INTRODUCTION
This study has been undertaken with a view to explore the progress of women's education at the primary and secondary levels. It must, of course, be recognized that any degree of women's education that we have had so far owes no small acknowledgment to the efforts of enlightened and often organised groups of private individuals. Yet, this study exclusively concerns itself with another and perhaps more powerful thrust behind women's education – public policy. In this connection, this thesis sets out to review the Government's policy towards women's education (1947-1985) and attempts to assess how far the public education policy contributed towards its progress.

The period chosen for the dissertation is 1947 to 1985. If 1947 marked the beginning of the Indian Government's efforts to universalise primary education and thereby bring the girls within the ambit of formal education, the year 1985 witnessed the formulation of a New Education Policy under Rajiv Gandhi. Significantly, 1985 also marks the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan.

The question of women's education has been a relatively neglected theme in Indian historiography. Women not only form an important constituent element in Indian society (933 women for every 1000 men, 1981 census), but also help in the transmission of social ideals and consciousness. Yet, the actual content of women's participation in the educational system of the country has not been adequately documented in proper historical perspective. It is partially to fill this gap that this study of women's educational development is proposed.

Perhaps the earliest treatise on female education is Jyotiprrova Das Gupta's Girls' Education in India in the Secondary and Collegiate stages (1938). This book, confined to secondary and collegiate education in 1935-36, agrees with the established perceptions of the social role of women. Girls' education is thus seen as a means of making a good wife and mother. While discussing the prevalent system of education, the writer however identifies and analyses some drawbacks that retarded the progress of women's education. A recent study by Lakshmi Misra agrees that the progress of female education is closely linked with the social status of women. In formulating suggestions for developing women's

1 Lakshmi Misra, Education of Women in India (1921-1966)
education, she analyses the recommendations of various education commissions, financial allocations to various education sectors, school curriculum and professional or vocational education. Aparna Basu's work "The Growth of Education and Political Development in India 1898-1920" tends to be more analytical. Three interwoven themes are discussed: the official education policy and its transformation towards the end of the 19th century, the growth of English education and the extent to which education was a determinant of political activity. Basu makes a significant point when she mentions that "the politics of educational growth" was determined by India's status as a colony. Basu's work, however, ends in 1920. Hence there remains the necessity for further research on the subject, particularly in the post-independence period.

The available evidences of Christian Missionaries, British administrators and Indian social reformers, indicate that women in early 19th century India had a low status in society. Child marriage was the order of the day; polygamy was allowed, hardly any vocation (except as a domestic maid or a wage-earner in agriculture or industry) was open to women and the social and moral codes were highly discriminatory against them. Only among some small communities like the Parsees and the Christians, the social status of women was relatively higher. This low status of women was reflected in their educational backwardness. The educational facilities provided for the women were almost nonexistent. Superstitious beliefs such as that education led to widowhood were also prevalent. The patriarchal nature of Indian society, barring some areas such as Kerala, restricted women's entry into educational institutions. Formal education was considered unnecessary for a woman because she would not take up an employment. Since her primary duty was to be a good wife and mother, the only education considered relevant for her was cooking, child care, home-management etc. These could be taught at home. Education, it was feared, would divert a women's attention from her domestic duties. Hence, Pathsalas and Muktabs, Tols and Madrasahs were dominated by men. M.S. Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay (1819-27) made no reference to women's education in his long minute. The Bombay Government undertook an enquiry into the state of indigenous education in 1820's. The first reports (1824) received from the districts made no reference to a single female scholar attending any of the common schools of the Province. William Adam's survey of education in Bengal
had concluded that almost all Bengali women were illiterate. Perhaps the earliest to promote the cause of women's education were the Christian Missionaries. The Christian Missionaries were motivated both by humanitarian ideals and the zeal for proselytisation. They established schools for girls and also encouraged 'zenana' education. The Missionaries had realised the importance of education as a channel through which they could influence the women and convert them. They hoped that conversion of women would gradually lead to conversion of the entire family to Christianity. Missionaries played a pioneering role both in Bengal and Bombay Presidencies.

The work begun by the Christian Missionaries was followed up by Indian social reformers who in their individual capacities encouraged women's education. Most of them had acquired western education and were deeply influenced by the new values and beliefs it had upheld. They formulated their own critique of the condition of women and argued for the need for social reform. The social reform movement introduced social changes which too helped the cause of female education. Sati was abolished and the age of marriage was raised. Raja Rammohan Roy advocated modern education based on liberal and rational values. Iswarchandra Vidyasagar promoted women's education by establishing thirty six schools for girls. Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, Badruddin Tyabji, Maharshi Karve and others also contributed to its growth.

