1.1 The Colonial Government and the Progress of Women's Education

......in the opinion of the Syndicate, the question of admission of females to the University is an abstract question. No female has applied or is expected to apply.1

This was how the Calcutta University Syndicate viewed the question of female education in 1858. Yet, in 1878 the same university permitted women candidates to appear for the B.A. examination. Chandramukhi Basu and Kadambini Basu were the first two lady graduates (1883). Awarding their degree in 1883, the year of the University, Silver Jubilee, the Vice-Chancellor hailed the occasion as the stepping stone to "a general recognition of the right of the women of this country to education....." This right the women could, however, acquire only after a prolonged struggle and that too amidst the Colonial Government's indifferent attitude towards female education.

The early 19th century presented a dismal picture of the state of general education in India, not to speak of female education in particular. A.D. Campbell, the collector of Bellary reported (1823)

"...It cannot have escaped the Government that of nearly a million souls in this district, not 7800 now are at school"2.

Presumably, a similar situation prevailed elsewhere in the British India. Educational progress required an encouragement from the ruling power. But this encouragement was not forthcoming at least in the initial stage.

For the first fifty six years of its rule in India, the East India Company remained unconcerned about the spread of education. There were, of course, exceptions. Warren Hastings had established a Madrasah in Calcutta (1781) for the study and teaching of Muslim law and related subjects. The Bengal Government, on the recommendation of Hastings, assigned lands with an estimated revenue of Rs. 29,000 per annum, for the benefit of the institution3. In 1791, Jonathan Duncan, the Resident at Varanasi established, with Lord

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1 S.N. Mukherjee, History of Education in India p. 136
2 Modern Review, Dec. 1907 pp. 551-52
Cornwallis' support, a Sanskrit College for studying Hindu Law and Philosophy. These institutions were meant to produce well-qualified staff for the courts of justice and constituted one of the early instruments for legitimisation of British rule in India. But there was no proposal or even a remote suggestion of establishing a system of education under Government supervision.

The earliest constitutional attention to education came from the Charter Act of 1813. It laid down

... a sum of not less than one lac of rupees in each year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of the knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in India\(^4\).

This clause was the first enunciation of the principle of state responsibility for education. Lord Hastings reiterated the same principle when he said,

'The government never will be influenced by the erroneous proposition that to spread information among men is to render them less tractable and less submissive to authority'.

Still nothing much was done till 1823 when a Committee of Public Instruction was set up in Bengal. This committee took the initiative in establishing the Calcutta Sanskrit College (1824).

It needs to be noted that the demand for English education in Bengal preceded any Government measures by several years. The necessity for learning English first arose in Bengal because it was in this Presidency that the British rule was first established. In 1800 a school was established in Bhowanipur for teaching English. In 1814 the Magistrate of Chinsura, Mr. Forbes, founded a school for teaching English. The Hindu School began functioning in Calcutta from 1817. The School Book Society, later named The Calcutta School Society, was also established in 1817. Schools were established by the Christian Missionaries. By 1835, when Macaulay's Minute was published, there were 25

English schools in Calcutta itself, not to speak of the many others outside the city.

Macaulay's Minute of 1835 marked the enunciation of the official policy of spending public money for the spread and development of English education among the Indians. Bentinck upheld this policy when he said in his communiqué:

"...the great objective of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education should be employed in English education alone".5

The reasons behind the adoption of such a policy are not far to seek. The Colonial Government had possibly realised that one of the main avenues for cultural colonisation or the imposition of alien values by ideological means rather than by legislation or by force, was education. Mecaulay's Education Despatch essentially sought to create a class of educated Indians who could serve the Raj at middle and lower level of officialdom with absolute loyalty to the British Government. Keeping this end in view they encouraged secondary and higher education while neglecting primary education and regional languages. Hardinge's proclamation of 1844 that for services in public offices, preference should be given to those who were educated in English schools provided added support to the growth of secondary schools. It was believed that education imparted in such schools would be a passport for entering Government services. The Macaulay inspired education system was certainly not congenial for female education. "Women did not make clerks and that is why women's education lagged far behind that of men".6 Thus while men moved out into the world and slowly adopted the western education and the English language, women were left entirely in the dark. No financial help was given to special private schools established for girls. Secular schools for women supported by Government grants-in-aid were opened only in the latter part of the 19th century, specially after the Wood's Despatch of 1854.

Wood's Despatch initiated a period of an all-India education policy.

5 Report of the Estimates Committee 1957-58 p. 1  
6 S. Dutt and S. Sen Gupta, Quinquennial Review of Education in West Bengal p. 1
Between 1854 and 1921 the Governor-General had appointed three important commissions of enquiry – the Hunter Commission (1882), the Indian University Commission (1902) and the Saddler Commission (1917-1919). Besides, two important resolutions on Indian Educational Policy (1904 and 1913) were also adopted during this time. This period (1854-1919) may conveniently be divided into three parts. 1. From Wood’s Despatch to Hunter Commission, 2. from Hunter Commission to Lord Curzon (1882-1904) and 3. from the Swadeshi Movement to Sadler Commission (1904-1919). From 1921 onwards may be discerned a general progress of women’s education in India.

**Women's Education between 1854 and 1882 (Wood's Despatch to Hunter Commission)**

Wood’s Despatch containing the Educational Development Programme (1854) made a special reference to education and employment of women. For the first time the Government thought of direct responsibility for making the women literate.

