CHAPTER III

UPLIFTEMNT OF WOMEN UNDER THE SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT

The Indian social reform produced a multifaceted intellectual expression of the social and cultural transformations which took place under the impact of British rule. The age of reform movements was started in the later half of the 19th century due to the intellectual process that went into the making of modern India. While explaining this age of reform movements S. Natarajan observes thus-

"Though the stimulus for the movement came from outside it was deeply rooted in Indian faith in continuity and evolution rather than revolt and change".

It means that the scholars in India like S. Natarajan inclined to accept that the root-cause of the reform movement was there in Indian society. The very idea of equality of man or equal status of man in the society to which the reform movement wanted to bring into practice was actually rooted deep into Indian religion and philosophy. However, it was not practised and it was never taken up as a matter of practice and useful to mankind. Against this Indian way of life, really, it is true as Natarajan had stated that stimulus for practice of man's equality in

1. Natarajan, S., A Century of Social Reform Movement in India, Asia Publication House, Bombay, 1959, P.5
society came from outside and hence, the stimulus for social reform movements. Because of the Europeans, who came to India and because of the British rule in India, for the first time, Indians, irrespective of caste, creed, and religion were permitted to intellectual exercise and after having some lessons in intellectual exercise, as it is commonly said that there was an outburst of intellectual activity of the Indians in India. This had created a new wave of transformation of Indian society into modern age.

As a result of all these, India as well as Maharashtra passed from medieval to modern age. The distinctive characteristic of the social reform movement was that, it started on religious grounds. In India, religion was far more important in the people than their lives and many of the people were prepared to die for religion. It is believed that self-religion is solace and salvation to them. Without religion, according to them life was to be, in hell. So unless religion permits, the Indians and particularly the Hindus were not at all prepared to accept any change or reform in their mode of life. It was, therefore, quite necessary to convince the Indians and particularly the Hindus, as the Hindus were in sorrowing majority, that their religion permits them to new change and reforms. The intellectuals therefore, among the natives as well as among the foreigners, who wanted change for the cause of humanity
in Indian society into the modern one, began first to study old scriptures of the Hindus seriously and bring to the Hindus the knowledge that their religion did not object for change or reform. It is true that the foreigners, who were missionaries and were engaged into the cause of spreading Christianity, wrongly attacked Hindu way of life, and had selfish motive to spring Christianity in India. However, their criticism and attacks on Hinduism, for the first time revealed and even brought to the notice of the Indians, under the name of religion, scriptures and gods of the Hindus many evil practices were followed by the Hindus which had no sanction in the Hindu scriptures. Such a form of criticism points out that many of the customs, traditions and even practices in the Hindu society like, child marriage or permanent widowhood had no sanction. While giving evidence of adult marriage Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar writes;

"After the completion of his study, student shall marry a girl who is not immature. Evidently when the Rishis like Ashvalayan, Apstamb, Hiranyakeshi etc., Wrote the practice of early marriage was coming in, but they set their face against it as irrational."

2. (a) Viadya, D.G., Dr. Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar Yanche Alpa Charitra (Marathi), Karnataka Press, Bombay, no date, p.28.
(b) Justice M.G. Ranade also proved with the help of scriptures that there was no sanction to such evils—See Miscellaneous Writings of M.G. Ranade, Mangranjan Prakashan, 1915.
The criticism of this type brought to the notice of the people unsanctioned way of life and made them aware of the fact that religious practices were injurious to the society and they were out-dated. Naturally, one had to give them up and adopt the real way of life. All that, i.e., criticism and attacks on the Hindus by the foreigners and missionaries in India as well as, sharing of their views by the newly educated Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others upheld the idea that the change and reform in Indian society was the need of the times. Therefore, first of all, they concentrated their almight on finding out drawbacks of the religion and then finding out the remedies to solve their religious problems. It was thus, that religion became the subject matter in which they wanted change and reform.

THE IDEAS OF CHANGE AND REFORM:

When the ideas of change and reform in Hinduism, that is, the religion of the majority of India, were on and many of the intellectuals of that period were pondering as to how they would be able to maintain their separate religious identity and continuity, they had to face numerous difficulties. First of all, they had beofe them the dream of maintaining glory and prestige of their ancient religion and the way of life. No doubt, they did not like inhuman practices, the Hindu religion sanctioned, but at the same time they wanted that their religion must be maintained at any cost.
Raja Rammohan Roy and others and very particularly he alone, while attacking and criticising Hinduism and the evil Hindu practices always mentioned that India could not go to Christianity. His was genuine effort to see that our people are brought up to enjoy the fruits of modernity, science, technology, and the age of social equality and social status. From him many Indians took inspiration and started to preach their people to give up bad practices in day-to-day life. In Maharashtra also the impact of the British rule was witnessed after the end of Peshwa period in 1818 A.D. and it was realised that the Europeans and especially the British, who conquered the whole of India and even the Peshwas, must be more superior and the religion of the conquerers of the Peshwas must be superior to that of the Peshwas or Hindus.