Another major impetus to women's education came from the nationalist movement. The nationalist leaders propagated female education and equality of sexes primarily to secure women's participation in the national struggle for freedom Gandhi said:

.... I am uncompromising in the matters of women's rights.
I should treat daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality.

While national leaders demanded female education, several enlightened women social workers also voiced the need for further educational opportunities for girls. Sarala Roy, Lady Abala Bose, Sarala Devi Choudhurani in Bengal, Vidyasundari Nilkanth, Sarada Ben Mehta of Gujarat, Begum Mother of Bhopal, Sister Subbalakshmi and Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy of Madras were actively...

2 William Adam's Reports, Second Report pp. 187, 188
It should be, however, borne in mind that the nationalist leaders viewed women's education within the framework of patriarchal society. Women's education did not mean that women would be granted the same freedom as men, nor did it overrule a women's primary duty to her husband and her children. Even the women's organisations did not challenge the parameters of acceptable female concerns.

Initially, the East India Company, which was primarily interested in trade, did not take the initiative in educating the people, much less the girls. There were, of course, some exceptions. Warren Hastings had established a Madrasah in Calcutta (1781) and Jonathan Duncan, the Resident of Varanasi, had set up a Sanskrit College. But there was no proposal or even a remote suggestion of establishing a system of education under Government supervision or control.

The Charter Act of 1813 had set aside, for the first time, a sum of Rupees one lac for the promotion of education in India. This was the first enunciation of the principle of state responsibility for education. Macaulay's Minute of 1835 was a declaration of the official policy of spending public money for the spread and development of English education among the Indians. It explicitly outlined his aim for the cultural colonisation of the middle class and sought to create a class of educated Indians who could serve the Raj as middle and lower level officials and clerks with absolute loyalty. The Macaulay inspired education system was certainly not congenial to women's education.

Wood's Despatch (1854) initiated a period of an Indian education policy. For the first time, it made a special reference to education and employment of women. It clearly mentioned that women's education should be encouraged.

The Hunter Commission (1882) laid emphasis on the fact that primary education had not made sufficient progress. The Report drew attention to the special and urgent need for the extension and improvement of elementary education of the masses. It proposed liberal Government assistance to private girls' schools and setting up of a separate inspectorate for these schools. Between 1882 and 1902 girls' education registered a quantitative increase, though this progress was insignificant when compared to the actual needs of the nation. The
percentage of literacy among women was only 0.8%. Needless to say, female education was confined to the communities which came in close contact with the Colonial Government. The girls from Christian, Parsee, Anglo-Indian and upper-caste Hindu Communities were the earliest to receive western education.

The next turning point in the Government's policy towards education came with Curzon's viceroyalty. He initiated a policy of governmental control over education. He believed that without this control schools, colleges and universities would be breeding places of Indian nationalism. However, Curzon encouraged women's education. A number of schools for girls were set up. In 1916 Lady Hardinge College for girls was established.

The Act of 1919 which made education a transferred subject and the Act of 1935 which established provincial autonomy, further boosted the cause of women's education. Yet, according to the census of 1931 while 15.6 per cent of Indian boys over five were literate, the percentage of literate girls was only 2.9.

A study of the education policy of the Colonial Government reveals that though under the British Raj the ideal of universal education was singularly absent, the initial apathy towards female education did, certainly, give way to a policy of encouragement. However, as already mentioned the growth of women's education that we observe in the latter half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries was not the outcome of the Colonial Government's policy alone. The endeavour of the Christian Missionaries, efforts at individual and organisational levels, the changing social requirements, the vocal demand of the women and the growing parental inclination to send their daughters to schools - all contributed to its progress. Nevertheless, education till 1947 was, by and large, confined to the urban middle class, while the rural women were virtually deprived of the available opportunities. There was, thus, a great divide.

The year 1947 is a landmark in the development of women's education. In 1947 only 8.2 per cent of the population had access to education. Of this 5.5 per cent were boys and 2.7 per cent were girls. Merely 6 per cent of Indian women were literate. Thus, as asserted by Maulana Azad, the foremost task of the National Government was, indeed, to provide education for all. While the Colonial Government aimed at producing low ranking educated officers, the

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independent Indian Government, at least theoretically, wanted to educate the masses within a democratic structure. Maulana Azad, the first Education Minister of independent India asserted, "the first and foremost task of the National Government is the provision of free and compulsory education for all." Article 45 of the Constitution bound the Government with the task of providing free and compulsory primary education within a period of ten years i.e. by 1960. Although no special mention of female education was made, universal compulsory primary education implied that girls were to be brought within the ambit of formal education. With the fast growing population that stood at about 400 million in 1947 the attainment of universal free primary education within ten years of the promulgation of the Constitution was virtually an impossible task.

