Chapter - 4
THE EMERGENCE OF ORGANISATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS FOR WOMEN EMANCIPATION

The experience of colonial rule was one of the most formative influences on the feminist movement of the early twentieth century. The nineteenth century was a period in which the rights and wrongs of women became major issues: if early attempts at reforming the conditions under which Indian women lived were largely conducted by men, by the late nineteenth century their wives, sisters, daughters, protegees and other affected by campaigns, such as that for women’s education, had themselves joined in movements. By the early twentieth century women’s own autonomous organisations began to be formed, and within a couple of decades, by the thirties and forties, a special category of ‘women’s activitism’ was constructed.¹

When the Britishers came to India, their primary interest lay in the economic gains. But with the passage of time they started interfering in the internal matters of Indian people and with the establishment of their political hold, started making new policies for their vested interests. The education policy was made primarily to procure clerical staff for themselves. However, these policies became a boon for the Indian people in many ways. People became aware and

enlightened about their rights. They joined different occupations and they also started forming organisations for the welfare of their brothers and sisters.

Indian educated men started working against different social evil customs of society - child marriage, dowry system, purdah, enforced widowhood and others. They were now convinced that to get rid of these evils there was only one alternative - spread of female education. “Indians supported female education because they wanted social and religious reform; or social and financial mobility, or both.”

These educational experiments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth produced a “new woman” with interests that went beyond the household. Even the social reformers were forming different associations for fight against social evils and for the spread of female education. Between 1900 and 1920 the “new women,” that is women who were the beneficiaries of the social reforms and educational efforts of the nineteenth century, stepped forward to begin their own schools and later formed their own organisations and associations.

In Punjab, Dayanand Saraswati’s movement grew rapidly from the 1880s, moving from a criticism of orthodox Hindu customs to their replacement with ‘Aryan’ ceremonies. The Amritsar Arya Samaj in 1882 was especially active performing widow remarriages.

---

mid of 1880s, Arya Samaj grew increasingly active in movements for women education and in 1890 Arya Kanya Pathshala was opened at Jalandhar. Lala Lajpat Rai and Lala Dhuni Chand both became active crusaders for women and Arya Mahila Parishads were also formed in Punjab.

In 1873, the Sikhs under Sardar Thakar Singh Sandhawaliya formed the Singh Sabha Amritsar. The main objectives of this organisation were propagation of Sikhism; propagation of education for boys and girls; making society free from all social evil customs; progress of Punjabi language; and others. In 1879, Sikh leaders of Lahore formed Singh Sabha Lahore on the pattern of Amritsar Sabha. In 1880 both the sabhas joined hands and started working jointly.\(^6\) This sabha then started opening schools in the different parts of Punjab. In 1892 Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya was opened in Ferozepur by Bhai Takht Singh and his spouse Bibi Harnam Kaur. Then the Singh Sabha within their branches also formed Women Associations (Istri Dal) for women emancipation. Women were appointed as ‘Updeshaks’ (preachers) who used to go to other regions and made people aware about the need of women education. These Updeshaks inspired the women to join the Singh Sabhas and work for women cause.\(^7\)


After the formation of the Singh Sabhas, Women Cells within these Sabhas were opened in every part of Punjab. The main active leaders and reformers decided to establish a head office of all these scattered Singh Sabhas. The Singh Sabha of Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Sargodha, Amritsar, Jhang all were working for the same cause viz. for the progress of the nation. So to meet this end, the Chief Khalsa Diwan was founded in Amritsar in 1902 as the main organizing body and various Singh Sabhas got affiliated to it in 1902.

The print media especially vernacular journals and newspapers like *Punjabi Bhain*\(^8\) (of Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya). *Istri Satsang, Phulwari, Istri Rattan* and others propagated for the formation of organisations, especially for women, through the columns of their issues. ‘Sikh Istri Jathebandi’ article in January issue of Punjabi Bhain in 1931 asked women to come together and form organisations mainly for women causes and help the reformers of Punjab.\(^9\)

*The Chief Khalsa Diwan* was established on 30 October 1902 at Amritsar. It was registered on 9 July 1904 under the Act XXI, 1860.\(^10\) Twenty nine regional Singh Sabhas got associated with the Chief Khalsa Diwan on 30th October. Bhai Sahib Arjan Singh Raees Bagriyan, Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia and Sodhi Sujan Singh were

\(^8\) *Punjabi Bhain*, Ferozepur, April, 1917, p. 6.
appointed as the Secretaries of the organisation.\footnote{Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sewa De Panjah Saal, Amritsar, Wazir-i-Hind Press, 1952, p. 4.} The organisation was formed mainly to promote the spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, educational and economic welfare of the people. To promote the teachings of the Sikh Gurus was also the aim of Chief Khalsa Diwan. For the women, the scope of its activities was confined to maintenance of Sikh widows and to advocate widow remarriages among Sikhs. Orphanages and infirmaries for orphans (both males and females) and handicapped children were also established for their upbringing, development and education.\footnote{The Monthly Circular of Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, January 1907, p. 9.} It also drafted rules to open schools for girls for propagation of female education.\footnote{Ibid, April 1906, p. 8.}