AIMS OF PIONEER SOCIAL REFORMERS:

Scholars like Acharya S.D. Jawadekar state the names of Balshastri Jambhekar, Dadoba Pandurang, Dr. Bhaub Daji Lad etc., as social reformers who started their work in 1840.


He further states that it was Gopal Heri Deshmukh who gave in real sense the speed to the social reform. Dhananjay Keer, is of the opinion that in addition of the names, like Nana Shankarshet, Dadabhai Naoroji and Mahatma Jotirao Phule is made then only Jawadekar's statement would be true. However, from the list of these social reformers and their place as the first or the foremost reformers of modern Maharashtra it seems that, there are contradictions and contradictory views. Sir N.G. Chandavarkar, while delivering his presidential speech at the Bombay Presidential Social Conference held up the name of Bal Gangadhar Jambhekar, popularly known as Balashasti Jambhekar, as the first and pioneer social reformer of Maharashtra. In 1950, the first Chief Minister of Bombay, B.G. Kher, also upheld in his introductory remarks the name of Bal Shastri Jambekar as the Father of Modern Maharashtra. But the facts reveal something else. Bal Shastri started his active participation in the social work in 1832 when he started his Darpan, i.e. the first Marathi journal in Maharashtra and quite earlier.

9. Ibid., preface P.11.
of that event, Jagannath Shankar Shet Murkute alias Nana Shankar Shet started the work of social reform and welfare activities in Bombay. He was born in 1803 and started his career as business man. From his young days only he was attracted towards social reforms and activities of upliftment of the poor and women. Nana Shankar Shet did help in eradicating the practice of Sati. Some missionaries, who visited India, and some of the retired officers in England were against the practice of Sati. They prepared an application requesting the British Parliament to make a law to abolish the practice of Sati which was placed before the House of Commons on 18th June, 1823. It was Nana Shankar Shet from Bombay and Raja Rammohan Roy from Bengal, who gave their full support to the application. While introducing Act of Sati in the Bombay Presidency in 1830, Sir John Malcom, the Governor of the Presidency, first of all consulted Nana Shankar Shet who promised him to give all kinds of co-operation. Nana Shankar Shet was praised for the work not only by the Governor but later on Rev. John Wilson credited Nana Shankar Shet for the peaceful behaviour of the people of Bombay as against the behaviour of the people of Bengal. From this account, it can be positively said that long before the reform work of Balshastri Jambhekar.

11. Ibid., P.422.
12. Ibid., P.425.
Nana Shankar Shet had started his social reform work. Hence the proposition or the statement that Bal Shastri Jambhekar was the first reformer of Maharashtra can not stand.

In the first rank of the social reformers of Maharashtra the names just now mentioned were the great personalities of their times and every one of them contributed his might with soul and heart to the cause of social reform and upliftment of neglected as well as women and it would not be proper to make any distinction so as to name them as first, second or so on and call them as great or first. Moreover, such a gradation among them will not also help us to understand correctly the situation in Maharashtra and their personal as well as individual contributions to reforms. Because every reformer had his own limitations in those days on the grounds on which he was brought up and the things he learnt. Maharashtra is a large country and because of the lack of communication and transformation it was but possible that without any joint consultation, adventure or understanding every one would have started his own activity. The example of the first widow remarriage in 1842 in Belgaum will prove that such an incident was very lately brought to the notice of Marathi people living far away from Belgaum. It was against this situation that Scholars like C.Y. Chintamani, stated

that it was in 1869 that the first widow remarriage was celebrated in Bombay. In fact it was not at all first when we take into account the widow remarriage that had taken place in Belgaum.

Thus we can come to conclude that whatever place and position they held, they had their best drawing wrath from the traditionalists to help the cause of social reforms and reforms relating to the upliftment of women.

While going into the details of the aims and objectives of all these early reformers one can understand that almost all of them had given priority to education, to their people. G.B. Sardar had quite appropriately explained the importance of education and as a result of that the early reformers wanted to have it. According to G.B. Sardar, it was presumed by pioneer reformers that if western education would be given to the natives their ideas of supression and trust in the unimaginable things and thoughts would vanish. Further Sardar had clarified that the pioneer reformers understood that, once western education is given society will be free of bonds of old, out-dated traditions and evil practices and would move on to true knowledge and morality and would see abolition of practice of evil customs.

14. Refer to:

of material development. This was all what the pioneer reformers wanted to give to their people through spreading of education.

Next to education, stress was given on removing evil practices in the society. But in the early times of reform period more concentration was given to the reforms relating to female-life and mostly about the female life in the high-caste Brahmin community. The Marathi literature of the 19th century reveals this very fact that the newly educated intelligentsia in Maharashtra was more inclined to remove wrongs in the marriage system of the Hindus. The problems they faced were like the child-marriage, polygamy, widow remarriage, tensure etc.

