CHAPTER-5

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The social reform movement, which arose out of the new conditions of social existence, set itself the task of removing the social and legal injustices and inequalities from which the Indian women suffered. The subjection of the Indian women in the pre-British period was rooted in the social and economic structure of the society of the period. The capitalist economy which the British conquest inaugurated in India and the legal and political regime established in the country, were based on the principles of the recognition of individual equality and contractual freedom of the individual.¹ The growing contact with the West and infiltration of new ideas through it into our country had been undoubtedly potent factors in generating forces of reform in society. The spread of education among the different sections of the people had also exercised a fruitful influence in stimulating the process of social renovation. The essence of social regeneration was uplift of women, which had been indeed one of the most fruitful contributions of new India and had been furthered by significant changes in the outlook of the women themselves.²

Any understanding of Indian women, of their identity, and especially of inner dialogue will be incomplete without a walk down the corridors of Indian history where have paused, lived and internalized the various role models. The role of Indian women, as it has evolved, been experienced and understood over 4000 years, has been intertwined with the history of the country which is primarily one of repeated impositions of an alien ethos on its culture necessitating a frequent restructuring of social system and consequently, individual identity. Like the country, the role of Indian women was full of diversity and contradictions.3 The male social reformers of the renaissance differed about the nature and scope of the work, but all of them were of view that women’s lot need amelioration. Some reformers wanted women to return to the Vedic glory and others placed definite plants to eradicate their problems. Women’s status was some what altered within the family. It also fought against the more blatant forms of women’s oppression and exploitation. Women’s organizations and institutions that sprang up in the period were reflection of certain activity and unrest among women. But women’s thinking on the question of their own status did not reveal the development of an independent self view.4

The Indian women had fallen from the high position and status held by them in Vedic times to a very degrading position in the earlier decades of the


modern period. In India the movement for female emancipation was led in the beginning by the male members of the society. These Indian males who fought for a higher status and the position of women were those who were impressed by the regard and considerations which western women enjoyed but they made the case of women emancipation on the basis of the reinterpretation of Indian religious texts and exposing the gimmicks of the half literate clergy.\textsuperscript{5} For the ill-treatment of women clergy men were drawing support from a perverted interpretation of the religious texts and religious percepts. The enlightened Indians exposed their misinterpretation and based their argument for women liberation on their own very well studied and expressed interpretation.\textsuperscript{6} By the end of nineteenth century, women were gathering courage to challenge society and their status. Many hailed from reformist families and they formed their own organizations and, in fact, the emergence of rudimentary women's movement in India can be traced from this time. The movement for women emancipation was also undertaken by enlightened women like Pandita Ramabai and others. They set the trends which was followed by hundreds of women. Pandit Ramabai founded the Arya Mahila Samaj and went on to set up a series of women' associations in various towns of Bombay Presidency.\textsuperscript{7} The project of reorganizing women's mind and refashioning their image inevitably involved grafting, recreating and inventing Indian tradition. In its

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} Majumdar, Maya, Social Status of Women in India, Dominant Publishers, New Delhi, 2004, p.28.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
reconstruction, voices of women emerged as more radical and or more significant than the liberal or orthodox male voices, which tended to carve role models for women within the framework of glorious Vedic tradition and patriarchal value system.8

Initially, women joined the reform movement as a subordinate partners – an extension of the wifely role of helpmate. Even when women spoke of themselves, they spoke the language of men and their thinking remained within the parameters carefully defined for them. Much of efforts were intended to ‘reform’ women rather than to reform social conditions which oppressed them. Since women had very limited contact even with their own husbands, they were by and large, left to devise their own inner forms of life within the repressive culture of Zenana. In this process, their thinking had become inaccessible to men. Not surprising, then, that all the reform movements that aimed at emancipation of women, remained ultimately the arch champion of social conservatism.9 Certain changes within the social system appeared desirable and some of the more ugly and unpalatable forms of oppression and ‘backwardness’ for women were sought to be eliminated. Exposure to western values led to the perception of the family as a space for emotional fulfillment, and as a consequence, the role of women had to be

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9 Upadhyay, Neelam & Pandey, Rekha, op.cit., p.31.
readjusted. But the women’s movement was, in the hands of the few bourgeois as men and women and coloured by their own problems and needs and did not correctly reflect the demands or the problems of the large mass of women. The efforts of the socio-religious reformers of the Renaissance, toils of the early women pioneers, novel forces of western liberalism and other development combined in one to spread awakening among Indian women. With the advent of the twentieth century, the scope of women’s movement in India began to be enlarged rapidly now by women themselves.