“.... The importance of female education in India cannot be overrated; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire on the part of many of the natives to give a good education to their daughters”

This was observed by the Wood’s Despatch. It recommended that women’s education should receive frank and cordial support from the government and that grants-in-aid should be given to private girls’ schools. Thus the Despatch ended the policy of non-interference and opened the gates of official encouragement to girls’ education. In spite of this declared policy, not a single institution for training lady teachers was established during this period. This indicated a lingering apathy of the Government towards female education.

Yet, the necessity for educating the girls was perceived by some Governor Generals. Dalhousie had issued an order which observed that,

“.... no single change in the habits of the people is likely to lead to more important beneficial consequences than the introduction of education for female children”

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7 Selection from Educational Records, Part II P 388.
8 Report of the National Committee on Women’s Education p. 16.
In his letter of April 11, 1850 to the Government of Bengal, Lord Dalhousie gave instruction to give all possible encouragement to any disposition shown by the natives to establish female schools. The chief civil officers of mofussils were also directed to promote Indians with all possible means at their disposal to establish girls' schools. Lord and Lady Dalhousie took keen interest in women's education and particularly in Mr. Bethune's school.

"...We believe it is generally known that since Mr. Bethune's death the Governor General has supported entirely at his own cost the native female school which has been about Rs. 700 per mensem."^9

This was the news published in the Hindu Intelligence of February 6, 1854. After the sudden and untimely death of Bethune, Dalhousie personally accepted the charge of the school.

Apart from Dalhousie, a few educational inspectors also undertook special efforts to spread female education. As early as 1857, a number of girls' schools were established in the districts of Mathura, Agra and Mainpuree in U.P. In his capacity as an Inspector of Schools, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar had set up between 1855 and 1858, over 40 girls' schools in Bengal. But the distinction of being the first school for the bhadramahilas in Bengal went to the Barasat Girls' School established in 1847 by the educationist Peary Charan Sarkar and others.\(^{10}\)

Nevertheless, the official effort to spread women's education remained slow and halting.

"The scheme of female education is doubtless unpopular and looked upon by the mass with fear and dread, whether Hindus or Mohammedans."\(^{11}\)

This was written by Mr. J.H. Litter, a member of the Council. It seems that the Colonial Government, for fear of hurting the social customs and beliefs, did not intensify its efforts to spread female education. In 1871 there were only 134 secondary and 1790 primary schools for girls in the whole country\(^{12}\). Despite the Government's hesitant support, an expansion of education among girls may be discerned.

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9 J. Bagal, Women's Education in Eastern India – First Phase P 85
10 Ibid P. 77
11 L. Mishra, Education of Women in India 1921-66 P. 19
12 S.N. Mukherji, History of Education in Eastern India P. 136
It may be pertinent at this stage to assess the state of women's education in India during the period 1854 to 1882 i.e. (from Wood's Despatch to the appointment of the Hunter Commission). In this period we come across both indigenous and western educational institutions for girls. According to an official survey there were in 1882 in Madras only 5480 girls in indigenous primary schools as against 78630 boys. Some girls from higher class families from Bombay were given domestic instruction in reading and writing\textsuperscript{13}. In Bengal, with a few exceptions, girls in general did not attend any school. But the indigenous system of education was slowly but steadily giving way to Western system of education and these indigenous schools disappeared between 1854 and 1900.

While indigenous system of education was allowed to die, Western education, specially for girls, did not expand at the required pace. Statistics demonstrate that in 1881-82 the total number of girls enrolled in primary section was only 1,24,291 or 6 girls for every 100 boys enrolled\textsuperscript{14}. If this was the situation at the primary stage, one can only wonder what the situation at the secondary stage would be. The following table reveals the deplorable state of women's education in 1882.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & % of literacy for women & Enrolment of Girls in & Total & \\
& & Primary Schools & Secondary Schools & College and Other Institutions & \\
\hline
1881-82 & 0.2 & 1,24,291 & 2,054 & 6 & 515 & 127066 & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Education among women in 1882}
\end{table}

(Source: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women p.130)

\textsuperscript{13} Saiyidain, Naik and A. Hussain – Progress of Compulsory Education in India p. 18
\textsuperscript{14} Hansa Mehta Committee Report p. 4
Table 1.2
Number of Institution for girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government Aided</th>
<th>Unaided but inspected</th>
<th>Unaided not inspected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collegiate Schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>6 50</td>
<td>25 2054</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>605 1541</td>
<td>398 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal Schools</td>
<td>4 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>616 1652</td>
<td>423 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: Syed Nurullah and J.P. Naik—A History of Education in India, P. 388

Women's Education between 1882 and 1904

In 1882 itself, a commission under the chairmanship of Sir William Hunter, was appointed by Lord Ripon to review the progress of education. The Hunter Commission Report drew attention to the special and urgent need for the extension and improvement of the elementary education for the masses. It suggested that the Government should give liberal assistance to private girls' schools, award grants to Zenana teachers, prescribe a simple syllabus in girls' primary schools and organise a separate inspectorate for girls' education. For general education, the Report recommended the management of primary schools by the Municipal and District Boards under the supervision of the Government. It also suggested a progressive devolution of primary, secondary and collegiate education upon private enterprise. The result was a steady increase in the number of schools and colleges. Consequently, between 1882 and 1902 girls' education also registered steady quantitative growth. In 1901 the total number of girls going to formal system of education increased to 365413, an increase of more than 187.5 per cent over the 1881-82 figures (or 9.35 per cent annually). But this quantitative progress in education seems insignificant.

