

CIVICS

Chapter 5: WOMEN CHANGE THE WORLD



WOMEN CHANGE THE WORLD

Stereotypic Roles of Women

A **stereotype** is an assumption or preconceived notion about a person, community or place which is not backed by any logic or reason. For example, girls are expected to talk softly but boys can pass off being aggressive.

Many people today believe in stereotypes. For example, women are supposed to be gentle and patient. This is the reason certain occupations are considered to be built especially for women. For instance, almost all nurses and receptionists are women. On the other hand, men are considered to be scientists, pilots, army men and police as people believe in the stereotypic notion that these professions require technical minds and physical power, in which women are generally considered to be lacking. In most families, education of the girl child is not considered important. The education of boys is given more importance than that of the girls.



Almost all the nurses are females

Women in the Nineteenth Century

- In the nineteenth century many schools were opened up, but women were not expected to read or write.
- Many people opposed the education of girls and as a result women struggled to attain education.
- However, women who did get educated began to question the general attitude of the people towards women education.

During this time, there were some women who not only learned to read and write amid oppositions but also worked towards the education of women. Some of these women and their achievements are:

Rashsundari Devi (1800-1890)

- She was born in West Bengal. She is considered to be the first woman in India who wrote her autobiography titled 'Amar Jiban'.
- She was a house wife belonging to a rich landlord's family where women were not allowed to read and write. It was believed that an educated woman brought bad luck to her husband.

- Rashesundari Devi secretly learned to read and write as she wanted to read Chaitanya Bhagabat (a book based on the life of a saint).
- She would often work on her reading at mid-night when everyone was asleep.
- Rashesundari Devi took help from her son's books in order to learn to read. After a long period of time she learned to read and was finally able to read the Chaitanya Bhagabat.
- She later also learned to write and wrote her autobiography in which she had discussed her busy work routine at home every day.

Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922)

- Pandita Ramabai championed the cause of women's education.
- She was educated at home by her parents.
- Due to her keenness towards her studies, she not only learned Sanskrit but also learned Marathi and Bengali.
- Due to her knowledge of the Sanskrit language, she was conferred with the title of 'Pandita'.
- She encouraged female education and to achieve this aim, in 1898, she set up a Mission in Khedgaon near Pune. This mission not only imparted education to girls and widows but also encouraged them to become independent.
- In this mission, women were trained in many arts and crafts such as carpentry and running a printing press.
- Pandita Ramabai's contribution to the Indian society in the nineteenth century is highly recommendable.



Pandita Ramabai

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932)

- Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was born in a rich family. Though she was taught to read and write Urdu, she was not encouraged to learn English and Bangla languages. It was felt that the learning of these two languages would expose girls to new ideas.
- She however secretly learned the Bangla and English languages and became a writer.
- Her famous work is the story titled 'Sultana Dreams'. In this story, a woman



Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

named Sultana reaches a place called ladyland where women had the freedom to study, learn and create innovations. Thus women in her story were controlling rains and flying planes in the nineteenth century.

- Later in 1910, she opened a school for girls at Kolkata, which is still functioning till date and is known as the Sakahwat Memorial Girls School.

Differences between the Education of Boys and Girls

- Today, both boys and girls attend schools in large numbers. However, there still remains a difference between the education of boys and girls.
- The census which is conducted by the government after every ten years, provide us information about the people living in India like the percentage of literate people, sex ratio, about the occupation of men and women etc.
- To estimate the level of literacy, children above seven years of age are taken into account. They are considered as literate if they are at least able to write their names.
- According to the census of 1961, about 40 percent of all the boys and men were literate while only 15 percent of all girls and women were educated.
- In the census of 2001, while 76% of males were literate, the literacy rate of the females was only 54%. The percentage of educated females is still lower than the percentage of educated males.
- What is more noticeable is that the literacy rates of the Dalit and Muslim girls are less than the literacy rates of the total female population of India.
- Statistics have shown that the literacy rates of Muslim girls were even less than those of the Dalit girls.

Reasons for Low Literacy Rates among the Dalit, Muslim and Adivasi Children

- Lack of proper schools in the rural and the poor areas.
- Many schools are located many kilometres away from the villages. Lack of proper transport facilities forces the children to drop out from the schools.
- Many families are so poor that they are unable to afford the cost of educating their children.
- Many Dalit children leave their schools as they are discriminated against by the upper caste children and teachers.