O’Malley observed:

“Throughout the nineteenth century even the most advanced men generally returned to unchanged homes, where the senior women of the family held her secular sway over the domestic economy of the household — Her husband could not discuss with her the affairs of his daily life— for, she knew nothing of his external contacts—- His life was cut into two completely separated halves outside and the inside home.”

But, in the twentieth century women came forward to raise questions about themselves, their role and the norms of society, and to undertake public activities in unprecedented ways. In doing so, they were

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partly shaped by current symbols and notions of Indian femininity (Propriety, Seva, Maryada etc.), at the same time they refashioned these symbols in the new spaces they had access to, whether in literature, in journals, in teaching or in political activism.\textsuperscript{13} The situation that prompted women to launch women’s movement in the twentieth century with fresh ferment is well described by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur:

“\textit{The women’s movement is the expression of the instinctive desire of women to rise to full liberty of soul, to the fullest development as human beings. To serve whole-heartedly, to give without stint, is an essential part of the development of free women. We have to battle against apathy, prejudice, and ignorance but there is within us now a passion for reform which, I like believe, has been kindled at an altar where burns the flame of love for God and man.}”\textsuperscript{14}

It indicated the peculiar rejoicing that the women of different provinces in India, were proceeding beyond the mark to improve the condition of themselves and there were no longer to propound to standards set for them by men--- the standards that had involved complete subordination and degradation of women.\textsuperscript{15} In this context, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur also said:

\textsuperscript{13} Orsini, Francesca, \textit{The Hindi Public Sphere : 1920-40}, OUP, Delhi, p.244.
\textsuperscript{14} Kaur, Rajkumari Amrit. \textit{Challenge to Women}, Allahabad, 1946, p.15.
"We are aware of the necessity of finding and being judged by our own standards as free human beings, voluntarily accepted; we are determined to face the facts of life, to fight the battle of our sex and take the risk."  

By the 1920s in north India, several educated women had come to the fore and acquired a voice in the male dominated Hindi sphere. The first stirrings were in the Punjab in the late nineteenth century, thanks to Arya Samaj educational enterprises. In fact, most of the first vocal and active Hindi-educated women were Arya Samaj graduates and students. Enterprising women had formed an organization as early as 1909 – the Prayag Mahila Samiti – devoted to the enlightenment of women, and the magazines *Stree Darpan* had started publication early in the second decade of the twentieth Century. *Stree Darpan* was, the first Hindi journal, launched by a women independently inspite of her (Rameshwari Nehru’s) orthodox upbringing in the segregated *zenana* as the daughter of the Arya Samajist Raja Narendranath (Who did not share the Arya Samaj ideal of new women) and her lack of formal education. She undertook the unusual task of cultivating women’s mind and crusading against those customs, which imprisoned their mind and body.

Even more daring and ambitious was her (Rameshwari Nehru’s) endeavour to
redraw and extend the contours of social consciousness of not only the mentally infantilised women over centuries but also of self centered men through the rational process of dialogue and interaction.\textsuperscript{19} The annual conference of the \textit{Prayag Mahila Samiti}, in 1914, was attended by about 200 women which was a very large number if we take into account the situation of Indian women at that time. Nevertheless, efforts were being made and discussion on social reform, political participation, education and women's rights had begun to be held regularly in the 1920s. Although the women who attended or the women who spoke at these meetings, were women from the elite groups in society but it is remarkable that women articulated their aspirations even before Gandhi's entry into politics.\textsuperscript{20}

The participation of women in active political life of the country, and the formation of women's organizations were two landmarks in the evolution of the women's movement. The idea which governed women's organization, however, did not make a break with the earlier reform, revival framework. A conflict between new needs and old perceptions was inevitable. Women's organization reveals the tension between confining women's issues to social reform efforts and the compulsions from the wider society to link national liberation to the women's movement.\textsuperscript{21} Before the first world war, all women organizations were of regional level because the idea of formation of women's

\textsuperscript{19} Mohan, Kamlesh. op.cit., p.178.
\textsuperscript{20} Rao, Uma. op.cit., pp28-29.
\textsuperscript{21} Chaudhuri, Maitrayee, \textit{Indian Women's Movement: Reform and Revival}, Radiant Publisher, New Delhi, 1993, p.106.
organizations was, in its initial stage, and most of these organizations were personal efforts also. The establishment of the women’s Indian Association (WIA) in 1917 was the first attempt to organize women on an all-India basis. In addition to the purely social service orientation, the WIA was also concerned with influencing government policy on women’s suffrage, educational and social reform issues.\(^{22}\) The WIA while comparing the women’s movement in India with the suffragette movement in the West, was careful to emphasize the difference. Rameshwari Nehru, in a speech delivered at a women’s college in England, emphasised the basic difference between the two movements. The suffragette movement in India was a fight against orthodoxy, ignorance and reaction, and not against the other sex.\(^{23}\) An important factor contributing to this new stage in the organizational development of the women’s movement was the existence of communication networks cooptable to the idea of provincial and national women’s associations. It was only after 1910, national and provincial women’s associations were started by women who had acquired experience in local women’s associations.

