

WOMEN CASTE AND REFORM

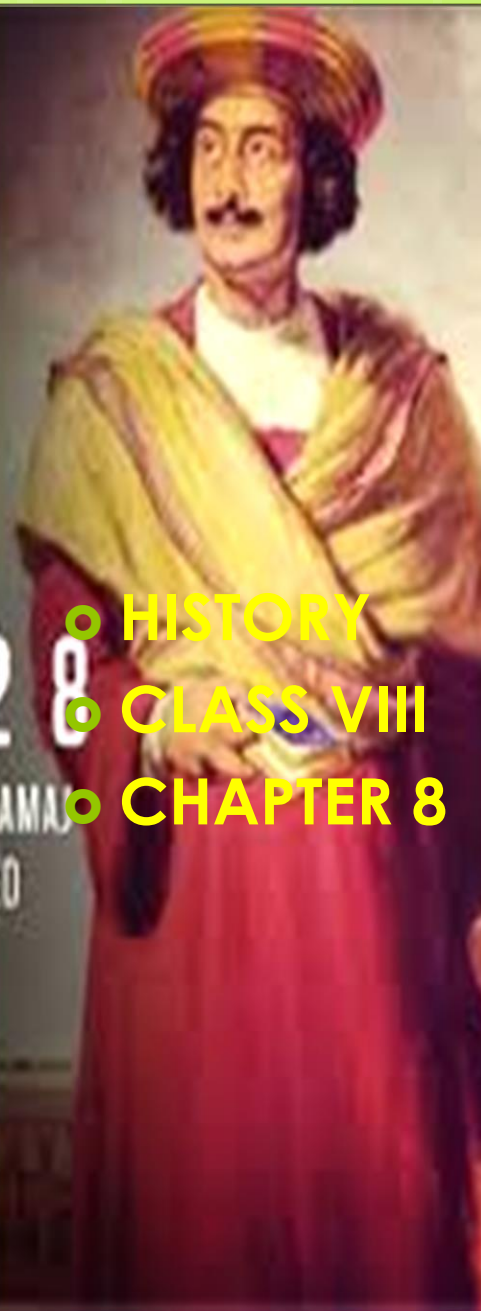
MODULE I



1828

BRAHMO SAMAJ
STARTED

- HISTORY
- CLASS VIII
- CHAPTER 8





Two hundred years ago the lives of women were totally different from what it is today. There were so many restrictions imposed on women.

Widows were praised and called 'satis' meaning 'virtuous' if they chose to by burning themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands.

People were also divided along lines of caste. Brahmins and Kshatriyas considered themselves in upper caste, after them traders and moneylenders referred to as Vaishyas and the lower caste were Shudras and included peasants, artisans, weavers, and potter.

The attitude towards women & social customs started changing from the early 19th century.

○ Working Towards Change:

(i) In early 19th century things changed because of the development of new forms of communication.

(ii) Social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy founded Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta.

(iii) Raja Ram Mohan Roy pioneered this reform movement. He opposed social practices such as discrimination on the basis of caste, untouchability, superstitions and the custom of 'sati'. He wanted to spread the knowledge of western education and bring about freedom and equality for women.



Changing the Lives of Widows:

- (i) Raja Rammohan Roy set up the Brahmo Samaj to fight social evils. He began a campaign against the practice of sati. Many British officials criticised Indian traditions and customs. They supported him and in 1829, sati was banned. He also supported women's education. In the religious field, he opposed idol worship and meaningless rituals.
- (ii) Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar was one of the most famous reformers who suggested widow remarriage. In 1856, British officials passed the law permitting widow remarriage.
- (iii) Swami Dyanand Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj in 1875, and also supported widow marriage.

Girls begin going to School:

- (i) Many reformers felt that to improve the condition of women, education for girls was necessary.
- (ii) Many reformers in Bombay and Calcutta set up schools for girls.
- (iii) With the inauguration of first school in mid-19th century, many people feared that school would take the girls away from home and prevent them from doing domestic duties.
- iv) Many people believed that girls should be kept away from public spaces as they believed that they can get corrupting influence.
- (v) In aristocratic Muslim families in North India, women learnt to read the Koran in Arabic. They were taught by women who came home to teach.

Women write about Women:

- (i) Muslim women like Begums of Bhopal promoted education among women and founded a primary school for girls at Aligarh.
- (ii) Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain started schools for Muslim girls in Patna and Calcutta.
- (iii) Indian women began to enter universities by 1880s. Some of them trained to be doctors and teachers.
- (iv) Tarabai Shinde got education at home at Poona, published a book, *Stripurushtulna* (A Comparison between Women & Men), criticizing the social differences between men & women.
- (v) Pandita Ramabai was a great scholar of Sanskrit, wrote a book about the miserable lives of upper-class Hindu women. She founded a widows' home at Poona to provide shelter to widows who had been treated badly by their husbands' relatives.

स्त्री पुरुष तुलना

लेखिका : ताराबाई शिंदे



प्रकाशक : पुस्तकालय संशोधन

Women write about Women:

- (vi) Later, women were trained to support themselves economically.
- (vii) Orthodox Hindu & Muslim Nationalists were worried as women started adopting western cultures and according to them that could corrupt and erode family values.
- (viii) Women started working for reforms. They wrote books, magazines, founded schools & training centers, and set up women's' associations.
- (ix) Women formed political pressure groups to push through laws for female suffrage (the right to vote).
- (x) Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose gave their support to demands for greater equality and freedom for women.



THANK YOU