In the beginning of the post-independence era, the Wardha Scheme of Basic Education4 was accepted as the model at the elementary level. This scheme proposed the imparting of education "through or in connection with a basic craft." The idea was to make education self-supporting, enabling the pupils to earn as they learn. The secondary and higher education, however, were to be remodelled to suit the requirements of the country. The University Education Commission (1948) headed by Dr. Radhakrishnan and the Secondary Education Commission (1952) presided over by A.L. Mudaliar were formed to expressly deal with university and secondary educations respectively. The appointment of these commissions was the first step towards reconstruction of the education system in independent India.

While launching the First Five Year Plan in 1951, the Planning Commission acknowledged the comparative neglect of Women's education but regretted its inability to do much in this regard. Agriculture and Power had to be given top priority. Still, the Planning Commission proposed the raising of the percentage of school going girls in the age group 6-11 from 23.8 in 1950-51 to 40 in 1955-56.

From the second Five Year Plan onwards, the Government became actively engaged in enforcing the various recommendations of the commissions that it had, in principle, already accepted. During this period, on the basis of the First All India Education Survey Report (1957), schools were set up even in the

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4 Gandhi's proposal to impart education through any useful craft was adopted by the Congress at Wardha in 1937.
sparsely populated areas in Rajasthan and in the hilly areas of Himachal Pradesh. Besides, the Government of India prepared a special scheme (1957) with a provision of 2.5 crores for the development of women's education. National Committee of Women's Education under the chairmanship of Durgabai Deshmukh was set up (1958) with the specific aim of suggesting measures to secure educational parity between boys and girls. While deploring the slow progress of women's education, the Committee emphasised that the education of women was to be treated as a major and special problem requiring special measures and not merely as a part of the whole problem of education. To promote girls' education at the elementary stage the Committee suggested free education, part-time education, mid-day meals, creches for younger siblings, attendance prizes and appointment of school mothers in coeducational schools. Free education liberal exemption from tuition fees, hostels and transport facilities, part-time education, night schools and scholarships were the suggested measures for promoting girls' education at the secondary stage. An important outcome of the recommendations of the Committee was the setting up of the National Council of Women's Education to advise the Government on issues and policies relating to women's education. The Bhaktavatsalam Committee (1965) identified the reasons for the backwardness of six States – Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh where women's education lagged behind that of the other States. Socio-economic backwardness and lack of suitable girls' schools were considered to be the main reasons for it. Needless to say, the Ministry accepted, in principle, the recommendations of these committees.

While various recommendations of these committees were being implemented, the accepted structure of education at the elementary level was also being altered. It became increasingly clear that teaching of all necessary subjects through a basic craft, as envisaged by the Wardha scheme of Basic Education, was impracticable. Besides, it was found that Basic Education was not well accepted by the urban people who aspired after white-collared jobs rather than manual work. From 1958 onwards no separate grant for Basic Education was made. Grants came to be sanctioned sectorwise – elementary, secondary and University.

Despite the attempts of the Government to spread education among
women, it was found that in 1965-66 only 18.29 million girls were enrolled in primary schools against the enrolment of 32.18 million boys. Obviously, special provisions for the weaker sections of the society were not implemented with requisite force. Inadequate Governmental efforts to counteract traditional social restrictions and irrelevant curriculum impeded the progress of girls' education. Regarding curriculum, it was decided, in accordance with the recommendations of Hansa Mehtor Committee (1962), to have uniform curriculum at the primary stage and diversified curriculum at the secondary stage.

The education system had, by now, developed two major flaws. First, while emphasis was put on the spread of education, little attention was paid to the quality of education that was being imparted in schools. Though the number of schools increased rapidly, there was no such corresponding rise in the number of qualified teachers. Consequently, the standard of education declined. Secondly no major restructuring of the old colonial system of education was made. Even the recommendations of the Secondary Education Commission (1952) to diversify secondary education was, in essence, a reiteration of the proposals of the Hunter Commission (1882). Hence, the need to formulate a new system of education which would fulfill the requirements of the country was felt. The Kothari Commission, set up with this purpose, submitted its Report in 1966. On the basis of its recommendations the National Policy of Education was formulated.