GOPAL HARI DESHMUKH:

Gopal Hari Deshmukh was a renowned social reformer of the 19th century Maharashtra, who for the first time wrote and discussed the evils spontaneously and courageously. He was a government servant, who studied Hindu dogmatic way of life and felt the necessity of its reform. During the period from 1848 A.D. to 1850 A.D., he published about 108 letters through a journal named "Prabhakar", under the penname "Lokhitwadi." In his writings of those letters almost all aspects of life, namely Historical, social, political.

16. Deshpande, A.N., Arvachin Vanmayacha Itihas, P.69
17. Prabhakar was the second Marathi Journal which was published on 24th October 1841 by Vithal Govind kunte alias Bhau Mahajan. It was the first journal who started to write against the British rule. The journal played vary important role in the early period awakening in Maharashtra- Joshi P.N., Marathi Vanmayacha Itihas, Prasad Prakashan, Poona, 1979, PP 37-39.
18. Lokhitwadi mens one who does welfare of the people.
and religious were covered. He devoted about 13 letters for discussing the degraded position of women, various evil practices like child-marriage, uneven marriage, polygamy, ban on widow-remarriage, tonsure etc. as well as necessity to improve their condition. From the 100th letter it is clear that Lokhitwadi wanted to inspire the younger generation to think of social evils, to have English education for getting new knowledge in the world and with the help of it to progress themselves and the society.

Up to 1850 what Lokhitwadi had done in regard to social reforms or upliftment of women is labelled by his critics as the work of non-active participant in the social reforms. According to his critics he was simply a propagandist and not a practical reformer. However, after 1850 various accounts prove that he got himself associated with various newly emerged institutions which carried on social reforms. He was appointed by swami Dayanand as a trustee of Ajmer Arya Samaj, he was president of the Bombay Arya Samaj for many years, He was one of the founder members of the organisations in Gujarat like Widow Remarriage Association, Debate Association etc., and Deccan education society in Poona as well as Orphanage at Pandharpur. He was one of

20. Ibid., P.29.
the seven signatories of the wedding card of widow remarriage performed in 1869 in Bombay and made controversy over it and had to take penance. All these incidents definitely prove that he was an active participant in the social reform.

TURNING POINT IN THE THOUGHT AND PRACTICE OF THE SOCIAL REFORMS:

It would be right to say that the later half of the 19th century was the era of active social reforms in Maharashtra, as the efforts were made on both levels, i.e., personal and institutional. The unique feature of the period is that both personal and institutional efforts were carried on simultaneously and social reformers from all strata of the society, i.e., Brahmans and non-Brahmins made efforts for the cause. The galaxy of social reformers like Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Vishnubua Brahmachari, Vishnushastri Pandit, Justice M.G. Ranade, Justice K.T. Telang, Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad, Maharshi Dhonde Keshav Karve and many

others as well as leaders like Nanashankar Shet, Dadoba Panduraing etc. came into being in Maharashtra who tried their level best to eradicate social evils and to achieve upliftment of women. The intelligentsia of Maharashtra realised the fact that unless and until, the better half of the society, i.e., women progressed, the development of society was futile. As a result, all of these reformers concentrated on the education of women, as education was and is the base of allround development. Mahatma Phule started girls' education in Maharashtra and shortly after that the Students' Literary and Scientific Society followed Mahatma Phule. Mahatma Jotiba Phule was the first social reformer of women and downtrodden people, who for the first time established school, for them in Poona in 1848, in the tooth and nail opposition. He also propagated utmost equality of men and women and stated that there should be one and the same law for men and women. He also offered patronage to the widows and provided asylum in his house to the illegally pregnant women.

Like Mahatma Phule the other social reformers mentioned above continued efforts for the education of women and also made efforts to abolish evil practices mainly connected with

women. Though in the later half of the 19th century there was considerable spread of education in Maharashtra, there was great opposition to educate girls and every social reform especially reforms of women, even from the educated people, as we all know how Tilak aggressively attacked the Bill of Age of Consent and this resulted in opposition from all corners of India. All the social reformers had to face bitter criticism for their work not only by the society but also by their family members also.

We will now take the account of major social evil practices relating to women, and how the social reformers tried to abolish the practices with special reference to Maharashtra.