15 Literally, Zenana was a Persian word which meant both women and women's apartments. Education given in these apartments came to be known as Zenana system of education.
16 Calculated from the table given in the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India p. 238.
when compared to the country's total female population. Though the number of girls going for formal education had increased, the percentage of literacy among women was only 0.7 in 1901-02\(^{17}\).

The progress of women's education was not uniform throughout the country. The communities which came in close touch with the Colonial Government were the first to be exposed to the western system of education. A survey conducted by Divisional Inspector of Schools for the Committee of Public Instruction in 1870 provides valuable insight into the social background of pupils at the school. It showed that they were all from what the British recognized as the "upper & middle ranks." Of the 76 pupils at Bethune School at that time, 51 were from the "small landholders, higher professional and lower professional" groups\(^{18}\). Wealth played an ambivalent role; while middle class families were generally more favourable to the education of their girls, some of the richer and more aristocratic families remained loyal to the tradition and kept their daughters illiterate\(^{19}\). The girls from Christian, Anglo-Indian, Parsee and upper caste Hindu families were the front-runners in receiving Western education. In 1901-1902, as many as 193 girls passed the matriculation, but 92 of them were Europeans and Anglo-Indians, 20 were Indian Christians and 23 were Parsees. The 169 girl students studying in colleges in 1901-1902 included 102 Europeans and Anglo-Indians, 32 Indian Christians and 16 Parsees. Among the Hindu and Muslim women, education was mostly confined to the primary stage. The census of 1901 shows that only 10 Hindus and 4 Muslims were literate in English for every 10,000 population\(^{20}\).

**Progress of Women's Education – 1904 to 1920**

Curzon's viceroyalty (1898-1905), marks a turning point in the Government's policy towards education. He went a step further than mere encouragement, abandoned the doctrine of non-interference in education and initiated a system of governmental control over education. Curzon's main objective in this pursuit was to increase the political safety of the Raj. He felt that if left uncontrolled, the universities would develop into "nurseries of discontented

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\(^{17}\) Report of the Committee on the Status of Women, p. 238

\(^{18}\) M. Borthwick, the Changing Role of women in Bengal 1849-1905 p. 76

\(^{19}\) Report of the Committee on the status of women in Indian p. 238

\(^{20}\) S.N. Mukherji, History of Education in India p 137
characters and stunted brains. The proclaimed need for guaranteeing superior education for efficient officers and upgrading the standard of college education were the pretexts for Curzon's Universities Act of 1904. This act actually reduced the number of affiliated colleges from 192 in 1902 to 174 within a period of five years. It had put education more completely under the control of the Civil Service. This distrust of the educated class was shared by many British officials as well. On one occasion Sir Auckland Colvin, after being shown in some provincial town a hospital and a school said, pointing to the former, "Everyone who comes out of the building is a friend to the British Government," and then pointing to the other, "and everyone who comes out of the latter.... is an enemy to the British Government." These words indicate a general bureaucratic reservation to the spread of western education.

It was Lord Curzon who took up the cause of primary education, although he had sought to put a brake on the rapid spread of university and college education. The Viceroy found it expedient to shift the emphasis from higher to primary education since the educated class in the city took the leadership in opposing British rule in India. Curzon found in Government controlled school education a possible weapon to combat the spread of middle-class nationalism. Hence, Governmental control over school education was introduced. Curzon said (in the policy Resolution of 1904),

"... irrespective of whether schools were managed by public authority or private persons, whether they received aid or not, the Government was bound, in the interest of the community, to see that education provided in them was sound."

Curzon also advocated the extension of facilities for the training of teachers and provision of hostels for schools and colleges. He endorsed the view that "through female education a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than the education of men." But in spite of this declared policy, female education did not receive its due importance.

21 A Basu; Essays in the History of Indian Education p. 7
22 Modern Review, June 1907, p. 14
23 Ibid p. 14
24 A. Basu, Growth of Education and Political Development in India 1898-1920 p. 160
25 Indian Educational Policy, Calcutta 1904, p. 14 in Y. B. Mathur, Women's Education in India 1813-1966 p. 10
possibly because the demand for it was not so vocal. Curzon sanctioned large recurring and nonrecurring grants for primary education. As this was a period of economic boom (1898-1905), the Central Government had surplus cash in hand and a portion of the additional revenue was allotted to education. Despite this additional expenditure, the share of female education in primary and secondary schools was disproportionately low – a paltry sum of 11 lakhs of rupees against 80 lakhs on boys.

The Government of India Resolution on Educational Policy of India refused to apply the principle of compulsion in primary education (girls would have come under compulsion also) for financial and administrative reasons, but reaffirmed the necessity of utilising the bulk of the available resources on the improvement and expansion of primary education on voluntary basis. It reported that "education of girls remains to be organised" and emphasised the necessity for the increase of women teachers in girls' schools. The policy outlined in the Resolution of 1913 materially helped the progress of female education in the Provinces.