As suggested by the Kothari Commission, the overriding concern of the Government was to link education to the man-power requirements of the country. In the realm of general education, the Government's emphasis shifted from quantitative growth to qualitative improvement, although schemes for the expansion of education were not scrapped altogether. It may be noted that these schemes for qualitative improvement were introduced in girls' schools as well. In order to improve the quality of education and make the teaching profession attractive, pay scales of teachers were enhanced and extensive scholarship programmes were adopted. With respect to the grant of scholarships, no distinction was made between boys and girls. Scholarships were granted on the basis of merit irrespective of sex and caste. This principle practically tilted the scholarship schemes in favour of the boys. Girls, predominantly being first generation learners, failed to secure scholarships on a competitive basis. At the
same time, the idea of Basic Education was dropped altogether. Only work-
education was retained. In the sphere of secondary education, vocation oriented
subjects were sought to be made more popular. But the diversification of
secondary education did not reduce to a significant extent the urge for general
higher education, particularly so far as girls were concerned. Their enrolment in
the faculties of technology, veterinary science or agriculture remained minimal.
Vocational education, apart from the traditional few, was still considered
unsuitable for women.

A major change in the administration of education took place in 1976 when
by an amendment of the Constitution, education was transferred from the State
List to the Concurrent List. This enabled the Union Government to legally
assume the role of a senior partner rather than that of an adviser. Even before
this transfer the Central Government was exercising control over education
through successive Five Year Plans and through financial grants to the State
Governments. Besides, it had appointed a number of committees, received their
reports directly and on the basis of these reports had evolved an all India
education policy. In 1976 the Union Government secured the required legal
status.

Despite governmental efforts, the spread of education, though considerable,
had remained far below the required goal. Universal primary education, as
envisaged by the Constitution, was still a distant cry. With a renewed emphasis
on the quantitative progress of education, three social groups were identified for
the enrolment drive: Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, girls in rural areas
and child labourers. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women
(1974) deplored that in spite of all the expansion, the education system only
covered 10 per cent of the total female population. Though women's education
had progressed unmistakably between 1947 and 1974, the disparity between the
enrolment of boys and girls remained astounding. Indian women of 1975 were
barely as literate as their menfolk in 1940. In 1985, girls comprised 73 per cent
of the children in the age-group 6-11 who were not enrolled. With the growth
of population, this number, in absolute terms, increased fast. The slow progress
of education and its imbalanced growth specially in the sphere of girls' education
clearly indicated that there were some major flaws in the education system. The
National Policy on Education which was adopted in 1968 also needed to be
modified. New ideas, new methods and new policies were required. Ultimately, a new National Policy on Education was formulated under Rajiv Gandhi.

While tracing the development of women's education, certain allied problems need to be taken under consideration. Educational problems relating to curriculum, dropouts, coeducation, imbalanced educational growth and expenditure were to be sorted out if a speedy progress in women's education was to be achieved. Regarding curriculum, it was decided that at the primary stage a uniform curriculum would be followed both for boys and girls. But at the secondary stage a diversified curriculum would be offered so that every student could choose the subjects according to his/her capability. Subjects like carpentry, plumbing or electrical repairing were reserved for the boys while tailoring, health and hygiene, nutrition, child-care etc. were subjects offered to the girls. Yet, a recent report revealed that tribal and backward women of Banda in Uttar Pradesh were working as plumbers, tractor drivers and hand-pump mechanics, thus challenging the gender-bias in the profession.

A more serious problem, the problem of dropouts is rooted not only in poverty but also in the socio-cultural structure of the community. The cultural and societal pressures on girls also explain why the rate of dropout of girls was higher than that of the boys.

An imbalanced growth of education posed another serious problem for the Government. While some of the States recorded a progress, States like U.P, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar remained backward with regard to female education. Purdah, the custom of child-marriage and general social backwardness were identified by the Vaktavatsalam Committee as causes of slow progress of women's education. While these States were backward, Madras and Bombay stood out in terms of enrolment of girls in all institutions and the expenditure by the Government on girls' education. This is so possibly because these States came in close contact with East India Company through trade relations. Also Purdah system was not so prevalent in these states. Thus the customs, ideas and ideals cherished by a particular community determined the response of its women to the educational programmes.

Imbalanced growth of women's education may also be discerned in the rural-urban differential. Imbalance had developed in the education system between the rich and urban level on the one hand, and the poor and rural level
on the other. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women (1974) had stressed the need for an even and balanced growth of female education.

The budgetary allocation for education in successive Five Year Plans (Rs. 169 crores in the First Five Year Plan to Rs. 2524 crores in the Sixth Five year Plan) did not keep pace with the rate of inflation and the growth of population. Even this meagre grant was curtailed whenever the country faced the slightest of financial problems. My study shows that the boys benefited more from Government's expenditure on education than the girls did.