Bharat Stri Mahamadal (BSM), founded in 1910 by Sarla Devi Choudurani. Its local chapters existed in Calcutta, Lahore and Allahabad and later in other Indian cities. Inter-provincial mobility—especially among educated Bengalis—appeared to have been important in the formation of local

\(^{23}\) Chaudhari, Maitrayee, \textit{op.cit.}, p.114.
branches of the Bharat Stri Mahamandal (BSM). It had a central executive committee composed of officers from the branches, but there was no central office or centralized fund raising. The Bharat Stri Mahamandal (BSM) adopted a practice of nineteenth century associations and invited women of nobility to preside over the conference and wives of British officials to be patronesses of the association. The influence of revivalism can be seen in the speeches delivered at the annual conferences. In 1912 Sarla Devi spoke on the honored position of women during the Aryan period. The stated objective of the Bharat Stri Mahamandal was “The creation of an organization by means of which women of every race, creed, class, and party in India may be brought together on the basis of their common interest in the moral and material progress of the women of India and in and through which organization they may work in association and in a spirit of mutual helpfulness for the progress of humanity and through that of their own sex.”

In an attempt to establish an all India Organization for women, the National Council of Women in India was initiated in 1925. In 1926 the Women’s India Association brought together several scattered women’s groups in the country at a convention and many of them united under the banner of the All India Women’s Conference. The first All India Women’s Conference on Educational Reform was held at Poona from 5th to 8th January

26 Talwar, Vir Bharat, op.cit., p.207.
1927. It was a historic event and brought together women from different parts of India and from all castes and communities. The conference henceforth met annually and became a leader among organizations fighting for women's rights and equality.\textsuperscript{27} The All India Women Conference (AIWC) was planned solely as a one time conference, its organizers transformed it into a permanent organization with local constituent conferences. It was founded as an educational conference, but, from its first session it focused on both social and educational questions.\textsuperscript{28} Like the burgeoning number of peasants and workers organizations all over the country, women own organizations developed as part of the anti-imperialist movement.

**Women's Perception of Their Own Lives**

It must be noted that in a society where the birth of a daughter itself was regarded as a calamity, where her only activity was domestic work and child bearing, where she was married at a tender age of ten or eleven, where she was married to a stranger in whose selection she had no voice, where she, many a time, became a widow before she has outgrown childhood and where her personality was tied to the apron string of somebody, she could naturally have no aim except of marriage.\textsuperscript{29} But with the spread of education, press, new ideas of equality and self respect, woman for the first time was acquiring the

\textsuperscript{28} Everette, J.M., op.cit., p.73.
freedom to express her views about women’s desire, needs and condition in the society. Women did not use only rational arguments but also appealed to justice and feelings, as letters and narratives showed, and carved out new meanings for accepted notions and women’s roles. Although women’s voices were largely shaped by dominant values and expressed them to a certain extent, male and female voices on women’s issues differed.\textsuperscript{30} The entry of women into mainstream media and politics was a significant feature of this period, the importance of women’s institutions and spaces such as schools, journals, and picketing lives cannot be overemphasized. Here women’s voices could emerge and take ‘women’s issues’ in unforeseen directions and girls could acquire self confidence and awareness of their own strength.\textsuperscript{31}

Women were describing their status and role in society, in their own words and also expressing their needs and desires. One Lilawatidevi, emphasized to find out the root causes of their low standard in the society. She criticized the male society because of the ways of social reforms described by the male society. According to her “women, themselves were also responsible for their condition because of their ignorance, superstition and illiteracy. They forgot themselves and made principle that household work, rearing of children, following of men’s correct or incorrect orders, are their duties. Men society took advantage of this situation to prove dominance over

\textsuperscript{30} Orisini, Francesca, op.cit., p.305.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.