The Chief Khalsa Diwan used to conduct Khalsa Diwans in different parts of Punjab like Baluchistan, Ludhiana, Lahore, Anandpur Sahib, Gujranwala and other districts for preaching Sikhism, baptizing people into Sikhism and informing people about the various social evils persisting in society and encouraged people to get rid of these evils with the mode of education.\footnote{Ibid, Jan. 1906, pp. 16-17.} It also started different kind of funds for raising money and used it for many progressive works. Preacher's Fund was started for paying the salaries of the preachers, Help Fund for social work in society, Khalsa Anathalaya (Yateem Khana) fund to help the needy and poor orphan
girls and boys, Hospital fund was collected to buy medicines to give at religious places and fairs free of cost.\textsuperscript{15} Atta Fund (i.e. flour fund) was started to encourage women to keep boxes or drums at their homes, in which they were asked to put handful of flour everyday and the flour was then to be donated in Khalsa Anathalyas.\textsuperscript{16} In 1906, Chaudhary Gurdit Singh, Bhai Dewan Singh and Bhai Sohan Singh of Amritsar took the initiative to keep charity boxes and money boxes at the shops. The shopkeepers were asked to donate an anna everyday in these boxes so that the money collected could be used for social welfare works.\textsuperscript{17}

There is always a need of newspaper or journal for any organisation to become successful and to fulfill all its aims. So in 1903, the Chief Khalsa Diwan started the publication of their weekly newspaper ‘Khalsa Advocate’. Earlier this newspaper was published in English but later on Punjabi medium was used.\textsuperscript{18} It also started ‘The Monthly Circular of Chief Khalsa Diwan’ from Amritsar. From 1st October 1905, it also started publishing its monthly financial report in this monthly circular so that people could know about the usage of their money donated to this organisation.\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid}, Jan. 1906, pp. 19-25.
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid}, Feb. 1906, p. 21.
\item \textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid}, Feb. 1906, p. 22.
\item \textsuperscript{18} \textit{Sewa De Panjah Saal}, pp. 13-14.
\item \textsuperscript{19} \textit{The Monthly Circular of Chief Khalsa Diwan}, Jan. 1906, p. 18.
\end{itemize}
In 1903, Sardar Harbans Singh Atari, Bhai Takht Singh of Ferozepur, Bhai Arjan Singh Chak Ramdas, and Bhai Teja Singh Mainganwale went to Sindh for preaching Sikhism. During their tour, the Sikhs of Sindh handed them a child of six years age whose mother had died and his father was unable to take care of his child due to extreme poverty. So this group of four brought the child to Amritsar and discussed with the higher officials of Chief Khalsa Diwan for opening ‘an orphanage’. So on 11 April 1904, Chief Khalsa Diwan opened ‘Yateemkhana’ in Amritsar for taking care of orphans (both males and females). On 18 November 1906, the Executive Committee of Khalsa Diwan passed resolution number four for opening ‘Central Khalsa Anathalaya (Yateem Khana), Chief Khalsa Diwan’. There orphans and needy people were helped, their care was taken, religious, professional practical and commercial education was imparted to them which could help them in earning their living. The organisation even had the right to marry girls and boys staying in the orphanage whom they thought eligible and all the expenditure of the wedding was the responsibility of the Yateem Khana.

The Chief Khalsa Diwan instructed ‘the Central Anathalaya’ to open more branches in the different parts of Punjab according to the need. Various technical schools, factories and mills were opened by

---

this Anathalaya for teaching orphans and sometimes they were sent to other technical schools in their neighbourhood. For the proper functioning of Yateemkhana, Chief Khalsa Diwan decided to start permanent fund in 1912. All the money was collected and was deposited in the bank and with the interest of that money the Anathalaya was managed. From 1912-13, there were one hundred and twenty six boys and three girls residing in this orphanage. They were given primary education in the institution itself and for higher education, the male students were sent to Khalsa College, Amritsar while the girls were sent to Sikh Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, Ferozepur. The widow of the preachers were also taken care of. Bibi Har Kaur widows of late Bhai Mehar Singh, preacher who was working Central Khalsa Anathalaya, was given rupee three per month. Sometimes widows were also encouraged to remarry and the expenditure of their weddings was borne by Anathalaya.

The Anathalaya became so popular in the second decade of the twentieth century that many families started marrying their children to the orphans of this institution. In 1913, Bhai Jhanda Singh Pandori Waraich of Amritsar, married his only daughter to Harbans Singh of this institution and later gave his whole property to him.

---

22 Ibid, p. 5.
24 Ibid, p. 5.
26 Ibid, p. 4.
The institution even appointed women to take care of girl orphans and for preparing food. In 1915-16, Anant Kaur was recruited to prepare food in the kitchen of the institution and Gurdial Kaur was appointed as nurse for providing medical aid. Scholarships were provided to girl and boy students for higher studies and even needy people like widows, were also given scholarships.