While the Government professed its support for the spread of education, the actual expenditure on it was negligible. Mr. Biss, who was instructed to make "proposals regarding the expenditure of one lakh of rupees that had been set aside in the budget for primary education outside Calcutta" was informed later that out of the money Rs. 50,000 had to be utilised for other purposes. What little was publicly allotted to education imperceptibly disappeared in the face of "other needs and other purposes". Even the Education Committee of the Simon Commission (Hartog Committee 1929) pointed out that the fund allotted to girls' education was only 1/7th of that sum allotted to boys.

Despite the lack of adequate resources, female education registered progress. The Education Department also adopted active steps and devised new plans for spreading women's education. Separate schools for girls were set up, arrangement of conveyance for taking girls to school was made, lady inspectors were appointed, favourable grants were made to private girls' schools and many.

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26 L. Mirsa, Education of Women in India (1921-1966)
27 Indian Educational Policy 1913 p.15, in Y.B. Mathur, Women's Education in India 1813-1966 p. 13
28 Calcutta Review, 1921, p. 190
29 Extract from Lady Hartog's speech in Stri Dharma, May 1936 p. 124
schools run by local bodies were transferred to Government. To encourage girls' education, liberal prizes were offered to them. In 1916 the first medical college, Lady Hardinge College for girls, was set up in Delhi. In 1917, there were 12 arts colleges 4 professional colleges and 166 secondary schools for girls.

Table 1.3
Education of girls and women in Pre-Independence period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrolment of Girls in Percentage of literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>124,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-02</td>
<td>344,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>1186,224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women. P238

As the table shows, between 1881 and 1921 girls' enrolment at the primary stage registered an annual increase of 21.35%. College classes were also started in Bethune College in 1878. Universities also opened their doors to female students. Calcutta University permitted women candidates to appear for the Entrance and B.A. examinations in 1877 and 1878 respectively. Bombay University followed in 1883. By a Syndicate Resolution of June 1883, admission of ladies was permitted in Calcutta Medical College. By 1921-22 primary and secondary schools for girls were established all over the country.

But although educational development of women as a part of the formal system of education in India was initiated under colonial administration, the process suffered from severe limitations and was slow to develop.

Women's Education between 1921 and 1947

The period from 1921 to 1947 witnessed a rapid spread of women's education. It received a special impetus by the Act of 1919 which made education a transferred subject under the direct control of the minister of education in each Province. With respect to primary education, the recognised

30 S.N. Mukherji, History of Education in India p. 194
31 Selection from Educational Records Part II pp. 80-85
policy was to leave the actual administration, as far as possible, in the hands of local bodies such as municipalities and rural councils and even smaller local bodies. Sometimes the Provinces and even municipalities chalked out their separate education policies. The Government adopted many of their recommendations. Thus the Government accepted the Resolution of the Erode Municipal Council, Madras Presidency, that elementary education should be compulsory within the whole of the local area under its jurisdiction for all children of school going age excepting Muhammadan girls. It should be noted here that compulsory primary education meant the inclusion of both boys and girls.

Like municipalities, some of the Provinces also sincerely attempted to help the growth of female education. Between 1927 and 1932, Madras made an additional expenditure of 24 lakhs on girls' education and there was an increase in the number of girls' institutions of over 2000 during those five years32. During 1933-34, the number of girls in educational institutions of Assam rose from 69,282 to 74,458. The Director of Public Instructions stressed the need for funds for the expansion and improvement of education of women33. The growth of female education was noted by Lady Hartog and she remarked in Contemporary Review (1929) that in every school that she visited there was a large proportion of unmarried Hindu girls in the upper classes in which a few years ago the overwhelming majority were Christians.

'It is true that a large percentage of girls still leave school between the age of 12 and 14, but the important and significant change is in the number who stay on to later age34.

It needs to be noted that each Province still spent more on boys' education than on girls'. In 1933-34 the Central Province was spending ten times as much on boys' as on girls' education in its regular budget. Despite this, the number of girls going to school went up by over 100,000 during the period 1921-1947. Yet, education was still mainly confined to the Christins, Brahmans and upper caste Hindus. The Annual Report of Eden High School for Girls (1923) in Dacca

32 Extract from Lady Hartog's speech in Stri Dharma, May 1936, p. 124
33 Ibid, p. 124
34 Ibid, December 1929-Oct. 1930 p. 8
mentioned that on 31st March 1923, there were 485 girls on the rolls. Of these, 24 were Brahmins, 31 Brahmas, 19 Christians, 19 Muhammadans and 392 Hindus of other castes. The Report also reflected the growing demand for education among the girls when it referred to the disappointment of the people who were keen upon educating their girls but whose applications were refused for want of accommodation in all classes.

In Princely States, too, female education received increasing emphasis. Maharani of Travancore advised the sending of Nambudri girls to public schools and urged the necessity of doing away with the purdah system among the Nambudri community. L.F. Rashbrook Williams in his report to the Parliament stated that several Indian States spent a considerable proportion of their income upon education, Baroda leading with a proportion of nearly 11 per cent of the State's gross revenue. A Compulsory Education Act was also introduced in Baroda. Rural Library Movement was being pushed in Mysore. In the early months of 1922 the Nizam issued a firman making primary education free in his territory.

Thanks to all these changes, by 1930 going to school had become almost an accepted part of an urban middle class girl's life. While in 1881-82 the total number of girls enrolled in primary section was only 119,647 (i.e. 6 girls for every 100 boys), in 1921-22 the number of girls enrolled in primary schools increased to 1.9 million (i.e. 23 girls for every 100 boys enrolled). According to the census of 1931 while 15.6 per cent of Indian boys over five were literate, the percentage of literate girls was 2.9.