184
Women, while lamenting on the women's status as men's shoes, argued for *internal swarjya* cutting across the religious bars. Protests were made against the stereotyping of women into certain roles, as passive objects. Such dominating ideas were criticized by saying, "Women, are regarded only as maids and for the purpose of sexual fulfillment and, have no consciousness, no brain and neither any desire nor ambitions." Women were told to follow *Pativarta-Dharma* by citing the examples from religious texts. All these ideas of men were full of selfishness because in reality women were suffering from the tyranny of male society. One writer said

"The examples of Sita, Savitri and Damyanti are explained for women. So, men should also consider the characters of Rama, Lakshman and Bhisma etc. for themselves."

A direct link between the revival of the ancient ideals of Sita and Savitri and in the women struggle, was drawn. Indian women were not born ignorant but were bred ignorant: "Women should come out in the arena keeping in mind the stories of those heroic women. There were differing arguments about the role, dharma, and nature of women and arguments in favour of a self-defined maryada. Arya Samaj reading of Indian history provided an argument in favour of equal education for girls, against traditional

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33 *Chand*, October 1930, pp.556-559.
customs as man-made, and even for women’s right to choose their marriage partner. Gopaldevi, the author of an article in Chand said that girls were given equal education in the Aryan Age and cited examples of Sita, Savitri, Damyanti and Draupadi, to give right to choose marriage partner because all these heroines chose their husbands in Svayamvars. She argued that the ‘Puranic’ slokas against women education were men-made and the practices of child marriage, purdah, necessary at the time of Muslim rule, survived, however, even after the Muslim rule had ended.

During the time period under review, women’s voices on education and the right to self-definition had emerged in the Hindi sphere. Here, education did not mean only literacy but an awakening to self respect and self awareness. The academic achievements of women who passed B.A. or M.A. were published with photographs in journals. But these women belonged to the English-speaking elite, usually the daughters of civil servants or ministers. Such news about graduate women from Lahore University, was published in Madhuri:

“This year five women complete their graduation and one Muslim women, Miss Khadiya Begam has passed M.A. Out of

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35 Orisini, Francesca, op.cit., p.255.
these five women one, kumari Sushila, is the daughter of Lala Harkishan Lal, minister in Punjab government.\textsuperscript{37}

But the attitude towards 'educate women' remained perplexed because of most of educated women were somehow different in dress and lifestyle. The western educated woman was the object of disapproval and contempt: as someone who had overstepped maryada, she had messed up all family and social relations, was bound to end up badly and compared unfavourably with the simple but innocent illiterate girl.\textsuperscript{38} In actual, this attitude towards educated women was a mixture of pride, irony and perceived danger. Women, who were English educated, usually turned their backs on 'Indian Civilization', therefore women brought up in the atmosphere of western education, were getting further and further away from Indian culture and sentiments.\textsuperscript{39} To pass a degree of B.A. or M.A., they did not have any interest in any matter of social world and deviated their concentration from the household work. But it was the point of consideration, that whether education, could solve the problem of women society or could fulfill the shortcomings in the lives of women. To become an educated woman, her duties were not finished, however, it was possible to get some self satisfaction from education. It might be a point of happiness because

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\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Madhuri}, February 1923, p.201.
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\textsuperscript{38} Orsini, Francesca, op.cit., p.259.
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after becoming educated, no one could understand them slaves or men’s shoe, it would be easy to find a suitable marriage partner.\(^{40}\)

On the other hand, some people did not consider, the education as a necessity for a happy life. Even women themselves wanted that they should be perfect in the household jobs because it was their duty. According to a woman writer,

"The education, that was obtained by girls with a lot of hard work, becomes an obstruction in the peace and happiness of their life in future. After marriage, an odd problem is to be faced by girls. They do not have any knowledge of domestic works because they spent their time in reading and writing before marriage. So, they have also a habit to give orders to the servants just like men."\(^{41}\)

In this sense, the women’s question was taken up by the rise of cultural revivalism- a counter attack on the western influence and values, particularly on educated youth (girl or boys). The revivalists, in their zeal to protect the indigenous cultural traditions, began to support women’s education, for, they thought, only the institution of family can strengthen indigenous culture. So, here the ‘women’s question’ took new turn, women came to be considered the


\(^{41}\) Ibid.
custodian of traditional cultural values. Women themselves accepted that the great ideal of womanhood established in India in the past. Such type of ideal was not established in any country of the world. In the glorious past of India, this ideal developed the motherhood and wifehood to such an extent that this country had been becoming upright in the peace of society and stability of family life. But the contemporary women’s movement was destroying this ideal. Women did not understand that the destruction of the stability of family would not be pleasant for human society as well as for women’s movement. Therefore, because of influence of modern women’s movement, the family life of the society had come within the range of danger.