THE PRACTICE OF SATI:

The most ancient as well as cruel and inhuman practice that restricted even women's right, of course right of the women of upper caste, to live was the practice of Sati. Though we get references of Sati in India since 5th century A.D. as far as Maharashtra is concerned it started during the

33. c) Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar had to suffer a lot in the age of Consent Bill—Vaidya D.G. *Op.Cit.*
reign of Yadava Dynasty. The belief behind the practice was that an ideal wife would not like to live after the death of her husband and she would end her life by burning herself on the funeral pyre of her diseased husband and declared herself as Sati i.e., Supreme Goddess. If the husband died on battle field, a Substitute such as turban or shoes for his body was used. But in the course of time, the voluntary practice became compulsory. Formerly, the practice was limited to kshatriya women only but as Dr. Altekar stated in his book, "The position of women in Hindu civilization", it came into vogue in Brahmin women. It seems from the writings of Lokhitwadi that during the Peshwa reign the practice was supposed to be honourable and prestigious to women and was followed by the higher castes, i.e., Brahmin Kshatriya and Vaishya. But from the foreign accounts, it


36. Altekar, A.S., Ibid. 133.

37. Ibid., P.134.

38. Ibid., P.129.


40. a. Arther Crawford writes about Konkanastha Brahmins "---but they are inately cruel—they were the last and most bigotted supporters of "Suttee".—Crowford Arther, Our Troubles in Poona the Deccan, Archibald Constable and Co., 1897, P.127.

b. George Smith while describing about Konkanastha Brahmins specifically mentions it as "---the widow burning self righteous, intellectually able and proud Maratha Brahmin—" Smith, George. The Life of Jhon Wilson, Jhorr Muray, London, IInd Ed., 1879, P.35.
seems that all other castes except the Konkanastha sect of Brahmin, left the practice. From the evidence of Charles Mallot, who was British regent in Poona, it seems that the custom might be in vogue among the Marathas also. He stated that his Maratha watchman died on 5th September 1792 and his wife of tender age, just of 22 years wanted to be sati. Mallot tried to convince her not to be sati and after three long hours discussion he succeeded. About the reactions of the people assembled Mallot wrote: "I am sorry to remark, that I really believe that the Hindu spectators were rather grieved and mortified than pleased at our success in saving this poor creature from the flames.

Though the practice of Sati was more common in Bengal, the government records of the 19th century show that in the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras the annual number of Sati was below 50. In Poona, in the dominion of Peshwa, the annual average was 12 during the period 1800-1812. It is quite possible that these statistics may be incomplete. In the Konkan, a part of Maharashtra, it was recorded that there were about 40 to 60 cases of Satis a year.

MEASURES ADOPTED TO ABOLISH SATI:

Due to the efforts of Raja Rammohan Roy, Lord Bentinck, against the opposition of his officials, resolved on 4th December 1829 that the custom was illegal. But it should be noted that prior to the British Government, in the Mughal period king Akabar and Aurangzeb had made efforts to abolish the custom. Taking into consideration the earlier efforts S. Natrajn rightly observed that "Contrary to the general opinion, the British far from initiating to abolish Sati were the last of the contemporary governments of India to move against it.

Towards the beginning of the 19th century, efforts were made to prohibit the practice in Maharashtra. The Brahmin government of Poona and Maratha government of Sawantwadi had issued official orders, definitely disapproving and discouraging the practice. And according to Altekar A.S. that was the reason for not much opposition by public when the Act of abolition of Sati came into being.

Even before the Act of Sati was made, efforts were made by Poona Magistrate, Captain Robertson, to put control on the compulsion. On 27th October 1823 Radhabai, a konkanastha

Brahmin lady was to be Sati. But as she could not tolerate the flames she came out and the servants of the Government took her to city and gave her medical treatment, but she died after three days. When Robertson came to know the incident he issued an open letter on 8th October, 1823 and informed the Shastris that hence forth the compulsion to be Sati would be treated as an offence.

The Act of Prohibition of Sati was regulated in 1830 in the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay with slight change. Satara and Baroda were the two states in the Presidency who prohibited the practice according to the orders of Sir James Rivet Cornac, the Governor of Bombay. Inspite of the anti-Sati measure of 1830 and the growing strength of reform movement stray cases of attempted or successful Sati were reported occasionally till 1840.

THE MOVEMENT OF WIDOW REMARRIAGE:

The abolition of Sati enacted in 1829 gave strength to the widow remarriage in Bengal as well as in Maharashtra. What V.A. Naraian stated about the extent of widows in Bengal

47. Prasad, issue of August, 1957, refer to the article of C.G. Karve,
is also applicable to the widows in the then Maharashtra.

