CHAPTER - 7

Conclusion

The profound impact of social institutions on women's education necessitated the study of women education in sociological perspective. This perspective largely covered the subject of prevailing social customs, gender roles, social values as well as social aspirations with respect to women. As we are aware, the social dimension is vital for the understanding of women education in traditional society such as India in general and Gujarat in particular were the interrelationship between social institution and women's formal education was strong. The present study of the colonial Gujarat, attempts to examine the emergence and growth of women education from the perspective of social- cultural milieu of the region.

To begin with, the sub geo-cultural areas of Gujarat were an influential factor in shaping the social-cultural positions of women in the Gujarati society. As we have seen, the Gujarat province could be broadly divided into three sub geo-cultural areas - the western Gujarat comprised of Saurashtra and Kutch, the central Gujarat or Mainland Gujarat that
comprised of north, central and south Gujarat and the eastern Gujarat that comprised of hills and forest. In western Gujarat, due to its proximity to sea and the erstwhile state of Rajputana, the influence of mercantile ethos and Rajput’s cultural traits was predominant. The latter i.e. Rajput’s cultural traits such as semi feudalistic polity and customs like Purdah or seclusion of women and Sati largely determined the socio-cultural positions of women in western part of Gujarat. The next sub geo-cultural area of Gujarat was to seen in mainland Gujarat. This part of Gujarat was the centre of trade and commerce and agricultural activities. Owing to its richness and strategic position mainland Gujarat formed a significant part of Mughal and Maratha empires. The latter i.e. Maratha rule introduced Dakhani cultural traits here. Some of the Dakhani traits such as the custom of widowhood were evident among upper castes and communities of Gujarat. This part of Gujarat was the seat of upper castes such as Audichyas of south Gujarat and Nagars of north Gujarat and merchant communities such as Jains and Parsis. Women education made progress in this part of Gujarat since the tradition of women education among higher castes like Nagars and higher communities like Parsis and Jains existed. In the eastern Gujarat which comprised of tribes such as Bhils and lower castes such as
Bharwads, women enjoyed relatively higher freedom in terms of mobility and service outside the home.

Women's social status in Gujarat varied from caste to caste. Social stratification in the forms of castes and sub castes was highest in Gujarat. There, instead of the four classical castes or chaturvarna, eighteen major castes or and its numerous sub divisions existed. Each caste differed relatively in terms of social practices and customs. As we have seen, the custom of Purdah was practiced largely among the highest stratum of Rajput community. However, in the lower Rajput communities women were largely not confined to the private sphere of house. However, certain social conventions found in some of the Rajput clans mainly Jadejas, led to the practice of female infanticide. Conversely, these Rajputs customs and practices were hardly practiced among Brahmin community of Gujarat. Nagars, the highest Brahmins of Gujarat, conferred enough freedom to women in terms of education and social reverence. Nagar women were the most educated women in pre colonial Gujarat. Among Banias, the Janis conferred freedom to women in respect to education. However, the status of women in agriculturist communities of such as Ladva Kunbis, was relatively low due to the practice of female infanticide. The middle and lower strata of Bania
caste groups formed the craftsmen community. Women from this group i.e. craftsmen's community, formed the largest workforce in craft industry of Gujarat during the pre colonial period. In most of the upper castes viz. Rajputs, Brahmins and Banias, the customs pertaining to widows were widely prevalent. However, the custom of child marriage was universally practiced in all castes and communities of Gujarat. These customs of child marriage and widowhood emerged as greatest hindrance for the growth of formal education for women in British period.

We will now turn to the debate on pre colonial education system for women in Gujarat. Almost all the survey reports on indigenous schools in Gujarat province, prepared during 1826-1830, pointed to the fact of non existence of female education. These survey reports were largely biased in a sense that only institutional education was taken into consideration. The biased could be the outcome of colonists' partial understanding on indigenous education system.

The indigenous education system was relatively different from British education system in terms of objectives, approach and structure. The major areas of learning were arts and crafts, sciences, philosophy, religious scriptures and cultural values. Literacy was one of the components of indigenous education system.
formal education however, are available in oral tradition, ceremonies and rituals and the ways of socializations of individuals in society.

The Hunter Report of 1882 also referred as the education commission of 1882, in depth described the existence of non formal education for women in India. The report pointed out that even though female school education was nearly absent; it did not imply the absence of women education at all. Women received education through various non formal ways. It is surprising that very little attention has been given to Hunter Commission's report on women's indigenous education while dealing with the issue of women education.