Public policy on female education at primary and secondary levels during the period under review faced several problems both in terms of formulation and implementation. First, no serious attempts were made to completely overhaul the education system. Instead the old colonial education was allowed to continue with marginal changes. Thus the education, which was deemed suitable for middle class boys seeking white collared jobs, could not satisfy the needs of the masses. Secondly, while the Constitution emphasised free elementary education, secondary education received proportionately more allotment of funds. Enforcement of compulsion to secure enrolment of girls was not possible in the face of extreme poverty of parents. It may be noted here that enrolment drives could not possibly succeed where child labour prevailed. Laws against child labour could not be strictly enforced and the child labour force mostly remained outside the ambit of formal education.

Yet, women's education had progressed to a remarkable extent between 1947 and 1985. When India acquired her freedom enrolment of girls was 40.78 lakhs in primary and secondary schools whereas in 1985, 44.7 million girls were attending schools\(^5\). Despite this progress, even in 1985 girls' education lagged far behind that of the boys.

The subject matter of this thesis has been divided into five chapters in accordance with the phases in the development of women's education.

Chapter one provides a historical background to the issue of women's education in India. It will highlight the attempts to spread female education within the colonial set up.

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\(^5\) Report of the Committee on the States of Women in India p. 238 and Education for all by 2000, Indian Perspective p. 11.
The second chapter traces the development of women's education in the post-independence period (1947-1966). Article 45 of the Constitution devolved upon the Government the task of providing free primary education to all children in the 6-14 years age-group within a period of ten years. In an attempt to reconstruct the education system, the Government appointed several commissions to enquire into the state of education and suggest ways and means to improve it. From the Second Five Year Plan onwards important strides were taken in this direction. Report of the Kothari Commission (1966) which formed the basis of National System of Education marked the terminating point of the first phase of public policy towards women's education in independent India.

The third chapter concerns the period 1966 to 1974. The official policy on women's education came to revolve around Kothari Commission's recommendations. Signs of change were there as indicated by the setting up of a number of committees which brought changes in the curriculum and offered incentives for the spread of female education. There was a massive leap registered in this phase, no doubt, but the socio-cultural factors which impeded the progress of women's education were marginally taken care of.

Chapter four traces the development of women's education between 1974 and 1985. This period covering the Fifth and Sixth Five Year Plans witnessed important developments in the field of education. The Central Government started taking increasing interest in the spread of education among the masses and in linking up of education with the requirements of the country in general. Thus in 1976, by an amendment of the Constitution, education was transferred from the State List to the Concurrent List. Hence forward the Centre was assuming a more important role in education. Ultimately, a new National policy on Education was introduced by Rajiv Gandhi in 1985.

The fifth chapter provides an analytical framework to understand the contradictions, imperfections and imbalances within the official policy on women's education in India. In this context the regional and class dimensions have been discussed along with such issues as the problems of drop outs and priority. Though measures were adopted to counteract these problems, the real solutions eluded the Government. The actual obstacles and hindrances in the quantitative and qualitative leap forward in women's education are thus highlighted in this chapter.
The conclusion summarises and brings together the findings of the investigation made on the growth of women's education during our period. The study reveals that though the Government, several reformers and social organisations have been involved at various levels in the implementation of Article 45 of the Constitution, the progress in this direction falls far short of the ideal. A wide and distressing gulf continues to exist between thought and action. Even the recommendations of the various commissions were not implemented with due care. It is increasingly being recognised that educational growth and economic reforms must go hand in hand. Economic development, when divorced from corresponding and appropriate development of education, cannot achieve its objective. At the same time for full and profitable development of education economic growth is a requirement. Besides, the social tensions and conflict arising out of the breakdown of traditions cannot be really eased without proper education.

This study focuses on:

a) The continuity, deviation and change, if any, in public policy towards female education.

b) Special efforts made to spread education among women.

c) The contribution of various non-governmental agencies towards the progress of women's education.

d) Causes of slow progress of women's education.

e) Reasons for the imbalance in the development of female education.

A detailed examination of these themes have enabled us to know how effective the public policy towards women's education was. The study has also provided insight into some of the problems which plague the present education system of India. Solutions to these problems are difficult to arrive at. But suggestions, particularly from women activists, may be helpful in this context.

My research project falls within the ambit of what is now called "contemporary history". Accordingly, it will primarily be based not on traditional archival materials but on various official and unofficial reports of recent times, parliamentary debates, contemporary journals, newspapers and periodicals and oral evidences of officials and women activists. By a careful and discretionary use of the materials available on the subject, this work may be able to throw new light on some of the aspects of the growth of women's education in India.