In the third decade of the twentieth century, the ratio of girls students was less but this institution was at least trying to help women in gaining education and removing social blots like widowhood.

The Chief Khalsa Diwan after forming Central Khalsa Yateemkhana also worked for forming ‘Central Vidwa Ashram’ for the welfare of widows. It wanted to tackle the problem of child marriage and widow remarriage. In the Central Khalsa Anathalaya, even women worked for collecting funds in both kind and cash. The wife of Sardar Aaya Singh Jaj collected food grains for the yateemkhana.

The Secretary of Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sardar Mehar Singh Lahore donated rupees hundred to Khalsa Yateem Khana for imparting technical and vocational education to girls. He also donated food and clothes for the girls.

28 *ibid*, pp. 6-7.
31 *ibid*, Feb. 1906, pp. 18-19.
32 *ibid*, April 1906, pp. 8-9.
The Chief Khalsa Diwan on 30 June 1935 passed a resolution number three hundred ninety six in the meeting of the Executive Committee and formed ‘Soorma Singh Ashram’ at Amritsar. Bhai Veer Singh donated rupees four thousand for opening this Ashram. It was mainly opened for blind students where students were taught ‘braille’ and weaving and stringing chairs and cots. This ashram was started with only five students in 1935.\(^{33}\) By 1947 the number of students rose to twenty.\(^{34}\)

After the formation of the Chief Khalsa Diwan in 1902, in December 1906 it started sending groups (Jathas) to Sindh for preaching. In 1907, when this Jatha was in Sindh and went to Karachi where they saw Muslims conducting Educational Conference, then these Sikh leaders also thought of conducting a conference on the same pattern. After reaching Amritsar, Surinder Singh Majithia called for a meeting of all important officials of the Chief Khalsa Diwan on 19 January, 1908 and it was decided to conduct an All India Sikh Educational Conference.\(^{35}\) So the First Educational Conference was conducted on 17-18-19 April 1908 at Gujranwala and was presided by Sardar Baghel Singh Raees Kulla of Lahore.\(^{36}\)

From 1908 to 1947, thirty three sessions of the Sikh Educational Conference were held in different parts of Punjab. In Amritsar, Lahore and Rawalpindi, the conference was held for four

---


\(^{34}\) Sewa De Panjah Saal, p. 24.

\(^{35}\) Sewa De Panjah Saal, p. 15.

times each. The Silver Jubilee celebrations of Sikh Educational Conference were held at Gujranwala in 1935.

The Educational Committee of the Chief Khalsa Diwan was constituted with thirteen members in 1908 and rules and regulations for the Sikh Educational Conference were made. To propagate western science and literature among Sikhs; to develop Sikh literature; to help financially and reform educational institutions, to encourage to open new schools; to provide scholarships to poor and eligible students, to promote female education among Sikhs and others were main the aims and motives of this conference.37

The education committee was working for the propagation of education by opening new schools in Punjab and used to meet the officials of the Department of Education to revise the curriculum for boys and girls separately. Girls and boys were granted scholarships from the committee fund. Girls were encouraged to participate in the exhibitions conducted during the educational conference.38

The delegates to the conference were elected through four channels - the Khalsa Diwan, the various Singh Sabhas, public meetings where no Singh Sabha existed, and through the various Sikh educational institutions. However the wives of the educated elite,
many of whom were fore-runners in the education of females, through their gratuitous efforts, also participated in the later sessions of the conference.\(^{39}\)

The three day session of the Sikh educational conference began by a grand procession on the first day to welcome the President of the Conference. An exhibition was held in which girls of different schools brought their hand made embroidery stuff and the exhibition was open for all the three days. On the second day the Reception Committee's President used to deliver his lecture, then it was followed by the Presidential address and other delegates also delivered their speeches.\(^{40}\) On the evening of the second day, ‘Kavi Darbar’ became an essential part of the conference sessions. Punjabi poets and poetesses drawn from all the communities were awarded prizes. This was a laudable attempt to improve Punjabi literature.\(^{41}\) All the resolutions were passed and the date and venue of the next session of the conference was fixed on the third day.\(^{42}\)

This Educational Conference gave a great impetus to the female emancipation through the propagation of female education. In 1909, it passed a resolution regarding the curriculum for girls’ schools. It demanded from the government that girls be taught cooking and

---

midwifery in Punjabi language in their respective schools.\textsuperscript{43} In the Sixth Educational Conference at Ambala on 21-22-23 March, 1913, Diwan Leela Ram Singh of Sindh in his Presidential address regarded girls' education more important than boys and requested each delegate present to work for female education.\textsuperscript{44} Under the impact of the educational conference, Sardar Sunder Singh, Science Master of Gujranwala Khalsa High School founded Sardar Balwant Singh Istri Sahayak Vidyalaya for widows from his own property.\textsuperscript{45} In the twentieth session of the Conference held at Sargodha on 29-30-31 March, 1929, a women meeting was organised in the form of on ‘Istri Conference’ and after that regular women conferences where held.\textsuperscript{46}