In 1937, when provincial autonomy was introduced and the Congress assumed office in 7 out of 11 Provinces in British India, it was hoped that great progress would be made in extending education in general and women's education in particular. It was so hoped because the Congress had been advocating female education almost ever since its inception. But all the aspirations were shattered when the Congress resigned on political grounds in 1939. The caretaker Government that came in its place adopted a policy of status quo in all departments and hardly any progress was registered till 1946 when the

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36 Stri Dharma 1929, p. 556
37 Lady Hartog's Speech, in Stri Dharma 1924, p. 557
38 H. Mehta Committee Report p. 4
39 Stri Dharma, May 1936
Congress returned to power.

At this juncture, it may be logical to assess the progress of women's education till 1946 both in absolute term and with relation to boys' education. The following Table shows the growth of women's education during the period 1881-82 to 1946-47. Table 1.5 gives a comparative study between the education of boys and girls.

### Table 1.4
**Education of girls and women in pre-independence period.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% of literacy for Women</th>
<th>Primary Schools</th>
<th>Secondary Schools</th>
<th>Colleges &amp; University</th>
<th>Other institution</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881-82</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>124,291</td>
<td>2,054</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>127,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-02</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>344,712</td>
<td>9,075</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>2370</td>
<td>365,413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1186,224</td>
<td>26,163</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>10,836</td>
<td>1224,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3475,165</td>
<td>602,280*</td>
<td>23,207</td>
<td>56,090</td>
<td>4156,742</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This includes 3,31503 girls enrolled in middle schools.


### Table 1.5
**Number of Pupils by sex in all Institutions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>69,62,928</td>
<td>14,24,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>93,15,144</td>
<td>18,42,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1,02,73,888</td>
<td>24,92,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1,10,07,688</td>
<td>31,38,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>1,22,66,311</td>
<td>37,86,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>1,39,48,979</td>
<td>42,97,785</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.6
Number of institutions of girls – all types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>23,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>27,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>33,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>33,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>34,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>28,196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Several trends emerge from the above tables. Table 1.4 shows that between 1881-82 and 1946-47 girls' enrolment increased by 317.1 per cent or 48.8 percent annually. In 1901-02 it registered a growth of 9.35 per cent annually over the enrolment in 1881-82. In 1921-22 the enrolment increased by 11.5 percent over the 1901-02 enrolment of girls in all levels of education. In 1946-47 girls' enrolment increased only by 9.56 per cent annually over 1921-22 enrolment. It is obvious that women's education did not progress uniformly throughout the entire period. Clearly the rate of growth of female education was the highest between 1901 and 1921.

Table 1.5 shows that girls' education lagged far behind that of boys. While we notice that the percentage increase in education is much more in the case of girls than in the case of boys (8 per cent against 4 per cent), we cannot overlook the fact that the total enrolment of boys exceeded by far the total enrolment of girls.

Table 1.6 shows that the percentage increase in the number of institutions for girls was proportionately less than the percentage increase in the enrolment of girls.

The closing of inefficient and ineffective institutions, specially at the primary level, caused a decline in the number of institutions for girls. But as Table 1.5 indicates, that decline did not imply a consequent decrease in the number of enrolment of girls in all institutions. More girls were studying in co-educational
institutions then they had ever done before.

These coeducational institutions, however, were less popular in the rural areas. Superstitions and societal norms restricted the girls from joining such institutions. As a result, female education did not progress well primarily due to lack of girls' schools in those regions. The Hartog Committee (1929) had pointed out that a great disparity existed in the figures showing school-going boys and girls, that the primary education of girls in rural areas was quite inefficient and limited in scope and that the provision for secondary education for girls was quite inadequate. In fact the education policy of the Colonial Government retarded the uniform progress of education in our country. While some educational provision was made for towns and cities the villages had very inefficient type of schools or none at all. This neglect of rural education implied the neglect of mass education as well because in India 87 per cent of the people live in villages. The ideal of universal education was never pushed through with a will and determination expected from national government. Yet the government's initial attitude of apathy and non-interference changed over the years into a policy of encouragement and support, probably to meet the social requirements of the men, the vocal demand of the women and the developing parental inclinations to send their daughters to schools.\textsuperscript{FN}

1.2 Non-governmental enterprise

A study of the development of women's education remains incomplete unless we take into consideration several other factors which contributed to its growth. In British India, apart from the Colonial Government, there were several other channels of female education – the Christian Missionaries, the philanthropic foreigners who took interest in women's education, the Indian social reformers and national leaders. Several women's organisations also sought to create an awareness of the necessity of female education.