"Women are challenging men by doing competition with them in every field, by ignoring the family life. Women’s nature of this type is not a benediction."

The nature had differentiated men and women in many ways. It does not mean that women did nothing to get their rights, and suffered the suppression because of men always. But in doing any protest, they should not ignore, kind, sympathy, maternity, wifehood, devotion, leniency etc., the natural attributes of women. Therefore, some women criticized the westernization of Indian women movement. Independent status of western educated woman was sought

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42 Upadhyay, Neelam & Panday, Rekha, op.cit., p.31.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
to be disregarded on the lines of corrupt materialistic image of women. Several articles as well as even cartoons were published in this regard. One of them was illustrated in the form of photograph—a woman dressed in a fancy saree reclining on an easy chair, while her husband dressed in traditional white kurta and dhoti, sitting on the floor, polishing her shoes. The text below the photograph read “Bivi saheba had gone to theater with Mr. Champat Rai. Now shrimati ji is resting and the poor husband is polishing the shoes of his wife”.47

So, the image of the westernized woman not only revolves around going outside (i.e. theatre in this case which is polluted), but also with a different man, quite an immoral act. Further, the husband is shown as the slave of his wife, though supposedly the ideal role would have been opposite, i.e. wife being shown as polishing his boots.48

In the event of a girl with a modern western education marrying into a traditional Hindu family or vice versa, it can cause immense psychological tension and lead to a cruel of her own. Therefore, the hallowed ideal of self sacrifice as a woman’s dharma (duty) was criticized. “Such self sacrifice which clearly destroys one’s own body and soul makes others greedy, selfish, unjust and tyrannical is not self sacrifice, it is suicide”49

In an article, ‘Gramin striyon ki Dasha’, in ‘Arya- Mahila’ journal, attention was drawn towards the

47 Chand, March 1923, p.360.
49 Talwar, Vir Bharat, op.cit., pp228-229.
condition of rural women. In actual, the educated women, who belonged to the elite families in the villages, did not consider the condition of rural women, and even disliked the poor and filthy women of the villages. They never tried to teach the rural women about the cleanliness of clothes, body and the atmosphere. According to the opinion of many people, girls should not be taught English, it had no advantage.

"There are many books in Hindi which are more than enough of their requirements. When the all material related to the self respect and pride of India is present in these books, then, why time is wasted in the teaching of a foreign language."  

But, a girl should be given an opportunity to learn both the languages if she could learn. There were also some people, according to them, women should have a little knowledge of English because generally there were chances when the knowledge of this language was required, for example in the reading of telegram, to read and write letters etc. But the more knowledge of English language was considered wastage, what girls would do to pass B.A. or M.A., girls did not have to do jobs. By getting more knowledge there would a sense of arrogance in them.

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51 Ibid., p.245.
53 Ibid.
There, a vigorous turmoil had been made in our country which was named as woman-awake-fullness. But the meaning of this awakening was not clear to the most of women. The literal meaning of 'awake-fullness' is the dissolution of sleep.\textsuperscript{54} Thence, women awake fullness meant that women were in the sleep up to that time, now their sleep was fragmented. But after the awakening from the sleep of pleasure, why did they acquire a terrible image? If their sleep was fragmented in reality, then it was a good sign. But there was no need to express this by making such vigorous turmoil. The scream had been made, from the time when women were awakening, that women would not be slaves of men from now. Women had understood the sinful nature of men and they would become independent.\textsuperscript{55} But all these thoughts and policies were of men. Men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar etc. had spent their life for the awakening of women but today after two generations, as though women suddenly awakened themselves and achieved independence in dreams. Women's such thoughts made the men responsible for their condition but they never tried to improve themselves for their own emancipation.\textsuperscript{56} Before 1920s, Hindi journals focus needless to say, was also completely on household; a few curiosities and women's news were the only items about the outside world. Journals published articles, short stories, and many short dialogues with a moral message, a few historical pieces on viranganas, dialogues on child-

\textsuperscript{54} "Smt. Anurupa Devi Ke Vichar", \textit{Saraswati}, August 1931, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
rearing, on girls education and on purdah, articles on stri-dharma and pativarata-dharma, on tensions within the family and ways of solving them, advice on how to avoid bad company and bad reading etc. The editorial voice was restricted to asking for recipes and contributions from school girls and to suggesting ways of washing clothes. At the same time, articles, related to the relationship between man and wife, made responsible English education to degrade woman from the position of saha –dharmi to that of pranayini (lover).  