In 1932 in the twenty second session of Conference, ‘Sikh Istri Conference’ was held under the presidentship of Srimati Shivdevi of Sidkot. She, in her presidential address, spoke on professional education for girls so that they could also share the burden of their husbands. But she also hoped girls to be perfect home makers simultaneously.\textsuperscript{47} By the end of 1930’s, this educational conference started discussing political issues, primarily concerning the independence of India. It encouraged both men and women to

\textsuperscript{44} Chenvi Sikh Educational Conference Di Karwayi Di Report, Amritsar, Wajir Hind Press, 1913 p.21.
\textsuperscript{45} Satvi Sikh Educational Conference Di Karwayi Di Report, Amritsar Wajir Hind Press, 1914, p.36
\textsuperscript{46} Golden Jubilee Book, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{47} Report Bahivi Sikh Education Conference Lahore Jo 25, 26, 27 March’ 1932 Nu Hoi, Amritsar Wazir Hind Press, 1932, p.23.
participate in the struggle for freedom through the use of media especially vernacular press for creating awareness among the people.

The main ideal of the Educational Conference of the Chief Khalsa Diwan was to impart education to every girl, boy and adult, whether rich or poor. The resolutions passed in the sessions of the Conference were forwarded to the Director of Public Instruction, Punjab and sometimes an influential Deputation used to meet the higher officials of government of Punjab and Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University.\textsuperscript{48}

In the first decade of the twentieth century, there were many 'Youngmen Chrustain Associations' which propagated Christianity. So to reduce the impact of these associations on youngsters in Punjab, Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia and Bhai Vir Singh formed \textit{The Youngmen Sikh Association} in Punjab. Initially this association was mainly formed to counter attack the Christian associations but with the passage of time it also started propagating against the various social evils of the society.\textsuperscript{49} This association also started the publication of a journal, \textit{The Khalsa Youngmen's Magazine} from Amritsar. It was published after every three months in 'Punjabi' language with annual subscription of rupees one.\textsuperscript{50} The association even published many tracts, books, pamphlets relating to all the

\bibliographystyle{plain}
\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{48} Univi Sikh Educational Conference De Samagam Di Karwayi Di Sankhep Report, Amritsar Wajir Hind Press, 1928, pp.102
\bibitem{49} Mehar Singh Rawel, \textit{Doctor Sunder Singh Manithia : Life aim and role}, p. 56.
\bibitem{50} \textit{The Khalsa Youngmen's Magazine}, Amritsar, March 1907, p. 561.
\end{thebibliography}
social evils like female infanticide, child marriage, female education, against propagation of Christianity and others. Tract Number One: ‘Achraj Kautak’ (अचरज कौतक), Number two: ‘Maapeyan Da Vair’ (मापेयन दा वैर), Number three, five and six: ‘Daango Dangi’ (दांगो दंगी) represented the conditions of society before and after the Sikh Gurus, intercaste marriages and interreligious their impact and other social evils like widowhood, child marriage respectively. All these tracts were published by this association in 1905.\textsuperscript{51} The association tried to make people aware about the importance of female education through the columns of their journal. This is illustrated below:

\begin{quote}
‘सिम्बल दिवस’ धन र बेह मदमी,
‘सिम्बल दिवस’ धन र बुख देवी,
‘सिम्बल दिवस’ धिमुर र बेह बघे।\textsuperscript{9}\\
‘पहेली सिम्बल’ हरू आ र भव भइमी,
‘पहेली सिम्बल’ ं स्वेच्छ भइमी सी।
‘पहेली सिम्बल’ धल आ र बेह मंडे,
‘पहेली सिम्बल’ यजुर भइमी सी
‘पहेली सिम्बल’ मदम हुं देवरी सी।\textsuperscript{2}\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

(without female education everything is incomplete, an educated female studies religious scriptures, educates her children, fulfills her household duties and is liked and praised by everyone in the society).

\footnotesize
\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{51} ibid, 16 Aug. 1905, p. 82
\textsuperscript{52} ibid, April 1905, p. 305.
\end{flushleft}
The members of the Khalsa Young Men’s Associations also sometimes visited different educational institutions in Punjab and made people aware about new developments in the field of education. ‘The Sikh Kanya Mahavidyalaya’ Ferozepur was frequently visited by the members and importance of female education was highlighted. This association regularly published the articles relating to female education in their journal. Special issues for women were encouraged and all the recent developments for women were mentioned. The members of the association also delivered lectures in various conferences, institutions regarding the emancipation of women. They regarded vernacular education as the most important source for the progress of women in the society.

There was also emergence of various women organisations which organised annual conferences as the other organisations were doing so in Punjab.

The Bhujangan Council was formed in the early 1900s in Kairon, Amritsar with the help of the Chief Khalsa Diwan. This Council was open to all women of the Punjab and its annual membership was rupees three per person. Bibi Livleen Kaur, Bibi Milap Kaur and others were the active members of this council. ‘Bhujangan Ashram’ as a female education institution was run by this Council. In 1916, the Council started the publication of a monthly journal Bhujangan Pattar in the month of September with Bibi Livleen Kaur as the editor.