Missionaries came to India with a proselytising mission, a fact admitted by the Court of Directors itself in its Despatch of 1659. These Missionaries thought

\textsuperscript{FN} Starting from no education at the advent of British rule, i.e. almost 0\% of the total enrolment under formal system, the enrolment of women increased to nearly 25\% of the total enrolment when India attained freedom.
that their mission would be more successful through education. Education was an important channel through which they could influence pupils, particularly women and thereby convert them to Christianity. In fact they hoped that by converting a woman, her entire family could be converted. Missionaries belonging to the Church Missionary Society and Scottish Mission established schools for girls. In 1823, the Church of English Missionary Society alone ran 20 girls' schools with almost 400 pupils in Calcutta and its neighbourhood. The Missionaries also established orphanages and boarding establishments where formal as well as some kind of vocational education was imparted. Domestic or zenana system of education meant for women belonging to the higher caste families, was also encouraged by them. The zenana education was not freely available to the less well off girls and was therefore compatible with the preservation of the higher status. It was assumed that most of the 1,327 women receiving Zenana education in Calcutta were from the upper and middle ranks, but substantiating evidence was unobtainable because of "alleged unwillingness on the part of the ladies receiving instuction to speak of the occupation of their husbands"\textsuperscript{40}. The Missionaries also encouraged young men to have educated wives and thus helped the progress of female education. It should be noted that most of the missionary schools were attended only by girls from the lower classes. The girls from upper classes were brought under the purview of schools primarily through the efforts of social reformers and foreign philanthrope.

David Hare, Bethune, Margarat Cousins, Mary Carpenter and Annie Besant were among the foreigners who helped women's education. In 1820 David Hare established a girls' school in Calcutta and ran it at his own expense. Bethune who also started a school in Calcutta was very much impressed by the intelligence of the girl students whose talent for study "surpassed those European girls of the same age"\textsuperscript{41}. Annie Besant who entered politics in 1914 emphasised the need to abolish child marriage and demanded for every woman the opportunity to educate herself. If child marriage was abolished, education would naturally spread among the unmarried girls.

The demand for women's education was a concomitant of social reform movement. The social reformers, viewing women as an integral part of the

\textsuperscript{40} Borthwick; The changing Role of Women in Bengal (1848-1905) p.76
\textsuperscript{41} Bethune's letter to Dalhousie dated 29th October in 1850 in Y. B. Mathur, Women's Education in India 1813-1966, p. 21
society, propagated the cause of their education within the traditional role in society. Women's education did not mean greater freedom of behaviour nor did it override a woman's primary duty to her husband. It was assumed that women would only be interested in education to enhance their wife-mother role. The slogan of Indian leaders and social reformers came to be—"educating a girl means educating a family." Women's education progressed due to the constant efforts of social reformers like M.G. Ranade, Dayanand Saraswati, Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen, Mahatma Phule, Vivekananda and Maharsi Karve. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar was one of the earliest reformers to take up the cause of women's education. He established 36 schools for girls. D.K. Karve founded a separate university for women (S.N.D.T. University) in 1916. Women's education, according to these reformers, was the crucial channel through which social evils could gradually be eradicated.

Reformist and revivalist sects like the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj made intensive efforts to promote education for the girls. Voluntary welfare organisations like Seva Sadan Society, Dev Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Khalsa Diwan did valuable work in creating favourable public opinion.

The social reform movements introduced significant social changes which too helped the cause of female education. Sati was abolished (1829), widow remarriage was legalised (1854), the Special Marriage Act was passed (1872) and the Sarda Act raised the age of marriage. The age of consent was first fixed at 10 and then raised to 12 in 1891. With the rising age of marriage, decline of the purdah and the growing need of the women to take up careers, the demand for women's education also increased. The fact that educated men came to prefer educated girls as brides further reinforced the concept of female education. These men were exposed to the British idea of a wife as a partner to her husband in social life. With a new set of values, these educated men found the uneducated women in the traditional set up unacceptable as brides. The parents were, consequently, motivated to send their daughters to school with the idea of fixing better marriages for them. The prejudice against female education was gradually but surely breaking down. More and more girls were being enrolled to schools.

42 K. Ahmed, Women's Education in India 1921-81 in Studies in Educational Reform in India Vo. III p. 4
43 Ibid p. 6
Another major impetus to women's education came from the nationalist movement. The nationalist leaders propagated equality of sexes and encouraged female education. This they did to secure women's participation in the national struggle and thus strengthen it. Sarojini Naidu's speech at Kanya Mahavidyalaya amply demonstrated this motive.

'It is in the comradeship of sexes that future India shall come out, men and women working hand in hand and supplementing each other'.

Gokhale made a very sincere effort to persuade the Government to introduce legislation making primary education compulsory. At a later stage the Bombay Primary Education Act was passed (1918). With the beginning of Swadeshi Movement in 1905, the concept of national education emerged. While the national leaders demanded a new system of education which satisfied the requirements of the Indians, they also advocated female education as an integral part of the new scheme. In order to build a mass movement the slogan of freedom had to be extended to the women. Gandhi said,

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

He founded Kasturba National Trust to train women workers in the rural areas. The mass awakening during the freedom movement and the role that women played in the struggle had a great impact on women's education and it began to increase at a much faster pace. In 1854 the total number of girls in the formal system was only 1,97,000 but by 1921-22 the number had increased to 12,24,128. It is worth noting that the nationalist leaders attempted to resolve 'the women's questions' in complete accordance with its preferred goals. This movement, primarily led by men, did not attack the prevalent patriarchal system in any way. Rather the attempt was to improve the condition of women within the framework of patriarchy. The 19th century reformers wished to give some importance to women without, at any time, challenging the position and power enjoyed by men within a male dominated society. It may be noted here that

44 Sarojini Naidu's speech in Kenya Maha Vidyalaya 1918 in Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu.
45 Report of the Committee on the Status of Women p. 238
even Gandhi's support to women's movement was not directed against the patriarchal system. He only wanted to strengthen the national movement for Swaraj.