Thus, traditional approach of female education had limited it to, reading religious books, simple calculations and letter writing. The efforts for the propagation of female education in India had been successful up to some extent only. As its supporters did not link it with the utilization of human resources and the wage-earning, possibilities for a woman were still very remote, it could not revolutionise the mentality of the people. However, the dawn of the twentieth century had witnessed the first generation of career women in India. Teacher, doctofs, nurses, social workers, superintendents and even religious preachers could be seen among the fair sex. Hindi press represents the changing mentality of the north Indian intelligently, Kumari Indumati Balram Sanjeet, M.B.B.S., was appointed House surgeon of lady Atchisan Hospital.

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57 Orsini, Francesca, op.cit., pp.262-263.
Smt. Hizab Intiaz Ali was first and only one Muslim women pilot whose photograph published in *Sudha*. Kumari Taramati Patel was the first Gujarati Women who passed L.L.B. examination. She belonged to patidar caste. The growth and development of the renascent spirit of female education can be studied through the Hindi journals of the period under review. In reality, the major success of the social reformers of the Renaissance was that they created an awakening among Indian women as a result of which they themselves came to assume the responsibilities of their own cause and began to revise to raise the demand for their proper place in society. Gandhiji has pointed out from time to time that there is no justification for men to deprive of or to deny them equal rights on the grounds of their illiteracy, but education is essential for enabling women to uphold their natural rights, and to improve their social position.

In the opinion of women, it was only the ignorance and illiteracy of our women enabled the male dominated society to make them submissive. The reign of superstitions had made them puppets in the hands of men. The ignorant and superstitious nature of our women was mainly responsible for the degeneration of our society. The younger generation was deprived of the good

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59 *Bharat*, 15th July 1929.
60 *Sudha*, March 1937, p.175.
61 *Vishal Bharat*, July 1930, p.17.
teachings, that only a mother could provide. The meaning of education or development was related to literacy, but it was not correct to understand an illiterate person, totally unwise. There were many illiterate persons who were able to call as educated on the basis of their experience. The number of literates was very small in India during colonial India. Only nine percent Indians were literate and the literacy rate among women was almost zero. In actual, women's education was not considered necessary for a long time. Now some improvement had been in the field of women education but it was limited to only urban areas. In the rural areas the condition was the so worst that women in villages even could not count up to twenty. The rays of new civilization had not reached up to them. They, were confined to the domestic sphere and did not feel any requirement of the change in the society. In reality, women in rural areas were not united against the cause of their suppression. Although in their opinion, male society was against the reforms related to female society, but there was no existence of women society in the absence of their unity. They were affected by jealousy towards each other and it is right to say that they were organized to a lesser extent as compared to men. Men participated and organized themselves in some work related to society because they were in same conditions but women could not organize themselves and created a

66 Saraswati, September 1931, p.329.
difference among them on the basis of education or financial factors. There was no coordination among women even within a family. In this way, we can say that the lack of unity and coordination among women was also one of the factors of their oppressive conditions.68

It is well known that the British system of education had been introduced for men with a clear purpose in mind. It aimed at creating a new social base for British rule and to produce a sub-elite which could man the colonial administrative structure. The reasons for extending education to women were not as clear even to the colonial rulers when they opened govt. schools for girls. The introduction of schools for girls was an attempt to transplant in to Indian soil the Victorian ideal of the woman as 'house wife', as the presiding deity of home and hearth, whose business in life was to create for her husband a pleasurable heaven when he returned home from each day's tiring business in the harsh, competitive outside world.69 Mission schools, however, were performing this job more efficiently. The education introduced by the colonial rulers was clearly not meant to expand horizons for women but to narrow them. During the period under review, due to participation of women in public sphere and changes brought by social reforms, women started writing about themselves as well as noting down their response to the changing environment. Their point of view was sometimes quite different from that of

68 Ibid.
men, and they often did not share the ideas some men and women held about them.\textsuperscript{70} Women writers emphasized on their economic independence for the development in the women society. Western educated women wanted that the education of women should be such that they could, get some job or earn their livelihood. In this way, they might be free from the suppression of men to a greater extent. They could get some respect only when they would, get some financial strength and know about their rights.\textsuperscript{71} Questions about women's access to public space and to employment were raised on account of the fact that respectable employment was a real necessity for many women and could be form of nationalist seva. In India, education became a pretext for speaking about burning issues like purdah, mismatched marriages, dowries and increasingly, women's right and economic self-reliance. Those who, supported the view that education was important per se and a mean of self empowerment, argued that women should take education into their own hands and extend traditional roles to the wider arena of society and the nation.\textsuperscript{72}