While describing the extent of widowhood in the 19th century he stated thus, "During the period every town, every village and almost every house was full of widows debarred from all good things of life and converted into household drudges". Lokhitwadi, while describing the state of widowhood in his 'Shatpatre' mentions that, there were 57 widows in the house of Panase, the Chiftain of Peshwa, and the only instance is sufficient to understand the seriousness of the problem in Maharashtra. A widow was regarded by the Hindu Shastras as an inauspicious and unfortunate woman, and many restrictions were put on her. As a consequence of the restrictions, the position of widows was very miserable. They were denied the pleasures of life, they had to remain secluded in their homes in which they were reduced to mere drudges. On auspicious occasions their presence was considered to be inauspicious and they were looked upon as a burden. It was no wonder then that the plight of the widows should have won the compassion of reformers like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and those of his way of thinking. Like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in Bengal, in Maharashtra scholars like Balshastri Jambhekar Gangadhar Shastri Phadake Lokhitwadi, Nana Shankar Shet, Baba

51. Narain, V.A., Social History of Modern India, Meenakshi Prakashan, Delhi, 1972, P.73.
53. Kane, V.P., History Of Dharma Shastra, Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona, 1974, P.586.
55. Darpan, 15th August, 1837.
56. Gangadhar Shastri wrote books on widow remarriage-Dnyanodaya, 1st July, 1853.
Padmanji* etc., prepared the ground for the cause, whereas Moroba Kanhoba, Nana Shankar Shet, Dr. Bhaub Daji Lad, Lokhitwadi, Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar, Justice M.G. Ranade and Vishnu Shastri Pandit who is well known as the "Vidyasagar of Maharashtra" etc., actively participated in widow remarriage movement in Maharashtra.

CELEBRATION OF WIDOW REMARRIAGES IN MAHARASHTRA:

Due to the efforts of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar the Government resolved the legislation on 19th July 1856, the "Widow Re-marriage Act of 1856". The Act allowed widows to remarry if they so desired and declared the legitimacy of their issues when they did so. It seems from the account given in Dnyanprakash that the earlier efforts of reformers of Maharashtra in regard to widow remarriage also awakened the women. A widow from Sholapur had written just before one month the act was passed, to the editor of Dnyanprakash stating her position and she had not only mentioned that she was ready for remarriage but requested the editor to try for her remarriage.

62. Dnyanprakash was a Marathi journal.
63. Dnyanprakash, 12th May, 1856.
Scholars have mentioned different years as the beginning of widow remarriage in Maharashtra. According to Ghose Benoy the first widow remarriage took place in 1861, whereas C.Y. Chintamany, a renowned social reformer of Madras, mentions the year 1869 as the first widow remarriage in Maharashtra. But as mentioned earlier the first widow remarriage was practiced in 1842. In 1853 Raghunath Janaradan, a Gaurd Brahmin by caste and a clerk in Municipality of Ahmedabad married a widow named Chimabai from Maharashtra. As the first wife of Raghunath Janardan was then living scholars like C.Y. Chintamany did not recognise the marriage. But it should be noted that there was the practice of polygamy in society and when widow remarriage was not looked upon as prestigious instead of marrying a virgin, Raghunath married a widow shortly after the enactment of Widow Remarriage Act. Another widow remarriage was celebrated in 1865 in Bombay. At the end of the year 1865, Narayan Jagannath Bhide, an advocate, after the death of his first wife, married the widowed daughter of Moropant Pendase secretly. In October, Lokhitwadi sent letters to prominent reformers of Maharashtra for giving their consent to the marriage but reformers like Sir N.G. Chandavarkar did not give their support.

The most important widow-remarriage which aroused controversy in Maharashtra was celebrated in Bombay on 15th June 1869. The bridegroom Pandurang Vinayak Karmarkar was a teacher in Khandesh and the bride was a 17 years old widow, named Venutai Paranjape, the daughter of V.P. Paranjape. The wedding cards were published under the signatures of "Saptarashi" i.e. seven profounders of the widow remarriage, namely, Lokhitwadi, Vishnushastri Pandit, Madhavarao Ranade, Talekar Shastri, Vishnu Moreshwar Bhide, Vishnu Parashram Ranade and Janardan Sakharam Gadgil. Maharshi Karve D.K. gives the account of this marriage in his autobiography thus:

"Many European and native gentlemen of distinction were present. Vishnushastri himself assisted by some priests the marriage ceremony and Rs.5000 were collected as presents."

A vivid description of the marriage was published in Indu Prakash, an eminent Marathi journal of the period, which propagated social reforms, raised a great commotion and controversy.

69. Deogirikar, T.R., Ibid.
THE CONTROVERSY:

Since 1865, when Vishnu Shastri Pandit translated a book on widow remarriage written by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar the controversy was raised in Maharashtra about the issue whether the scriptures had permitted it or not, which resulted in the formation of two groups i.e., Sudharak means reformers, and orthodox. And in the same year the book 'Vidhava Vivaha' of Vishnushastri Pandit came out. Two more books, namely "Vidhava Vivah-Khandan" by Balkrishna Shastri Bapat and "Punarvivah Nishedha" by Krishnaji Prabhakar shastri Sathe were published, Proving that the widow remarriage was against the Shastras. We come across numerous publications on the issue in the year 1870-71 and it was because of the controversy raised by the widow remarriage performed in 1869.