Many Dalit families are too poor to send their girls to

Women's Movement

Women have not gained all their rights in various fields such as education, health, legal rights automatically. They had to struggle for gaining their rights. The struggles waged by them in order to gain their rights are known as the **Women's Movement**. Many women, organisations and men have participated in the women's movement to help women gain these rights. Some strategies which are adopted for making people aware of the women's rights are:

Campaigns

- Campaigns help the women to protest and fight against discriminations which are made against them.
- In 2006, as a result of several campaigns, a law was passed which gave legal protection to women against domestic violence.
- Many campaigns were organised by various women organisations through street plays, protests and by approaching the courts to demand the banishment of dowry from the country.
- Sexual harassment of women in the work place and other institutions became an act punishable by law due to the organisation of large scale campaigns by women.



Women holding campaigns

Making People Aware

One way to fight against the discrimination of women is to make people aware by staging street plays, composing songs and holding public meetings.

Protests

When some grievous injustice takes place against women, or a law is passed hurting their interests, protests are held by various women groups. Taking out public rallies and holding demonstrations leave a deep impact on the minds of the people.

Showing Solidarity

The solidarity shown by women together helps them fight various issues. When women empathise and sympathise with one another, the women's movement becomes stronger.

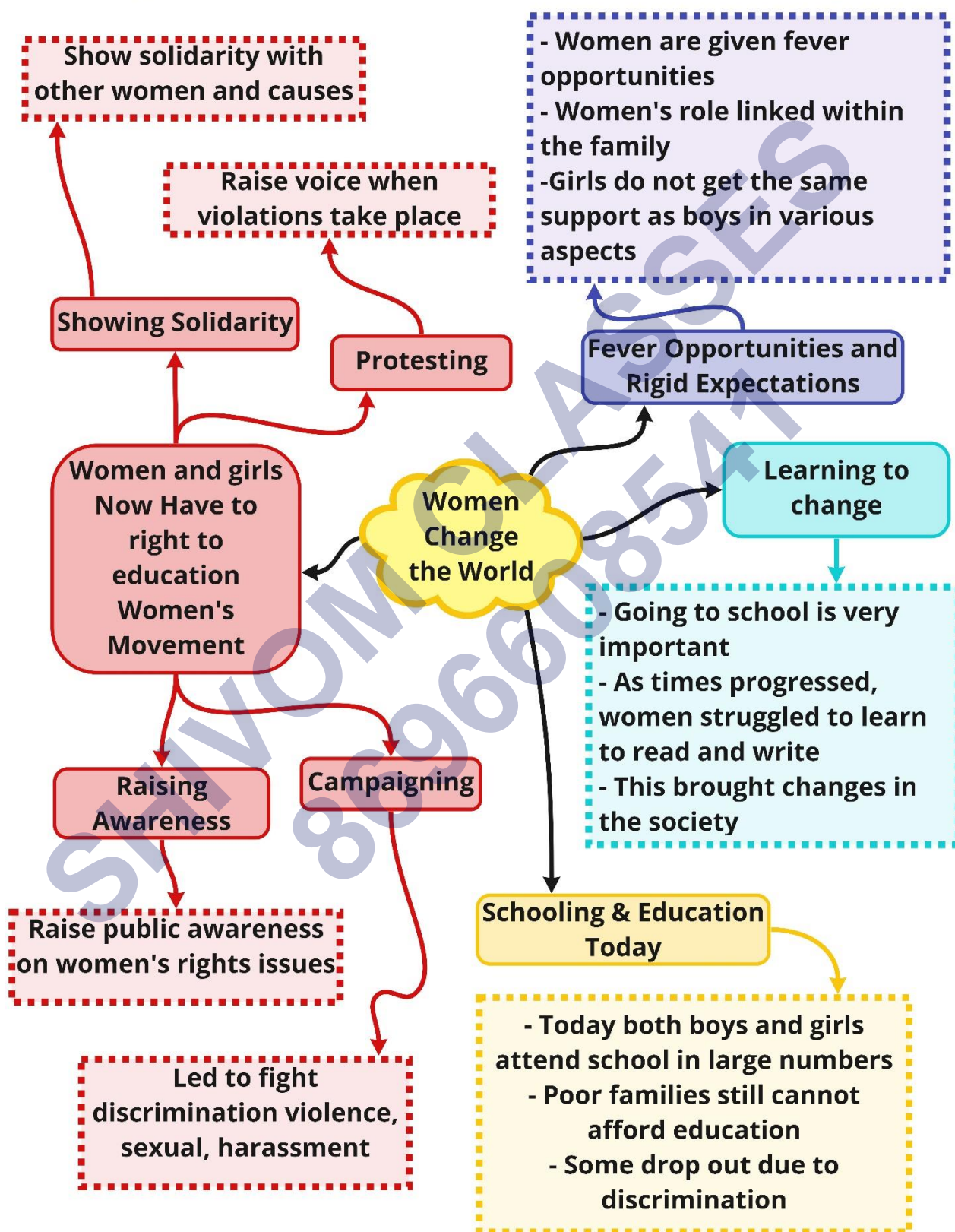


Women make people aware of the discriminations against them by holding rallies and writing slogans



