CHAPTER-7
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The present study reaches the inevitable conclusion that the images of Indian women in spite of the changes brought by the social reforms, were still confined within the framework of patriarchy (i.e. based on the conventional opinions). After the entry of women into the political sphere, women’s emancipation movement was no longer the ideal of a few social reformers, but part of a much bigger political crusade. As women took to political activity many of the taboos and restrictions which had been placed on them were either lifted or overlooked. Political upheavals help in bringing about social change, and it is doubtful if a century of preaching and social work would have brought about the same change in the position of Indian women as was achieved in the wake of two decades of political struggle in India.

In examining the images of Indian women, the efforts has been to study the actual position or status of women as reflected by Hindi journalism. In doing so, it can be concluded that there was lot of variations in the status of women, diverging in accordance with caste, class, family structure and morals. Besides, the role and position of women had been far from static ranging from what was believed to have been a position of considerable esteem, authority and independence to one of equally considerable subordination and
subservience. The images of women reveal a peculiar amalgam which represents a unique intermitting of low legal status, ritual contempt and sophisticated sexual partnership. There was no universally applicable image of an Indian women during the time period of this study. All images of women had undergone numerous changes but among the most dominant idea is the notion of the pativrata, the devoted and virtuous wife. The predominance of this pativrata image has led to the admiration and idealization of a model of wifehood committed to and constrained by virtues like patience, tolerance, devotion, chastity etc. a large section of Indian women was identified with the pativrata image which, therefore, continued to affect and shape their lives, was, a volatile but insignificant manner.

The image of glorified motherhood was also closely associated with the notion of the pativrata. The positive estimation of the mother's role in Indian mythology, folk lore, contemporary journalism political ideology and everyday family life was well-established that it requires little elucidation. In the sharp contrast to the positive images of women encompassed in the ideal of the pativrata and the glorification of motherhood, a variety of negative image is also appeared in the contemporary society. Chief among these destructive images were those of the widow and the witch. Widowhood is inextricably associated with the idea of inauspiciousness and results in the loss of the right to full participation in socio-religious life. The presence of these negative images was because of social evils present in the contemporary society.

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The two decades between 1920 and 1940 saw a sequence of the processes in the literary and political fields that had started in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the coming of the twentieth century, Indian nationalist ideology became increasingly concerned with the momentous question of the objectives freedom was existed to serve. It was only in the 1920s that women's voices began appearing in the Hindi journalism. This undoubtedly was a result of the general expansion of Hindi journalism and the widespread participation of people in the nationalist movement after the first world war and the Non-cooperation movement. Hindi journalism had become a medium to show the outlook of the society in northern India. By the 1920s all mainstream Hindi journals started carrying women's section usually articles on problems like purdah, child marriage, widow-marriage etc. Hindi journalism had gradually become the centre of women's movement not only in the Hindi-heartland but also for the entire north India. Relatively few women participated in the Non-Cooperation movement. But, the significance of their participation lies in the fact that women organized meetings and demonstrations. It is also significant that meetings were attended by ordinary, practically illiterate women and they were beginning to hear of the progressive women's magazines even if they could not read them. The awakening of the Indian women was the manifestation of the growth of national sentiments and democratic urges for national and individual liberty among them. The image of the women
participating in the country’s struggle for the attainment of ‘swaraj’ was a traditional one. Her sphere of work was still the home.

Hindi journals published the photographs of the women who were given imprisonment to salute the women’s empowerment. Women attained a political and historical consciousness through which they questioned the double standards of patriarchy and claimed participation in public life. Women did not hesitate to occupy the new role provided by the changing time. They tried to become the product of the new age. Though they lived as usual in the limited environment of the household, they did not feel any difficulty in adjusting with the larger and more sophisticated world of politics. According to Prabha, a Hindi journal (Feb. 1922,) in contemporary society, “What is the position of women in the society?” had become the subject of discussion. At the same time, women also nourished the desire to be independent and free. They began to assert their point of view in family and society. Smooth functioning of the family and its continuity necessitated the assignment of different roles to men and women because of their biological differences. Men held to the “bread winners”. Consequently, men enjoyed supremacy over women both in family and in society. Contrasting the scenario of male supremacy over status and wealth, the contribution of women to family and society had largely gone unnoticed.
The illustration of Indian women as the portrait of religions and morality differentiated her from the western women and also bound her in limited sphere. The attempts to expand the scope of nationalist activity to include poor women, were based on the image of women as nurture rather than as workers themselves. All these attempts were to improve the condition of women within the frame of patriarchy. Women were told to follow pativatra dharma by citing the examples from religious texts because Western Educated Women was the object of disapproval and contempt. The concept of femininity was associated with spiritual and moral courage. The heroines, who were chosen for women to emulate, were Sita and Draupadi rather than, the Rani of Jhansi. The vociferous participation of women in national movement reflected women’s keen interest for inclusion in mainstream political progresses. Women consciously or unconsciously were becoming aware of power they could derive through political empowerment in effective articulation of their demands as women. According to an article published in Saraswati in 1931 (September, p329) this progressive trend revealed only in the urban areas and it was absent to some extent in the rural areas where most of the Indian population was residing. The custom of purdah also turned the zenana (inner part of a house) into the exclusive dwelling place of women. It soon inculcated in the minds of women that freedom of movement outside the house would lower their standing and place them on a common level with low castes. According to Madhuri (May 1929, p528) women especially in north India were, concealed
from outside world and become useless for the construction of nation. Thus, the women of the castes which were at the bottom of the social structure had internalized the concept of hierarchy which had set limits to their range of imagination. This made that lower caste women were the more favorable upholders of caste restrictions and disabilities than their social superiors. The articles related to the women movement were also based on the traditional images of women in the glorious past of India.