As we have seen in the study that in spite of the absence of formal education in Gujarāt, women received education through various non formal mediums. Important among these were socialization process in family, caste and oral tradition. The socialization process generally trained an individual in social behaviors. Thus, through socialization a girl received training on household matters. Later on, as a part of socialization, ceremonies and rituals imbibed in girls the notions of ideals of womanhood, values and cultural traits. Arts and crafts such as household drawings done during auspicious functions like marriage and embroidery were taught by elder women to the young girls. To a large
Spinning and weaving was a household activity. Almost all Gujarati women, belonging to artisan caste groups, were engaged in spinning and weaving activity. Spinning wheel was a sacred tool to women. It was women's best friend and a significant source of livelihood for rural women. Gandhi could mobilize women particularly rural women in Satyagraha movement because spinning formed a significant activity of the movement. Therefore, spinning activity was largely considered as women's activity in India. Largely, in contrast to this Indian image of women engaged in spinning activity, for western women, spinning was related to maiden life. Women in spinning activities were generally referred as spinsters' means unmarried woman whose main work was spinning.

Women from various communities of Gujarat such as Rabaries, Kathis and Lohanas were known for embroidery works and coloring of cloths. These skills were hereditary and were passed by women within the caste.

One of the components of indigenous education for women was the oral tradition. The oral tradition was one of the ancient modes of communication particularly among non literates. In simple terms oral tradition means sharing and understanding the collective cultural
knowledge of a community verbally. The oral tradition included folklore which was the primary means of imparting ideas, and other forms of knowledge to the unlettered people.

Folklore was a major means of expression for the unlettered women in the society. Through this medium women were able to effectively express their feelings, emotions, aspirations and desires. Collective cultural ideas of women were effectively imparted through folktales, folksongs and others in traditional society. Often there existed an inter-relationship between the cultural ideas on women and women's own views on these ideas. In short, folklore was an independent domain where women had scope for their voices of dissent or acceptance on various matters.

In Gujarat, Kutch and Saurashtra were the paramount centers of the oral tradition. This was due to the existence of traditional story tellers or Bards and Bhakti saints. The latter i.e. the Bhakti saints contributed the most in the development of oral tradition of Gujarat. Much has been written about the men Bhakti Saints. However, very little attention has been given to women Bhakti Saints of Gujarat. Except Mirabai, the works of women Saints were largely in oblivion. Yet, Gujarati women
saints works could be traced in Gujarati folk literature. The folk literature of Gujarat refers to women devotees or Bhaktas as ‘Sati’ means truth or woman who was in search of truth. Some of these women who are still remembered through their works are Sati Gangabai, Sati Loyal, and Sati Toral and Ratanbai. It is noteworthy to see their social background. Most of these women were from the upper castes mainly Rajputs. As discussed earlier, the seclusion of women in Rajput community was relatively common. Women lived in a constrained social environment. There was no space for women to express their emotions, ideas or thoughts openly. In order to liberate from highly conservative social environment, some women renounced their life and adopted sainthood. Since, sainthood was the only secure way left to liberate from the conservative society for women. The society too respected and revered the woman who had adopted sainthood. Bhakta women were glorified for their piety and religiosity. In contrast to this, in west, till the late nineteenth century, the only way left for woman to liberate from the constraining environment of the family was prostitution. This is well depicted in one of the famous plays of late nineteenth century ‘A Doll’s House’ by Henrik Ibsen, 1879. This play sharply criticized the prevailing
Victorian marriage norms in the western society of early nineteenth century.

The transition in the system of education from indigenous to western was followed with the establishment of British rule in Gujarat around 1818. However, not all parts of Gujarat were under the direct rule of the British. The territories which came directly under the British rule constituted the areas of Surat, Bharuch, Khera, Panchmahal and Ahmedabad. These areas of British Gujarat were attached to the northern division of Bombay presidency for the administrative purpose. Thus, British Gujarat became part and parcel of Bombay Presidency. The impact of any development in the presidency was felt in British Gujarat. Similarly, the developments taking place in the field of education had an impact in the British Gujarat.

The establishment of British rule in India witnessed the process of change in the indigenous administrative structure, polity, judiciary and economy, although the process was comparatively slow. However, in social and cultural matters, and particularly education, the British government was reluctant to bring any changes. Later on, owing to the demands of capitalists and intellectuals at home, the British government in India abandoned the policy of non-interference. Moreover, the
financial deficit the company faced during this period obliged the British
government to withdraw from the policy. All these factors culminated
into the formulation of social policy in which propagation of colonial
education formed a significant component. The charter Act of 1813 was
considered as the beginning of the propagation of colonial system of
education in the India.