---

54 Ibid, July 1906, pp. 323-324.
55 Bhujangan Pattar, Kairon, Amritsar, 1 Aug. 1920, p. 13.
‘Gehne Nasak Sabha’ (गेहने नासक सभा) was also working under this organisation which used to publish books, tracts, poems and others relating to female emancipation. ‘Bhujangan Pukar’, ‘Bhujangan Virlap’, ‘Shingar Lanat’, ‘Shingar Yudh’, ‘Narki Gehna’, ‘Shingar Siapa’ were the various books which were published describing the ill effects of jewellery and wanted a simple and sober life for the women of the Punjab.56

In 1916, ‘the Bhujangan Council’ organised the first ‘Sikh Women Conference’ at Kairon, Amritsar. This ‘Sikh Istri Conference’ became a platform for the Punjabi women to speak for the rights and needs of the women.57 Women were encouraged to present papers in this conference on each and every aspect important for girls. On the first day of the Conference Bibi Liveleen Kaur and Bibi Milap Kaur of Amritsar, Doctor Ramindar Kaur were the few ladies who presented their papers in this conference. Gyan Kaur (wife of Master Chanda Singh editor ‘Panth Sewak’) read her paper in the conference. Bibi Jaswant Kaur, Bibi Shivdevi (wife of Banga Singh Inspector Police), Mohinder Kaur of Lahore, Gyan Kaur (wife of Narian Singh Barriter Lahore) were the regular participants of the conference.58 The Reception Committee welcomed the President of the conference and a

57  Ibid, 1 Nov. 1917, pp. 5-6.
58  Ibid, 1 Nov. 1917, p. 6.
great procession was held for escorting the President to the venue. The second day witnessed lectures of various women from every corner of the region on female education, social evils like superstition, female infanticide, child marriage and others. The third day was the last day on which special competitions and Khalsa Diwans were conducted. 

‘Baal Prikhaya’ (competition for healthy child) was conducted and medals were given to the winners. The most healthy baby of the day was selected and given a gold medal. This was done in order to make women more and more aware about the health of their babies and ladies were taught about the science of child care. Baba Khem Singh ‘Bedi’ (active worker of Singh Sabha movement) was the first to start this competition in this conference. 

‘Dharmik Diwan’ (Religious Diwan) was conducted in which girl students of different schools used to contest. Finally, on the third day, all the resolution discussed by the delegates were passed. The venue of the next year conference was also fixed.

In ‘The Bhujangan Ashram’ of Kairon in Amritsar, different organisations and institutions were also working like ‘Mata Sahib Kaur School’, ‘Bhujangan School’, ‘Khalsa Bhujangan Diwan’, ‘Khalsa Bhujangan Council’, ‘Sikh Istri Conference’, ‘Bhujangan Pattar’ and

---

59 Ibid, 1 Nov. 1917, pp. 5-6.
60 Ibid, 1 Oct. 1917, p. 17.
61 Ibid, 1 Nov. 1917, p. 9.
‘Gehne Nasak Sabha’. The monthly reports of these institutions with detailed information about their working and expenditure were published in _Bhujangan Pattar_.

_The Punjab Temperance Federation_ with its headquarters at Amritsar worked for the three fold objective of health, general and adult education. The main motive was to make people aware about the anatomical effects of the intoxicants like alcohol on the different parts of the body. They even tried to help the orphans and widows of the victims. Females were given financial help as well as sometimes were trained in some vocational and technical field to earn their living. Special meetings in the form of Nagar-Kirtan, processions and fairs were organized. The free distribution of tracts, songs, stories, dialogues, poems, mottoes and charts in Urdu, Hindi, Gurmukhi and English was made. The members of the Federation used to deliver lectures in the Punjab, Delhi, UP and Punjab. Different schools, colleges, corn markets, Mandis, Cantonments and religious places were visited and short speeches, addresses and discussions with the people were held. In 1925, The D.P.I. of Punjab, Sir George Anderson, circulated a letter C.M. No. 14244 G dated 14th December 1925 to the Deputy Commissioners of the Punjab to avail the services

---

62 _Ibid_, 1 February 1920, p. 4.
63 _Report of the Punjab Temperance Federation, Amritsar, 1925_. (prepared by Master Sant Singh, Secretary Punjab Temperance Federation), p. II.
64 _Ibid_, p. 12.
65 _Ibid_, pp. I, II.
of the Honorary Secretary Punjab Temperance Federation, Master Sant Singh, in their District Board area in connection with health, general and adult education lectures.\textsuperscript{66}