There was a public discussion in Poona which continued for nine days in March 1870. The orthodox party kept the issue before Shankaracharya for decision. There was much curiosity among the scholars in Shastras not only of Maharashtra but also of India as the Shastris from distant places like Gwalior, Indore, Nasik, Paithan, Satara, Kolhapur etc., had gathered in Poona to hear the discussion. A debate of eleven persons, with the sanction of Shankaracharya, was arranged between orthodox and reformers.

Five Shastris were nominated by the orthodox and five from reformers' party. Gopalacharya Karadkar of Gwalior was appointed as Jury. Vishnushastri was leading the reformist party whereas Narayancharya Gajendragadkar, a colleague of Vishnu Shastri, at the time of studentship was leading orthodox party. After the long discussion for nine days Shankaracharya declared the decision against widow-remarriage. In fact, the fifth member of the reform nominees was in favour of remarriage as far as his opinion was concerned, but he voted against owing to the pressure that was brought to bear upon him.

It is a notable fact regarding widow remarriage movement that some of its profounders themselves married widows. For instance, Moroba Kanboba remarried in 1870, Vishnushastri Pandit remarried in 1874, whereas D.K. Karve, the leader of widow remarriage movement and women upliftment in later period of Maharashtra, married a widowed sister of his friend Joshi in 1893. But it is a fact again that all the social reformers, who married widows had to face bitter opposition from the society as well as from the family.

The Act of widow remarriage remained a dead letter for long in Bengal as well as in Maharashtra, though all

74. See for details Autobiography of Karve, D.K.
social reform groups and associations made widow remarriage as a prominent programme in the reform movement. They failed to remove the general social fear and traditional beliefs against widow remarriage from the minds of people. As a result, its pioneer, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar mortally felt the sting of snobbery and hypocrisy of these people. The movement almost died out long before the death of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in 1891.

While discussing the failure of the movement V.A. Narain evaluated thus,

"Although the widow remarriage created great sensation in society, its principle results were insignificant. Social Stratum as faced by Karve, discouraged many enlightened men to marry widows. Subconscious preference of young men in general to marry virgin girls also stood in the way of the movement in becoming a living force in the society. Even in western educated parents, a widow girl never had any spontaneous desire to marry her, for customs die hard."

Like orthodox society its strongest opponents were women themselves. Women were of the opinion as described by O'Malley, "We are born once, we die once and we are married once". It was therefore practically imperative inspite of the efforts made by the reformers.

Though the movement could not become popular in Maharashtra, the work of upliftment of women flourished under three eminent social workers namely Pandita Ramabhai Dhondo Keshav Karve and Ramabai Ranade.

78. Pandita Ramabai opened Sharada Sadan, i.e. House of learning in Bombay in early 1889, but was removed to Poona in 1890, where it stayed for more than ten years. Godubai Joshi, wife of D.K. Karve was the first student of the Sadan. The sadan was mainly opened for the education and self-sufficiency for the widows and orphan girls. When Ramabai started propagation of Christianity the supports like M.J. Ranade, Bal Mangesh Wagale, Dr.R.G. Bhandarkar and others withdrew it and then it became a centre of christianity known as Mukti-Sadan-See for details Fuller Mary Lucia Bierce. The Triumph of an Indian Woman, published in U.S.A. n.d. also refer to the biography of Pandita Ramabai by Tilak, D.N.


80. Ramabai Ranade started Sava Sadan in the beginning of 20th century for the upliftment and self-sufficiency of women, Which became the centre for upliftment of widows. Today there are various courses run by the institutions. Parvate, T.V., OP.CIT.
TONSURE:

The evil practice connected with the widowhood was the tonsure, which made the widows ugly. We can imagine from an incident narrated by N.R. Phatak, in the biography of Justice Ranade, that even during the reform movement how people stung to the beliefs and how they were superstitious. Phatak states the incident happened in 1859 in a village Madhav, near Sholapur that a widow who was not tonsured died due to the collapse of her house by heavy rain. But Brahmins were not ready to perform funeral rites till she was tonsured and as she was dead the barbers were not ready to tonsure her. At last a Shudra performed the funeral rites. Another incident in the same book shows the importance of Shankaracharya in Hindu life. In 1854, when Shankaracharya was in Ahmednagar, some Brahmins complained against the ill-behaviour of a widow for which Shankaracharya declared penance and fine of Rs.19. Though these and the like one incidents prove the slow or reverse progress in the British rule, N.R. Phatak has given another incident which shows that there was the progress of awakening among women and according to Phatak due to the freedom, they got under British rule, they dared to refuse the decision of Shankaracharya. When some Brahmins brought widows before Shankaracharya and

complained against their ill-behaviour, as usual Shankaracharya, asked the penance of tonsure. But those brave ladies boldly answered that they would not obey the order. It might be the first instance that the order of Shankaracharya was not followed by women. The fierce Shankaracharya asked the barbers who were with him to tonsure the widows forcibly. But instead of getting scared the bold ladies answered thus:

"This is not the Mughal rule. If compulsion is made we will complain against you to the Police Inspector and provision would be made such that you could not go safely out of the city".