The colonial education system or western education system
introduced by the British was distinct from the indigenous education
in terms of structure, approach and aims. As discussed earlier, in the
indigenous system, the education was imparted in formal and non
formal education ways. We have discussed the non formal ways of
imparting education for women in pre colonial Gujarati society.
However, with the advent of English education system the scope of
non formal education decreased tremendously because the British
institutionalized the whole education system.

The colonial education system had certain general characteristics.
First, the colonial education system was largely service oriented.
Education was largely meant to seek employment in middle grade
provincial and central level government services Second, indigenous
languages and knowledge was alienated in colonial schools and
other educational institutions. Third, the colonial education was meant only for that section of the society which rendered support in consolidation and strengthening of colonialism. Colonial education therefore, was consistent with the colonial objective of imperializing the minds of indigenous people. Western education for women in India was largely resisted on ground that western education alienated indigenous culture and its underlying objective was to westernize Indian men and women.

In contrast to men's education, the formal education for women lacked explicit objectives. Perhaps, this was the reason the British government did not take direct initiatives in propagating western education for women. Nevertheless, private organizations, both secular and non secular worked towards the growth of women education in India. Even though, private organizations differed relatively among each other regarding the objectives of women education, they initiated the movement of women education in India. Christian missionaries were the pioneer in introducing western education for women in India and in Gujarat. The issue of women education was located in the Christian missionary's agenda of proselytization or conversion.
Indoctrination of woman through education would mean the indoctrination of the whole family with western values. Hence, women education became a crucial subject for Christian missionaries.

In British Gujarat, the London missionary, the Irish Presbyterian, the American mission and the church missionary society established girls' schools in small towns. The schools set up by these missionary societies were referred as charity schools which admitted pupils not only from the low castes of the society but also among higher castes mainly Brahmins. The latter i.e. upper castes were attracted towards these schools because of learning of English. The curriculum of mission schools included teaching of three R's—reading, writing and speaking, needle work and knitting. However, bible teaching formed the core subject in mission schools. Significantly, the medium of instruction in mission schools was vernaculars. To impart western knowledge in vernacular was convenient and less costly. In this way, Mission schools laid the foundation of vernacular schools and later on that of Anglo-vernacular schools long before the state system of education was introduced in Gujarat.
By the third decade of the nineteenth century, other private organizations began to set up girls schools in British part of Gujarat. The first of this kind of organization was the Bombay Native Education Society. Another significant organization of this period was the students literary and scientific Society. Both these private organizations did pioneering work in the field of women education in Gujarat in the first half of the nineteenth century.

It was the Private enterprise of second half of the nineteenth century that vigorously strived to translate the process female education into a movement. This period witnessed the consolidation of social reform movement in Gujarat. Significant reform based organizations were Gujarat Vernacular Society and Manav Dharma Sabha. Most of the social reform based organizations worked towards the growth of women education. These organizations worked beyond setting up girls schools. Girls school curriculum, social customs and lack of awareness were impediments for the growth of women education. Private enterprise mainly social reform organizations worked to eliminate these impediments.

The new education was mainly school based. School in that sense was a public institution. It was a fact that in traditional society the
public participation of women was largely restricted. Therefore, to spread awareness and encourage people to send girls to schools became a significant agenda of private organizations. However, most important of all was the emancipation of women from social customs mainly early marriage and custom of widowhood which were the main obstacles in the growth of women education. To emancipate women from these customs several associations came up. Important association of this period that worked against the custom of widowhood in Gujarat was *Punar Vivah Utiejak Sabha*. Reformers like *Mahipatram Rupram, Bholanath Sarabhai, Bechardas Ambaidas, Kavi Dalpatram* and *Ranchhoddas Chhotalal* were the active members of this Sabha. The Sabha provided an opportunity to those men and women who were willing to remarry. mentioned social reformers To generate awareness against the custom of child marriage an association known as *Bal Lagna Nishudak Mandali* came up. A reformer like Gopal Hari Deshmukh was the president and *Ambalal Sakarlal Desai* and *Navalram Laxmiram Pandya* were the secretaries of this association. Thus, the social reform movement in Gujarat that was initiated by above mentioned social reformers and
many others brought up the issue of social reforms largely in the context of women education.

A significant feature of movement for women education in Gujarat was tremendous involvement of the business community mainly Parsis and Jains. By providing financial assistance these communities contributed to the growth of female education and development of social, cultural and political institutions.

The number of Parsis and Jain women were largest in educational institutions of this period.

The state system of education in Gujarat was initiated by the Bombay government. However, the government had shown lukewarm attitude towards women education from the beginning. One of the reasons for this attitude was the involvement of huge fund for women education. Women education virtually had become a parallel system of education as it required separate infrastructure, separate curriculum and special staff. However, government through education commissions displayed its cordial support for the promotion of women education. The education commission of 1882 was a bench mark in the history of women education as for the first time a comprehensive policy on women education was formulated. New government
agencies like municipalities and local boards were given the responsibility of setting up schools for girls. In Gujarat, the performance of municipality Boards in respect to the promotion of girls' education was far better than any other British province.