While the national leaders demanded female education, several enlightened women and social workers also voiced the need for further educational opportunities for girls. Sarala Ray, Lady Abala Bose and Sarala Devi Choudhurani in Bengal, Vidyagouri Nilkanth, Sarada Ben Mehta and Begum Hamid Ali of Gujarat, Begum mother of Bhopal, Sister Subbalakshmi and Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy of Madras were actively associated with educational and social work. Women's voluntary organisations like the Women's Indian Association and the All India Women's Conference contributed enormously not only to the social uplift of women but also to the spread of education among girls and women. The All India Women's Conference under leaders like Margaret Cousins, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur demanded universal compulsory primary education for all children irrespective of sex. They sought special hostels for girl students and incentives for women teachers. Several middle schools and even secondary schools for girls were also started by these voluntary organisations. It may be relevant to point out here that an awareness of their rights was lacking in women in the 19th century who were, by and large, at the receiving end of male patronage. But around the time of World War I we find that women's movement was led by women who attempted to put forward women's points of view. A delegation of Indian women led by Sarojini Naidu met the Minister for India, Edwin Montagu in November 1917. The delegation expressed its support for Swarajya as demanded by the Congress, Muslim League and the non-official members of the Council. But at the same time, they also asked for compulsory free education for boys and girls, training for women teachers, medical colleges for women and improved health care facilities for women and children. The women's delegation was constrained to raise all these issues separately because the national leadership had failed to do so. Yet, even these leaders of women's movement did not really challenge the traditional concept about the role of a woman in the family and society. Education was meant to inculcate in women the virtues – the typically bourgeois virtues, characteristic of the new social forms of orderliness, thrift, cleanliness, the practical skills of literacy, accounting and hygiene and the ability to run the household according to the new economic conditions within the framework of
socially approved male and female conduct. Most women appreciated the value of education without relinquishing their domestic role. Radharant Lahiri, trained as a teacher from the Native Ladies' normal school wrote:

> Helping others is a woman's ornament, and religion her life 
> - taking these two sayings to heart a women could be educated and nothing other than good will result from it⁴⁷.

Nevertheless, due to Government and non-Government measures there was indeed a significant growth of female education in British India. Thus while in 1881-82 only 124345 girls were enrolled in primary and secondary schools, in 1946-47 4077445 girls were enrolled in such schools. Needless to say, female education till 1947 was mainly confined to the urban middle class without much of a rural participation. Nevertheless, this should not make us ignore the growing urge of upper class women themselves to gain education, under the changed economic situation, specially after the outbreak of the two World Wars.

1.3 Co-education and Curriculum

In the early 19th century, when the initial attempts to bring girls into school were being made, the public generally demanded separate schools for girls even at the primary stage. In view of the popular prejudice against co-education, separate girls' schools were started wherever possible. But the number of women teachers was so limited that only a few separate schools for girls staffed by women teachers could be opened. Consequently, most of these girls' schools had to be placed in charge of male teachers. That too was not favoured by conservative parents who refused to send their daughters to such schools. Though in Bengal and several other States where Missionary activities were strong, separate schools were founded, such institutions were very few in other States. Hence the girls either attended boys' schools as in Madras and Bombay or did not go to school at all as in Punjab, Bihar and North Western Frontier Province.

The speedy progress of girls' education particularly after 1921 necessitated the growth of co-educational system at the primary stage. This concept was a

devise to get girls at school without the expense of setting up separate schools for them. By 1935 co-education in primary schools became an accepted notion. In the year 1934-35 alone there was an increase of nearly 40,000 girls in boys' schools in Madras only. In Assam, the enrolment of girls in boys' schools was higher than their enrolment in girls' schools. In U.P. and Bihar a large increase was reported in the number of girls reading in boys' schools. Reports from Sind revealed that even Muslim girls were sent to boys' schools where there was no separate school for girls. It is obvious that regional variations with regard to enrolment of girls in boys' schools was there. The following table demonstrates the variations.

Table 1.7
Percentage of girl students enrolled in boys' schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>1922</th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1937</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>36.00</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWFP</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British India</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table shows that between 1922 and 1937 Madras had the highest and N.W.F.P. and Punjab the lowest percentage of girls studying in boys' schools. One of the possible reasons for this may be that the efforts of the Christian Missionaries working in Madras, generated a demand for female education. In the absence of separate schools, girls began studying in co-educational institutions. The absence of purdah system in Madras facilitated the process as well. The low percentage of girls attending co-educational institution in Bengal may be due to the existence of a large number of girls' schools in the Province. Almost half of the girls' primary schools were set up in Bengal. The popularity
of boys' schools even for the girls at the primary level may partly be attributed to the belief that better education was imparted in boys' schools than that in the girls'.

The acceptance of co-education at the primary level did not deter the growth of the demand for separate schools for girls at the middle and secondary stages. But the few middle and secondary schools for girls that existed in the country were mostly located in cities, towns and bigger villages where the demand for girls' education was stronger. The girls in other localities had no other option but to join the boys' schools. The only alternative to co-education was no education at all. The increasing number of girls joining boys' schools even at the middle and secondary stages did not reflect the growing popularity of co-education. It highlighted the inadequacy of girls' schools at these levels. Taking the country as a whole and all the institutions together, the percentage of girls attending co-educational institutions was on the increase during the period 1921 to 1947.