The Federation also organised the ‘Temperance conference’ annually where aims and objects were well furnished.\textsuperscript{67} ‘Temperance Magazine’ was also started in 1903 for advocating their cause. It chiefly devoted to the federation’s mission and movement and had articles, poems, songs, dialogues and reports of the meetings. It had a nominal subscription of rupees One and half and two thousand copies were circulated monthly. All the female issues like female education, position of widows whose husbands died due to excess intake of intoxicants were discussed regularly. The victims were helped by this Federation.\textsuperscript{68} ‘Arya Girl School’ of Montgomery and Layalpur, ‘Siri Guru Singh Sabha’ of Lyallpur were visited on 31st December 1925, 7 January, 1926 and 8 January, 1926 respectively by the members of the Punjab Temperance Federation.\textsuperscript{69}

\textit{Punjab Non-Government Schools Federation} was formed in 1927 in Punjab. It was a deliberative and advisory educational body.\textsuperscript{70} It mainly dealt with the educational questions that is opening of new private schools for both males and females. Curricula of studies for

\begin{itemize}
\item[Ibid, p. V.]
\item[Ibid, p. 63.]
\item[Ibid, p. 64.]
\item[Ibid, pp. 17-20.]
\item[Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni, \textit{Welcome address at Non-government Schools Conference}, held at Lahore on 2nd & 3rd May, 1931, p. 2.]
\end{itemize}
girls were discussed and suggestions were made to the British government.\textsuperscript{71} This federation also conducted annual conferences in which many educationalists and reformists participated like Raghu Natha Sahae.\textsuperscript{72} The Federation wanted ‘female education’ based on the Indian principles. It wanted domestic education along with vocational training so that the girls could work for the society and their family. It wanted female teachers and made the most substantial contribution to the social, moral and intellectual uplift of the province.\textsuperscript{73} The main slogan of the federation was the education by the people and for the people.\textsuperscript{74}

Khalsa Tract Society was formed in November 1894 at Amritsar with the efforts of Bhai Kaur Singh (son of Rai Bahadur Sadhu Singh Dhupia). But with the death of Kaur Singh in April 1895, Sadhu Singh Dhupia along with Bhai Vir Singh and Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia continued the functioning of this society. Initially this society published tracts relating to Gurbani, Sikhism, Punjabi literature and Punjab History.\textsuperscript{75} But later on it also started publishing tracts regarding social reforms, health, social evils and other issues of the society. The annual subscription of the tracts was rupees three.\textsuperscript{76}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{71} Ibid, pp. 3 to 9.
\item \textsuperscript{72} K.L. Rallia Ram, \textit{Welcome address' 2nd Annual Conference of Non-Government Schools, Punjab, 25 & 26 Feb. 1928}, Lahore, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Ibid, p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Ibid, pp. 8-9.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Mehar Singh Ravel, \textit{Doctor Sir Surinder Singh Majithia : Life, Aim and Contribution}, pp. 135-136.
\item \textsuperscript{76} \textit{The Monthly Circular of Chief Khalsa Diwan}, Amritsar, p. 16.
\end{itemize}
'Adhuri Vidya Jind Da Khun’, ‘Bachche Palan Dian Mattan’, ‘Baal Viyah De Dukhre’, ‘Istriyan Liye Amrit Di Lor’, ‘Agyakar’ were the few tracts which were published by this society in the early 1900s discussing all the issues important for women. Tracts on religion, universal brotherhood, Sikh faith, devotion, kitchen education, manners, profession, photography, higher education, general education, female education, material science, general science were regularly published twice a month.77

Another society which was working on the same lines of the Khalsa Tract Society was, *Swadesh Bhasha Pracharak Agency* of Taran Taran in Punjab. It also published tracts, pamphlets and books regarding the social evils like child marriage, dowry system, female infanticide and beating of students ‘Prem Sahit Sikhya (प्रेम माध्यम सिख्या)’ meaning discipline without brutality, tract number one hundred and sixty two was published by this agency. This agency discussed different curricula for girls and boys and wanted education for girls which could make them perfect in household duties.78

The Muslim reformers started organising the Muhammadan Educational Conference in the late nineteenth century. In the late 1890s in response to a growing desire of the western educated Muslims to find educated wives, this educational conference started a section to promote women's education. Shaikh Abdullah was

---

77 Sewa Dr. Panjah Saal, p. 19.
78 Ranjeet Nagar, Lahore, June 1929, p. 7.
Secretary of this section and he used to organize exhibitions of women's crafts at the annual Muhammadan Educational Conference meetings - to raise money for women's education and to point out that Muslim women were capable of doing useful and constructive work. In 1905, he started an Urdu journal for women viz. Khatun. The annual session of this conference were held in different parts of Punjab.79 In 1907, its annual session was held in Karachi in Punjab where Sikh leaders came to know about this conference and later organised Sikh Educational Conference at Rawalpindi.80

On 1 March, 1914, The All India Muslim Ladies Conference (also known as Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e-Islam) was founded at Girls' School, Aligarh. For opening the new building of Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e-Islam, prominent Muslim women from all over India went to Aligarh. From Lahore in Punjab, Begum Mian Muhammad Shafi, whose husband was a leading member of the Muslim league and the future Education and Law Minister in the government of India and her sister Begum Shah Din, wife of a justice in the Punjab High Court went to Aligarh, Waheed Begum Yaqub, editor of Tahzib-e-Niswan (a journal) of Lahore and Fatima Begum, editor of Sharif Bibi (another journal for women) from Lahore attended this opening ceremony.81