The old reactionary conception of the role, position and function of women was slowly giving way to a new higher and more democratic conception. The age of marriage had been steadily rising. Education was spreading among a larger and larger section of women. Further, there was a growing desire among women for participating in outdoor economic and social

\textsuperscript{70} Karlekar, Malavika, \textit{Voices From Within}, OUP, Delhi 1993, p.9.
\textsuperscript{71} Sudha, March 1935, p.161.
\textsuperscript{72} Orsini, Francesca, op.cit., p.256.
work. More and more women considered self-respect and the development of personality as necessary goals of life. They determined to be a herald by assuming themselves the incarnation of ‘shakti’ (power) and ‘saraswati’ (knowledge). They were becoming ready to protect their rights by destroying the ostentations present in the contemporary society. They had shown their talent in the field of education and power in nationalism. They were tried to establish their own existence, independent of men, in other fields also. But women are of soft nature and it is not natural for them to do revolt. They are assumed to follow the duties like devotion to husband, trust on religious instructors, maryada etc., therefore, normally they cannot do work against their nature. Though by and large supportive on the overall issue of bringing women out from the inner quarters (antahpur), an important section of the society (that had even some women also) was nonetheless sensitive to the fact that change could indeed bring about unprecedented reactions. Consequently, this section of the society spent considerable time and energy arguing about the need to reform traditional society while keeping some fundamental principles in mind. According to a writer Ushadevi Mitra, a woman’s development should not be confined to the inner quarters (antapur) but women should not forget that they can think about “outside world” only after having properly fulfilled the duties of the home: a woman’s highest duty is that of rearing

73 Desai, Neera, op.cit., p.244.
74 Sudha, May 1933, p.386.
76 Karlekar, Malvika, op.cit, p.193.
children.\textsuperscript{77} So, women of the contemporary society made the house as a primary work place for themselves and public activities were secondary for them. They had also some contribution in their own suppression under custom and law for which men alone was considered responsible.

During the last years of the period under review, women’s view of the ‘modern woman’ did include political activists and women teachers. These modern women had recognized their own strength and ability to act and create, although their development had not been matched by an equal effort at adjustment by men. “Old fashioned men look down upon them with contempt, modern minded men support them but are unable to help them actively and the radicals encourage them but find it hard to take them along. In the real sense, modern women are alone than old ones.”\textsuperscript{78} There were two significant facts: (1) Two trends were working in the contemporary Indian society, one in the direction of social change and progress, the other struggling to preserve the status quo. As the reformist trend was strong in some aspects and weak in other. Therefore, the trend itself promised a bright future. (2) The other fact disclosed that the Hindu society was registering a steady social advance.\textsuperscript{79} Despite the many constraints of a life of confinement, many women worked out a meaningful role within antapur for themselves. Some flourished and blossomed in the newly found freedom which literacy brought, others wrote of

\textsuperscript{77} Mitra, Usadevi. “Striyon Ka Sthan”, Chand, October 1931, p.750.
\textsuperscript{79} Desai, Neera, op.cit., p.244.
their grief and of their sorrow. For these women, it was access to the male preserve of learning which helped them give expressions of their feelings.\textsuperscript{80} They led to a process of self expression and questioning, which often ran counter to the hopes and expectations of those involved with introducing change. Self-expression, whether it speaks of tacit obedience, ambivalence or of rejection, is symptomatic of any human response to a situation which involves change; the outcome may also restate more firmly the need for a maintenance of the status quo.\textsuperscript{81}

Although, the women society considered the importance of the discussion of their own rights, but there was less attention towards some significant topics like Hindu law. According to Indian ‘Hindu Law’:

(1) “A woman (Hindu) can’t get remarried with the help of parents and relatives if her husband is alive. If she does so, then there is a punishment for her and this punishment is in the form of money and rigorous imprisonment for seven years including father.”\textsuperscript{82}

(2) “A husband can get married many times at any age but in this situation, he has to pay some money to his first wife and that money is called ‘stri-dhan’. The first wife has full right on

\textsuperscript{80} Karlekar, Malvika, op.cit., p.196.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., p.197.
\textsuperscript{82} Arya, Anjnadevi. “Hindu Striyan Aur Unke Adhikar”, Madhuri, February 1929, p-96.
'stri-dhan'; furthermore, if a husband does not want to keep his wife in his house-send to parental house or else where, then according to rules he has to pay money as cost of living."83

