right answers. Let them write down the correct answers if they like in their books.

### Written Assignment

- The teacher has two options—(i) Either do these exercises orally first and then ask the students to write them down. OR (ii) Ask the students to write the answers on their own. Then the teacher can announce the correct answers from the students and they can ask their partners to cross-check them.

In either case, the answers can be written as homework and the teacher can check them in the class.

## Think Tank

- F. **HOTS questions:** Discuss the questions in the class and let the students write the answers to F and G as homework. Teacher should assess individual work.