Holding a candle light march is one way of showing solidarity with women

Class : 7th Social Studies (Political Science)
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the World



Important Questions

➤ Multiple Choice Questions:

Question 1. Driving her train was written by:

- (a) Rokeya Sekhawat Hossain
- (b) Ramabai
- (c) Neeta Lai

Question 2. Ramabai was given the title of 'pandita' because she could read and write the language:

- (a) English
- (b) Sanskrit
- (c) Hindi

Question 3. Rashundari Devi was from:

- (a) Bengal
- (b) Maharashtra
- (c) manipur

Question 4. Who became the first woman engine driver of the northern

- (a) Laxmi Lakra
- (b) Rashundari Devi
- (c) Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

Question 5. International women's day is celebrated on:

- (a) 7 March
- (b) 8 March
- (c) 9 March

Question 6. what do you mean by stereotypes?

- (a) All boys are superior in class
- (b) All people are behaved in a particular manner
- (c) Rich people are higher in class
- (d) None of these

Question 7. In which year the law was passed to give women protection from domestic violence?

- (a) 2000
- (b) 2001
- (c) 2006
- (d) 2005

Question 8. what percentage of ST girls leaves school at primary level?

- (a) 36%
- (b) 67%
- (c) 49%
- (d) 78%

Question 9. what was the title given to Rama bai?

- (a) Swami
- (b) Intellectual
- (c) Lady
- (d) Pandita

Question 10. What is the main aim of families in general for the future of girls?

- (a) Higher education
- (b) Marriage
- (c) Good career
- (d) None of these

Question 11. Who were the famous women who make changes in other women's life?

- (a) Rashsundari Devi
- (b) Ramabai
- (c) Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain
- (d) All of the above

Question 12. Which famous book is written by Rashsundari Devi?

- (a) Amar Jiban
- (b) Godan
- (c) Madhushala
- (d) None of these

Question 13. what do you mean by women's movement?

- (a) Movement planned by senior citizen
- (b) Women struggle for improvement in life
- (c) Men struggle for improvement in life
- (d) None of these

Question 14. why many girls do not continue their education?

- (a) Poverty
- (b) Discrimination
- (c) Both a and b
- (d) None of these

Question 15. which are the languages Rokeya Sakhawat learned?

- (a) Bangla
- (b) English
- (c) Both a and b
- (d) None of these

➤ **Fill in the blanks:**

1. _____ are pressurised to think about getting a job that will pay a good salary.
2. Showing solidarity is an important part of the education of _____.
3. Rokey Hossain in started a school for _____.
4. Amar Jiban was written by _____.
5. Scheduled caste is the official term for _____.

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F):**

1. Laxmi Lakra is from a poor tribal family in Madhya Pradesh.
2. Many women and men made efforts to open schools for girls.
3. In 1910, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain started a school for girls in Kolkata, and to this day, the school is still functioning.
4. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was born into a poor family who owned no land.

➤ **Very Short Questions:**

1. What is the percentage of women engaged in agricultural work in our country?
2. What does agricultural work mean to these women?

3. When we think of a farmer we only think of a man. Why?
4. Why was Ramabai given the title 'Pandita'?
5. How did women support men in the pottery trade?
6. Mention any one stereotype about what women can or cannot do?
7. How did Laxmi Lakra break the stereotype that only men could be engine drivers?
8. What changes came to be seen with the emergence of new ideas about education and learning in the 19th century?
9. Who was Rashsundari Devi? What did she write in her autobiography?
10. What did Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain do for the girls?

➤ Short Questions:

1. How do you think stereotypes, about what women can do and what they cannot do, affect women's right to equality?
2. Describe few methods of struggle used by women to raise their issues.
3. Who set up a Mission in Khedgaon near Pune in 1898? How did the Mission prove beneficial for the women?
4. Why was Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain stopped from learning Bangla and English? How did she manage to learn these languages?
5. Why do you think learning alphabets was actually important to women like Rashsundari Devi, Ramabai and Rokeya?