According to these rules, a woman can't get remarried with the help of her parents even in a condition such as her husband is old aged or a dead drunk or a child or a patient. There women should consider the question of remarriage in these situation if they want to live a happy life. Otherwise, they would have to live a life, by controlling over sensual appetites, or, full of unchastity.84 It means that the societal values were differential for male and female. Chastity, virginity and faithfulness provided framework of norms for sexual relationship for women. People had usually considered men and women to be two opposites, the two poles that were in contrast and, therefore, had developed concepts (certainly false) like rational and emotional, active and passive, strong and weak, aggressive and modest, the first the attributes of men and the second those of women. These concepts had played a dangerous role in subjugation of women. Of course, men and women are biologically different but this difference is marginal, only sex difference, they are not two parallel lines nor even two hemispheres. They can be considered as single line bifurcating at two

83 Ibid.
84 Ibid, p.97.
or three points and then becoming one again. Without the cooperation of the two (men and women) a society can not remain alive. Men and women should feel the significance of each other, if they are well wisher of society in real sense. Women had felt the significance of men and even maintained it. But men had forgotten the importance of women and made women as slaves instead of colleague or wife because of a fear (false notion) of reduction in their importance and pride. In spite of this, it was a thing to glad, that men were improving their mistakes and to a greater extent, the credit of ‘women – awakening’ was belonged to them.

The essence of social regeneration was uplift of women, which had been indeed one of the most fruitful contribution of new India and had been furthered by significant changes in the education and outlook of the women themselves. Our country had justly realized that “the woman’s cause, is man’s: they rise or sink together, dwarfed or godlike, bound or free.” Mrs. Kamala Satthianadhan wrote an article on the position of Women in Ancient and Modern India, strongly advocating the extension of the privilege of modern education to the members of her sex. She rightly pointed out that the education of Indian women “will be a powerful instrument for the social reform of India” and expressed the hope that “in India when the time of trial and work is past

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86 Vishal Bharat, November 1933.
87 Dutta, Kalikinker, Renaissance, Nationalism and Social Change in India, Bookland, Patna, 1973, p.117.
and our cause is won, our Indian sisters will compare favourably with our more favourably situated sisters in the West".\textsuperscript{88} The education in the lives of women involved strategic familial decisions of various kinds. It meant investment in time, energy, as well as a certain degree of organization, re-orientation and management of the antapur (inner quarters). Some strong and out-spoken women emerged out who quietly and steadfastly ministered to their families while developing a distinct identity of their own. These were very special women but there were others as well. Many accepted unquestioningly the Victorian prototype and were perhaps quite happy to do so.\textsuperscript{89} Even in literature, the time period under review, marked a watershed. From imaginary characters, removed in time and space or confined to marginal and stigmatized groups, politically active respectable women characters gained greater social acceptance and we can find positive images of independent—minded volunteers.\textsuperscript{90} In the short story ‘Svayamsevika (1931) by Rajbahadur Varma, political seva is the only way out of the gender, caste and economic deadlock of the protagonist finds herself in.\textsuperscript{91}

The Hindi press helped our women to be aware of their rights and duties. Hindi journals (especially women’s journals) published articles, reports, photographs etc. with a view to presenting not only women’s perception of existing social mores, problems and current national issues but also the

\textsuperscript{88} Quoted in Dutta, Kalikinker, op. cit. p. 117.  
\textsuperscript{89} Karlekar, Malavika, op.cit., p.197.  
\textsuperscript{90} Orsini, Francesca, op.cit., p.297.  
\textsuperscript{91} Quoted in Orsini, Francesca, op.cit., p.297.
common man's opinions and aspirations. It undertook to sculpt a new model for Indian woman self-reliant, confident and capable of securing her own independent economic and social status. The women's journals had major aim to cultivate minds of women and to make them conscious of their own status growing out of their socialization and conditioning within the patriarchal mould and values. Although some Hindi writers showed orthodoxy in their conception of the women's freedom but this approach was limited. This traditional approach was disappearing at the end of the period under review due to participation of women in every field of life. The women writers supported the Western approach for women's freedom, yet some women writers moulded this western approach in the Indian version. The main goal of the contemporary Indian women's movement was women's uplift and the meaning attached to "women's uplift" was reform of social practices so as to enable women to play a more important and more constructive role in society.

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92 Mohan, Kamlesh. op.cit., p. 179.
93 Everette, J.M., op.cit., p.82.