80 Sewa De Panjah Saul, pp. 24-25.
81 Gail Minault (ed.), The Extended Family : Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan, pp. 89-90.
The concerns of these women was the promotion of women’s education in the Muslim community in their respective regions. The main aims of this Anjuman were to work for unity among all Indian women; to support those working for women’s education and to ensure that both religious education and practical training were included in the curriculum; to promote the improvement of homemaking generally Anjuman also resolved, that no Muslim girl should be married before the age of sixteen.\(^\text{82}\)

In the second decade of the twentieth century, the Anjuman formed various local branches in Lahore, Delhi, Meerut, Jullundhur, Dehradun and a few other towns and these branches started opening many small girls schools. In 1918, two sisters Begum Shafi and Begum Shah-Din and their daughters Begum Shah Nawaz and Begum Muhammad Rafi (who were active in educational and social causes of women in the Punjab) invited the Anjumans to organize their annual session in Punjab. So the All India Muslim Ladies Conference was held in Faridkot House at Lahore on March 3-5, 1918 and over five hundred women attended, more than twice that at any previous conference. This gave an opportunity to the women from the Punjab to meet women from Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Hyderabad.\(^\text{83}\)

\(^{82}\) ibid, p. 91.
\(^{83}\) Tahzib-e-Niswan (Lahore) XXI, March 30, 1918, pp. 199-201 in Gail Minault (ed.), \textit{The extended family}, pp. 93-94.
Various women spoke on many social evils like purdah system, polygamy, childmarriage and favoured spread of education among Muslim women of Punjab.

The Begum of Bhopal presided the All India Muslim Ladies Conference from 1914 to 1930 till her death and women from Lahore like Waheeda Begum Yaqub also remained the Vice-President for many years. The Anjuman certainly fostered an increased sense of community and social consciousness among Muslims. It provided a respectable meeting place for purdah-observing women from many provinces, branches out from North India and the Punjab to include representatives from Calcutta, Central India, Bombay and Madras.\(^8^4\)

The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 and The National Social Conference was formed at the third meeting of the National Congress in 1887 to provide a forum for the discussion of social issues. From 1885 to 1905, there was no Ladies Social Conference or Mahila Parishads attached to Congress. After 1905, Mahila Parishads were inaugurated and they used to discuss the topics of female education, abolition of evil social customs such as dowry, neglect of widow, child marriage and others at the National Conference.\(^8^5\) In December, 1909, a resolution was passed at a Ladies

---

\(^8^4\) Gail Minault, (ed.), *The Extended Family : Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan*, p. 100.

gathering held under the auspices of the Indian National Social Conference presided over by the Rani Saheba of Pertabgarh in Lahore in Punjab. The resolution was to the effect that a permanent association of Indian Ladies be founded under the name of the Bharat Stree Mahamandal (literally means the Great Circle of Indian Women) for the amelioration of the condition of Indian women, and an annual gathering of ladies be held by it at the Christmas season.\textsuperscript{86}

So in November, 1910, at a private meeting under the presidency of Mrs. B.N. Sen and Sarla Devi Chaudharani as General Secretary, the Bharat Stree Mahamandal was formed with headquarters at Lahore. The inaugural meeting of this was held during the X’mas week at Allahabad where ladies from different parts of India were expected to congregate there.\textsuperscript{87}

Sarla Devi Chaudharani was the neice of Rabindra Nath Tagore and daughter of Swana Kumari Devi, a social activist of Bengal. Chaudharani earlier known as Sarla Debi Ghosal married a widowed Arya Samaji Ram Bhuj Choudhari of Lahore in 1905 and after her marriage she was often referred to as Devi Chaudharani. And in Lahore she worked with her husband and formed, the Bharat Stree Mahamandal in 1910.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{87} ibid, pp. 344-345.
\textsuperscript{88} Radha Kumar, \textit{The History of Doing}, pp. 39-40.
This Stree Mahamandal was formed in Lahore as an organisation representing women of every caste, race, creed, class and party and had a common interest in the moral and material progress of women.\textsuperscript{89} The Chief aim was the spread of female education, but as the purdah system and child marriage were the main obstacles to the education of women it was proposed to start organisations in every province whose function would be to collect money and engage teachers who would be sent to the houses of those who desired to educate their wives and daughters.\textsuperscript{90} For this purpose the Mahamandal developed branches in Allahabad, Kanpur, Bankura, Midnapur, Calcutta, Hazari Bagh and Lahore.\textsuperscript{91}

There were three main branches of this organisation - Calcutta, Allahabad and the Lahore branch and these main branches were to open sub-branches in the whole of India.