By hearing the answer the Shankaracharya was rather astonished, he ordered to boycott on the ladies and went away. The incident is enough to show how the reform movement influenced the women and how they, no doubt their number was small, were becoming bold enough to come forward and fight against injustice.

After rather a long gap of about 35 to 40 years we come across the efforts made for abolishing the practice of tonsure. Mahatma Phule had started to publish a Marathi journal namely, "Deenbandhu" for the propagation of his ideas in which he wrote a series of articles on the tonsure

82. Phatak, N.R., Ibid., P.118.
of widows and stated that barbers were getting the "curse of
the widows without any reason. At about the same time, one
person gave an advertisement in Indu Prakash that if a widow
would go to the court of law against the compulsion of
tonsure he was ready to bear all the expenses. All these,
resulted in the awakening of barbers of Bombay and at last
they organised a meeting on 14th April 1890 in the Camp area,
near Elphinstone college. In this meeting, some leaders
of Arya Samaj and Prarthana Samaj as well as some barbers
expressed their views against the practice before a mob of
about 400 to 500 barbers and it was resolved that henceforth
barbers should not tonsure the widows. Some ladies from
England wrote letters congratulating the barbers, on the
decision taken by them.

CHILD MARRIAGE :

The only reform movement of the 19th Century, connected
to the evil practice of child-marriage and in which all
corners of India were involved was the Age of consent Bill.
The characteristic of the movement was that, the movement
was started not by a Hindu but by a Parsi, journalist,
Behramji Malbari. What made Behramji to turn to this problem

of Hindu girls was that Behramji Malbari observed the fate of child-brides generally as child-widows because of the practice of marrying a girl of tender age to an age-old man. The practice was very common in the 19th century in Maharashtra. Though we come across the instances of child marriage during the Wakatāk period in Maharashtra, the practice became common from the medieval period. By and large the low age of marriage was related to the notion of purity of women and value of virginity of girls at marriage. While discussing the causes of child-marriage which strengthened the practice, Charles Heimsath stated that as the desire of the groom's family to have a daughter-in-law young enough to adjust easily to her new domestic surroundings, occasional "sale" of brides to old men or unsuitable men who demanded a very young girl and were willing to pay a large "bridge-price", and the shastric injunction, that the girls must be married so that intercourse might take place with the first signs of puberty. In the course of time the marriages were held in the cradle only. Like widows the state of child wife was very precarious as well as subjugated. She had to face many

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restrictions as not to talk loudly, must never speak before or to the father and elder brother-in-law or any other distant male relatives of her husband unless commanded to do so. The practice of child-marriage was related to some other evil practices like selling of girls, polygamy, widowhood, uneven-marriage i.e., an old man marrying a girl of a tender age etc.

AWAKENING OF PEOPLE:-

The press became the first mass media in the first half of the 19th century Maharashtra, which made the people to think about the practice of child marriage and one would wonder that as long back as 1842 reform minded people of Maharashtra propagated through journals the marriageable age of bride-groom and bride as 16 and 10, when in practice a girl was generally married when she was of just 8 years. Another instance of a letter of 1847 shows the increase in the age of marriage as 20 and 16 respectively which was far ahead than the Age of Consent Bill. Lokhitwadi went still a step further and stated that marriage should be arranged with the consent of bride-groom and bride. He also advocated that people should give up the out-dated practices. Though these efforts went futile it was a good sign that people of Maharashtra were becoming

89. An open letter was written in the Issuee of Prabhakar dated 9th February 1842.
90. Prabhakar, 17th May, 1847.
more and more serious about the practice and wanted to raise the marriageable age. Later on in 1887, Agarkar expressed the same views as those of Lokhitwadi through the Sudharak, like Prabhakar, another Marathi journal, Vividhadnyan Vistar dealt with the problem and insisted upon the necessity of adult marriage.

But the efforts for legislation were made in 1860 in Bengal by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. The code was changed without much opposition as per Ishwar Chandra's request that the sexual inter-course with a girl below the age of 10 be regarded as rape. This resulted in stimulating other reformers and they continued their efforts in various parts of India and especially in Maharashtra for an effective legislation to check the horrors of child-marriage.

THE AGE OF CONSENT BILL:

The credit to get legislation enacted against the practice goes to Behramji Malbari. In 1884, he published his Notes on Infant Marriage in India and Enforced Widowhood and sent the Notes to the Parliament. The Government of India sent it to local government and to the legislative Assembly as well as great personalities of the time as Justice M.G. Ranade, Raosaheb V.N. Mandlik, Justice K.T. Telang, Romesh Chandar Datta and many others for suggestions.

Meetings were held in Bombay, Poona and in other places and other provinces, but nobody answered affirmatively. The Government came to the conclusion that the public opinion all over India was against the proposed amendment and in 1886 dropped the proposal.