Another important factor which prevented women acquiring great mobility and venturing into outside field was fear of sexual violence and loss of social status especially for the women belonging to higher castes. The destiny of women still seemed to be that of remaining captive to the universe of the cultural attainment, irrespective of their efforts. They remained with the confines of the role models prescribed by traditional society. Among the widows who did not immolate themselves on the funeral pyre, yet had no right to remarry. Only one third of the widows of India belonged to castes in which strict injunctions against remarriage were inforce. In low castes they had always remarried. Widow celibacy remained a widely practiced custom because of high caste. Hindu portrayed it as one of the most authentic symbol of the culture of the respectables. According to Bhagwati Devi (Madhuri Sep.1927, p306) to a certain extent, the acceptance of widow remarriage in the society was the result of a threat of their sexual fallibility and liberty to men to remarry. But the remarriage was advocated only for young and child widows.
while widows above 22 years or with children were only sought to be educated so that they could earn their livelihood.

Inspite of social discrimination women felt that they had also same responsibilities for social development as those of men. During 1930s, politically active respectable women characters gained social acceptance and we can find positive images of independent minded women. By way of nationalist participation women tried to solve the problem of gender and caste oppression. As a person, she wanted to develop her own personality, aspiration and ambitions and also wanted their fulfillment. But a woman did not have many option to exercise, she could accept only the patriarchal structure and played her role as daughter, sister, wife and mother. No caste was free from the social prejudice against women and the feeling that they were inferior. Indian women’s unique cultural heritage also provided a tradition of women as strong and powerful beings and with their position in the social structure which offered them the possibility of independent existence. But the past was largely fantasy whereas their present was harsh reality women felt helpless and fragile and lived through the agony of being violated.

The women issues were taken up in order to project a liberated image of the Indian women but their moving out was authorized in a limited way and their role as working women was still disapproved. The companionate role of women was the result of the changes that were brought into women’s lives as a
result of the social reforms. But the companionate role of women also confirmed their stereotypical role inside the home. The modern woman had been confined in a role of educated housewife or mother. From this discussion we can say that people neither accepted the complete freedom to women nor they rejected it. The nationalists and social reformers were in the doubtful condition on some women issues. It was obvious because they belonged to a society, in which the vision of people towards women was narrow and conservative. Hindi journals discussed the women questions in the light of national movement through articles and editorials. Not only from the vision of women but for the collective development it was becoming necessary that women should be free to choose their work field outside the four walls of the house. By the participation in political movement, women helped in their own struggle for liberation. Inspite of these close linkage between the nationalist movement and the women’s movement, the alliance broke down on the personal issues because women wanted freedom from male domination also, which not all the nationalist were willing to acknowledge. Although, the reality remained the same – of women endlessly adjusted to what ever given situation but Hindi journals provided some space for individual self determination. According to a writer Usha Devi Mitra(in Chand, Oct. 1931, p750) women think about outside world only after fulfilled the duties of the home properly. A women’s highest duty is that rearing children for service to the Motherland so, it can be concluded that the centrality of the home, of Motherhood and
wifehood as woman’s housebound characters was largely self-determined because of individual conception and not only because of imposed social norms.

In spite of all these notions, the images of women had been changing since the second decade of the twentieth century. This change in the images of women in Hindi journalism was because of the expansion of Hindi journalism and the western thoughts. Hindi journalism provided space to the women to express their needs and desires. The narratives of women in Hindi journals accelerated the pace of changes in women’s images. Lastly, it can be said that the images of women in Hindi journalism were conventional in nature to a greater extent i.e. constrained by virtues like patience, tolerance, devotion, chastity etc.

Organization of seminars and establishment of women studies centers on the problems of women in India lead us to think that the problem is of serious nature and it is not an individual problem nor a localized problem but a problem which is social and which affects the entire nation. Therefore, writing on the history of women in a colonial setting, has many challenges. The deliberate insistence at the rural household level on keeping women illiterate keeps women away from any possible media exposure. Hindi journalism covered some of these situational realities of women, so most often the images of women it presents, may be disturbed. It is this distortion in the portrayal of
women that does more harm to women. Women are painted as voluntary and external sufferers, as one who rejoice and take pride in self sacrifice. By such coverage journalism provided an ideology to the readers to accept such discrimination against almost half of the population.

It is true that formal education and the development of publications written by women gave women a voice but most of these women belonged to the higher strata of the society. Although women were certainly not an undifferentiated group but, because of the existence of caste hierarchy there is a scarcity of records in journalism to go beyond generalization about their lives. In this way, the present study finds itself inadequate due to the sheer enormity of the sources itself. The epoch concerned with our present study, witnessed a large scale production of Hindi journals only few of which have been touched upon because some of the smaller libraries have not preserved valuable collections of women's journals. As yet there is no archives or museum devoted to preserving items of women's material culture. Lastly, the reach of Hindi journals and newspapers among the masses and the nature of public response have to be probed further, for any valuable study.