In Punjab, the Lahore branch was headed by Lady P.C. Chaterjee with Mrs. Ramasaran Das and Mrs. Shadilal as the vice presidents. Miss Majumdar acted as the Secretary and Srimati Sushila Devi of Sialkot were the active workers of this branch.\textsuperscript{92} Free private classes were opened at a place outside the Lahore city to impart instruction to zenana ladies three times a week for two hours at a time. Needle work, fancy work, drawing, painting, music, the

\textsuperscript{89} Sarladevi, “A Women’s Movement”, \textit{Modern Review}, p. 347.
\textsuperscript{90} Radha Kumar, \textit{History of Doing}, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{91} Geraldine Forbes, \textit{Women in Modern India}, p. 70.
literature of Hindi, Urdu, English and Sanskrit was taught there. Besides this a well equipped school outside the city was opened. The Mahamandal was also successful in opening several schools in the heart of Lahore City. Visiting the ladies in the different lanes and houses, lecturing to them and inducing them to devote a couple of hours daily to reading and writing and keeping up their enthusiasm by periodical units was the main work of the General Secretary Sarla Devi in Lahore.93

In 1906, Ram Bhuj Dutt Chaudhari and Sarla Devi Chaudharani founded the Lahore Hindu Sahayak Sabha. And later, various Hindu Sahayak Sabhas were formed in Multan, Jhang, Sialkot, Lyallpur, and Gujranwala. These Sabhas worked against all the social evil customs persisting in the society of Punjab.94 The members of these sabhas later also participated in the national struggle for independence.

There was also another very important organisation for women - *The All India Women's Conference*. This was of all India level but it worked with its branches which were opened in different provinces of colonial India. *The All India Women’s Conference (AIWC)*95 first met in January 1927 at Poona with the Maharani Chimnabai Saheb Gaekwad of Baroda as the first President. There were eighty-seven

---

93 ibid, pp. 348-349.
members from the local reception committee, fifty-eight delegates from local conferences and two thousand observers (men and women).  

The main concern of the women assembled was women’s education and it was felt that as the problems connected with girls’ education were different in different provinces and localities, so it was necessary to hold women’s conferences on educational reform in each province and in clearly defined districts.

AIWC when formed was only an educational reform body but by the next year in 1928, it widened its scope to eradicate social evils as it decided that there could be little progress in educational matters unless harmful social customs were eradicated. By the 1930s AIWC’s members started participating in the political struggle for freedom. By the mid 1930s the list of sub-committees included labor, rural reconstruction, indigenous industries, textbooks, opium and the Sarda Act.

In 1941, the AIWC established its quarterly journal, Roshni to reach to each and every women and propaganda on women issues was made through this journal.

From 1927 to 1947, twenty sessions of AIWC were held in different parts of India. In Punjab, there was only one session of AIWC at Lahore in 1931 under the presidency of Muthulakhshmi

---

96 Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, p. 79.
99 *ibid*, pp. 80-81.
100 *ibid*, p. 82.
Reddi (Women activist of Madras) and Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur (of Kapurthala State in Punjab) acted as its Chairperson. This organisation became so important that a large number of women from Punjab started participating in the annual sessions of conference and sometimes even got elected as the Presidents Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was a die hard activist of the AIWC and always wanted it to emerge as a significant political force for women. In 1934, in the eight session of AIWC, Lady Abdul Qadir of Lahore presided over this conference. Many other women from Punjab also attended this session. Mrs. Brijlal Nehru of Lahore and Sardarni Pritam Singh of Ambala City were the participants of this Session also.

Thus AIWC became a sound platform for the women of Punjab to discuss about their rights and duties. The Conference became so important that it opened its branch in Lahore and women activist regularly organised 'Istri Conference’ regarding various social evils of society.

All these organisations mentioned above became the medium for the expression of “Women’s opinion.” The organisations were either formed by male reformers or later by the “new women” - educated. Both these organisations became a training ground for women who later took up leadership roles in politics and social institutions. The

---

101 “Appendix 9” in Aparna Basu and Bharati Roy, Women’s Struggle, p. 215.
102 Gerakdine Forbes, Women in Modern India, p. 82.
103 Report of AIWC, Eight Session, 1934, Calcutta, p. 27.
104 Ibid, p. 5.
emergence of these organisations, associations and institutions led to women's participation in public life and further in political arena where they joined hands with their brothers, fathers, husbands against the common enemy-Britishers.

With the help of these organisations, women began to communicate with their counterparts outside their families and local communities. Regional and National organisations were formed and they worked together for one common goal - emancipation of women through the propagation of education (either English or vernacular). The issue of female education had been a thorny topic in colonial Punjab and India and each and every organisation worked for this issue. The organisations opened their respective educational institutions for females, started publishing their magazines and journals for publicizing their objectives. And later asked their women to start up their own associations and institutions for their development.

Thus the education policy formulated by the Britishers for making a class of clerks for their administrative help led the reformers of Punjab and India to make their society free from social evils with the help of education. The educational institutions of these socio-religious reformers led women to come out of their homes to form new organisations for themselves and by themselves. These social organisations later became a platform for women to participate in public life and the freedom struggle for India.