Though the Government washed its hands off, Behramji Malbari was not disappointed. When he was in England in 1887 for medical treatment, he circulated the pamphlets among the prominent persons and held public meetings and resolutions were made regarding the age of consent and remarriage of widows. While he was making efforts in England, at about the same time Dayaram Gidumal published a pamphlet which concentrated its attention on the Indian Penal Code instead of on caste and family customs. Gidumal proposed simply that there be enacted an amendment to the Penal Code raising the age of consent to twelve. But the orthodox party in Poona headed by Tilak became fierce and Tilak published a pamphlet in answer to the Pamphlet of Dayaram Gidumal stating how the present age of consent was correct. Two years later, the reformers of Bombay held a meeting and sent an application duly signed to the Parliament requesting the legislation regarding the age of

95. Ibid., PP. 154-55.
96. Ibid.
consent. Some of the doctors of Bombay also sent a separate application. By the time Behramji Malbari returned to Bombay and held a meeting under the Chairmanship of Justice K.T. Telang. The discussion in the Parliament as well as the efforts made by reformers resulted in the progress towards the legislation. And when it was confirmed that the legislation was to be enacted the orthodox party in Poona decided to hold a meeting.

In 1890, a meeting of 200 persons opposing the Bill was held in Tulasibag at Poona in which Tilak put forth his counter proposals including dowry, widow-remarriage etc. Regarding the view of Tilak towards the Age of Consent Bill Heimsath rightly concluded that Tilak nevertheless saw in the Age of Consent question a religious issue which could be aggravated into a major weapon for the use against his personal enemies, the social reformers in Maharashtra. He further stated that, though the Bill's alleged offense against religion was a focal point of attack, Tilak's underlying concern was to increase the political strength of the forces at that time moving in the direction of extremist opposition to Tilak. In the beginning of 1891, there were meetings in Bombay and Poona of both the parties. For the first time it seems that women of Maharashtra came forward in a large number for their own cause, i.e. the Age of Consent Bill.

When the movement of the Age of Consent Bill was in high-pitch in 1890, about 2000 women of Bombay sent an application to the Parliament to support the proposed Bill. By knowing this in the beginning of 1891, it was proposed to hold meeting of women of opponent to send an application. Ranade looked at this as a sign of awakening of women and said that, if Poonaite women gather in Tulsibag in great number and discuss their difficulties then the reforms would be achieved shortly. They might resolve anything as they liked but they should come and discuss.

In Poona, a meeting of Arya Mahila Samaj was held in which about 100 women were present. The meeting was held in the house of Kirtane, a social reformer of the time, when Pandita Ramabai explained the nature and importance of the Age of Consent Bill. Mrs. Kashibai Kanitkar suggested that application should be sent in support of Bill to the Government for which there was rather hot discussion and at last the suggestion was accepted with the opposition of five to six ladies. The application was prepared accordingly and signed by the women who were present for the meeting.

This was perhaps the most hotly conducted controversy in the social reform movement in India which lasted from 1890.

101. Ibid.
102. Ibid. P.440.
103. Phatak N.R. mentioned the number of women as 300 in the biography of Justice Ranade.
104. Mrs. Kashibai Kanitkar was a wife of Justice Kanitkar, a colleague of Justice M.G. Ranade as well as journalist and an author—See for details Kashibai Kanitkar-Atmarcharita Na Charitra (Marathi) by Sarojini Vaidya
105. Sudhara dated 3rd February 1891.
1884 to 1891. But without any effect of the meeting of the opposition in many parts of the country the Imperial Council passed the Bill of the Age of Consent Act X on 19th March, 1891. However, even after passing the Bill it remained a dead letter for it did not redress any grievance which came before the court created under that Act. The Census Report of 1931 shows the improvement in the child marriage but it was very slow and minor. In 1831 there were 206 married women per 1000 aged between 9-15 years, where as in 1891, it was 193 and in 1901 it was decreased to 186.

The Age of Consent Act of 1891, although, made legal provision of the girls above the age of 12 years, the religious customs and social traditions did not allow them to take the benefit of the Act. Besides, the society that followed the traditional religion, never felt that the Age of Consent Act was to help their girls. It was thus, the Acts like the Age of Consent Act and other social reforms introduced in the last half of the 19th century did not fulfil the aspirations and hopes of the reformists as well as progressive law makers. Of course, all the efforts that had been made in that direction were not fruitless and of negative approach. In fact, it was because of those Acts like the prevention of Sati and child marriage, the Widow

Remarriage Act and reforms like the opening of schools for girls and treatment to them equal to men had certainly helped to change the earlier life and status of women to take them to reforms and upliftment. In a way, it was because of those beneficial Acts and reforms opened a new horizon of bright hopes and good life to women in Maharashtra.