The main objectives of women education were to improve women's familial status and inculcation of women's ideals. These objectives of women education were almost same in west as well in India. However, the imposition of western ideals of womanhood and western culture in women education in India created differences of opinions among colonists and revivalists. The latter, to counter the influence of western culture, stressed on inculcating traditional ideals of Indian womanhood and traditional culture in women curriculum. This gave rise to a debate on girl's curriculum in schools in late nineteenth century. These differences over the issue of girls' curriculum were seen in Gujarat as well. The Gujarati Social reformers like Dalpatram, Navalram, Karsandas, and others, made a powerful plea for women's education. The objective of women's education was to improve the familial status of women and inculcating the traditional Gujarati ideals of womanhood such as Gruhpriya or Gruhlaxshmi. Govardhanram Tripati, a revivalist and
renowned novelist of this period, constructed the images of a new Gujarati woman in his epoch making novel ‘Saraswati Chandra’. Formally Educated Gujarati women were expected to carry the virtues of ‘Gruhpriya’.

It was therefore right to say that girls’ school education of this period was an extension of girls’ socialization at home. However, there existed significant differences between home education and school education. School as a public domain provided relatively larger exposure to the outside world. The general awareness about the happenings and events taking place in the society and world at large came from school education. Accessibility to literary books, journals, periodicals was more in school education. Gujarati Women’s periodicals such as Sundri Subhodh and Stribodh were largely centered on the issues of social reforms. Hence this kind of environment in the school system of education was the cause of awareness and consciousness among formally educated women.

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed the consolidation of freedom movement. The issue of women education too acquired nationalist dimension. Now, along with familial status the objective of women education was to serve the nation and participate in social
activities. The issue of women education increasingly got intertwined with nationalistic sentiments. The argument put forward by women leaders of national movement that without women’s reforms, the movement was meaningless. Women’s liberty was viewed in the larger context of the meaning of Swaraj. Women, who were oppressed since centuries, find the struggle meaningless, if their conditions are not improved. Women leaders, therefore, motivated other women to represent themselves in the struggle for liberty for their cause.

Education was not being related with progress of the family as was seen in the underlying objectives of women education in late nineteenth century. The women education was now related with the progress of nation as well. An educated woman was expected to participate in social activities to serve the nation. This was evident in articles written in Golden Jubilee issue of Stribodh, the first Gujarati women magazine. Social service became an additional attribute of girls’ curriculum in this period.

One of the significant developments of twentieth century was emergence and consolidation of women agency. Educational enterprise of late nineteenth century resulted in the emergence of middle class educated women in India and in Gujarat. These women
were urban based and belonged to upper section of the society. Most of the educated middle class Gujarati women were Jains, Nagar Brahmins, Parsis and Baniyas. Some of the educated women were employed in the fields teaching and medicines. The general opinion, of late nineteenth century, although, was against women's employment. However, women such as widows or women who were not in traditional family set up took up employment in these fields. A large number of educated women began to participate in social activities such as relief work, charity or philanthropy. Some of them became members of social reform organizations and worked under the guidance of male social reformers. The Interaction amongst educated women began to increase as the social participation of these women increased. Most of the educated women had common things to share such as ideas on women education, child marriage and other issues of women. There was a need felt among these women to have a platform where social as well intellectual interaction between them could take place. This need led to the formation of women organizations. However, the women organizations of late nineteenth and early twentieth century was largely founded by male social reformers. With the beginning of
mass movement particularly in the Gandhian period, women themselves founded women organizations. Women's problems, their solutions and actions were now taken over by these organizations. Hence, in true sense women organization of this period were not under the tutelage of male organizers. Important Gujarati women organizations of pre Gandhian period were Ladies Club, Vanita Vishram and Gujarati Stri Kelvani Mandal and of Gandhian period were Jyoti Sangh and Vikas Gruh.

The education system of a society is based on the needs and requirements of that society. In colonial India the kind of education system that developed was according to the needs and requirements of the British. However, to counter colonial education system, the nationalists came up with the concept of national education which was based on indigenous cultural and economic needs. Similarly, the women education that emerged during colonial period in India was based on the needs and requirements of colonists as well as nationalists. Women education, in the colonial period was largely located in the changing cultural context. It became a site of colonists and nationalists hegemonies. Its transition from indigenous to modern therefore, witnessed a lot of resistance.