➤ Long Questions:

1. Give a brief life sketch of Laxmi Lakra.
2. Was Rashsundari Devi a superstitious woman? If not, why not?
3. Although the literacy rates have increased since independence, what remains the worrying factor with respect to gender?
4. Who wrote the story Sultana's Dream? What is the story all about?
5. What are the various ways women apply to fight discrimination and seek justice?

ANSWER KEY –

➤ Multiple Choice Answer:

1. (c) Neeta Lai
2. (b) Sanskrit
3. (a) Bengal

4. (a) Laxmi Lakra
5. (b) 8 March
6. (b) All people are behaved in a particular manner
7. (c) 2006
8. (c) 49%
9. (d) Pandita
10. (b) Marriage
11. (d) All of the above
12. (a) Amar Jiban
13. (b) Women struggle for improvement in life
14. (c) Both a and b
15. (c) Both a and b

➤ **Fill in the blanks:**

1. Boys
2. women
3. girls
4. Rashsundari Devi
5. Dalit

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F):**

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

➤ **Very Short Answer:**

1. 83.6% of women are engaged in agricultural work.
2. Plating, weeding, harvesting and threshing.
3. It is because major portion of the agricultural work is done by man. Women only assist them.
4. It was because she could read and write Sanskrit. It was a remarkable achievement as women were not allowed such knowledge those days.

5. They collected the mud and prepared the earth for the pots.
6. Women can be good teachers but they are incapable of dealing with technical things.
7. She became the first woman engine driver for Northern Railways.
8. Schools became more common and communities that had never learnt reading and writing started sending their children to school.
9. Rashundari Devi was a housewife from a rich landlord's family in west Bengal. She wrote about her everyday life experiences in her autobiography.
10. She started a school for girls in Kolkata which is functioning even today.

➤ Short Answer:

1. Stereotypes about what women can or cannot do affects women's right to equality because they are considered weak and incapable of doing strong works. And thus women are called inferior to men. They are paid less salaries / wages than their man counterparts.
2. **Following are the methods of struggle that women's movement used to raise their issues:**
 - i. Raising awareness through street plays, songs and public meetings.
 - ii. Protesting through public rallies and powerful way of drawing attention to injustice.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Learning the alphabet was so important to women like Rashundari Devi, Ramabai and Rokeya because after learning alphabet they could achieve their goals and fulfill their dreams and contribute the society.
 - i. **Rashundari Devi:** Wrote "Amar Jiban", first autobiography written by an India woman.

- ii. **Ramabai:** She set up a mission in Khedagaon where widows and poor women are taught variety of skills from carpentry to running a printing press.
- iii. **Rokeya:** She started a school for girls in Kolkata in 1910 and thus helped other girls to get education.

➤ Long Answer:

1. 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. Rashundari 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. Rashundari 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.
3. 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.
4. It was Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain who wrote the story Sultana’s Dream in 1905 at the age of 25. The story is all about Sultana’s dream. In her imagination she reaches a place called Ladyland. Ladyland is the place where women had the freedom to study, work and create inventions like controllin’ rain from the clouds and flying air cars. In this Ladyland, the men had no freedom at all. They had been sent to seclusion. Their aggressive guns and other weapons of war defeated by the brain-power of women. As Sultana travels in the Ladyland, She awakes suddenly and becomes disappointed to see the reality.

5. The various ways women apply to fight discrimination and seek justice are as follow:
- i. It has proved to be a great success. It has led to a new law being passed in 2006. This law gives legal protection to women against domestic violence which includes physical and mental violence within their homes.
 - ii. Women by dint of campaigning made the Supreme Court to formulate guidelines in 1997 to protect women against sexual harassment at workplace. They also campaigned for bringing justice to those families which have become pray to dowry deaths. As a result of their campaigns, dowry laws were changed to punish families who seek dowry.
 - iii. Raising Awareness. Women, in order to fight-discrimination, work hard to raise public awareness on women's rights issues. They do so through several means such as street plays, songs and public meetings.
 - iv. Whenever a law or policy acts against the interest of the women, they rise in protest by holding public rallies and demonstrations. These are powerful ways of drawing attention to injustices.
 - v. Showing Solidarity. Women associated with the Women's movement also believe in showing solidarity with other women and their causes.

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