Closely connected with female education was the question of an appropriate curriculum. It is accepted by all educationist that the educational needs of all the children irrespective of their sex are the same at the primary stage. So the same curriculum could be followed at the primary stage both for boys and girls. The question of differentiated curriculum could be related only to education at the secondary level. The curriculum for girls, needless to say, is determined by the role a woman is expected to play at home and in the society. Women in the 19th century, were expected primarily to be good wives and mothers. School education was required to equip them with relevant knowledge to fulfil their societal and familial obligations. It was believed that besides academic courses, the curriculum must also include such subjects as would prepare a girl for the role she would be called upon to play in adult life. Even a national leader like Tilak said:

... start with founding a high school for girls and it would soon lead to women running away from home...
Speaking on the role of women and their education Gandhi had announced:

...she must have special knowledge of the management of home, care of children, their education etc.\(^{48}\)

Women themselves appreciated the value of education without relinquishing their domestic role. Among women, knowledge could not serve as means for external advancement because there was no place for them in the public domain. It is doubtful if, excepting a few, they even aspired for one. A practical knowledge of domestic subjects and laws of health, which would enable a women to be a more competent wife and mother, were to be included in the curriculum for girls.

"The importance of fitting a few highly gifted girls to enter the profession is much less than fitting the average girl to be a good wife or mother."\(^{49}\)

Even educated women social workers did not conceive of any other role for a woman beyond her predetermined societal role. Sarala Ray said:

...The girls' schools' curriculum should be entirely different to those of boys. If education has any value for a girl it must make her more fit for her household work and daily life...\(^{50}\)

Women's Indian Association voiced the same opinion while chalk ing out the role of women in society:

...and their duties will for the majority of them be those of housewife and mother...\(^{51}\)

It was assumed that boys were educated to get jobs but women needed no career. Since the purpose of education was different for boys and girls, the curriculum should also be differentiated. It may be noted here that even the women leaders did not put any serious thought to careers for women. Hence, arose the demand for differentiated curriculum.

These arguments received official support and shaped the Government's

\(^{48}\) Gandhi's speech at the second annual conference of the Bombay Bhagini samaj in True Education p. 165.
\(^{49}\) Presidential address of the Junior Rani of Travancore at Women's Educational Conference in Stri Dharma Dec. 1927 p. 21
\(^{50}\) Sarala Ray on Female Education in Sarala Ray Centenary volume
\(^{51}\) Presidential speech of Zamidami Kumaraman Salam, in Stri Dharma 1928-29
policy towards women's education. No special thought was given to girls’ career. Only teaching, nursing and medicine were the fields where women were acceptable. Starting with the Hunter Commission (1882) most of the Government committees on education accepted the validity of these arguments. Home / Domestic Science, needle work and fine arts came to be regarded as exclusively girls’ subjects in school. Mathematics and Science were considered too difficult and unnecessary for girls and were kept as optional subjects for them. A lower attainment standard was also prescribed in subjects like History and Geography. Consequently, majority of the girls' schools did not provide these subjects at higher levels. Most of the girls studying at middle school and higher school stages opted for the differentiated curriculum partly under compulsion and partly by choice. Yet, there is evidence to show that the essential capacity for learning is the same between the two sexes. Lack of interest of some girls in a particular subject does not mean that the same subject should be eliminated or the curriculum should be differentiated.

But this differentiated curriculum could not possibly be offered to all the girls on account of the co-educational system of education. In the boys’ schools the subjects meant for girls could not be introduced. So the girls attending boys' schools could not opt for differentiated curriculum. Besides, the Second World War and the partition forced the women to seek employment to rehabilitate themselves and their families. In order to compete with the boys on equal footing a common curriculum was required. Hence, the old differentiated curriculum slowly gave way to a common and uniform curriculum for both boys and girls.

Thus arose the demand not for differentiated curriculum but diversified curriculum at the secondary school stage. The Sargent Committee (1944) appears to be the first one that made some attempt to solve the educational problems of the country in relation to its needs. It stated that a diversified system of secondary education which would meet the interests and capabilities of all the children irrespective of sex needed to be formulated. Education should be related to individual aptitudes and interests and the question of differentiated curriculum on the basis of sex was irrelevant.

This opinion was accepted by the independent Indian Government. The institutionally differentiated curriculum was abolished. A new diversified
curriculum on the basis of capabilities was to be introduced. Yet, certain subjects were exclusively reserved for the males. This indicates the persistence of the dictum of 'differential education'.

To sum up, one may as well say that the Colonial Government while paying lot of lip services to the cause of spreading women's education, did little to accord it any kind of priority. Governor Generals like Dalhousie and Curzon only knew it too well that the single largest factor to improve the whole gamut of social backwardness was to educate the womenfolk at the grass roots. They said it in as many words. But then the British bureaucracy had its other overriding priorities. One such need was to have a cadre of local clerks and women did not make a clerk at that point of time. To this was added the gender bias of the male dominated Indian society at large. Women's education therefore lagged far behind that of men almost by generations. This huge gap between the two was never meant to be bridged, despite the natural growth in women's education from year to year. The seedling of women's education almost grew on its own occasionally sprinkled with benedictions from the Government constituted committees as well as private individuals, local municipal bodies and missionary support. As it slowly grew up to be a tree, its roots spread haltingly, but surely. Lack of basic infrastructures was partly compensated by co-educational institutions. The process, however, by and large, remained dominant in urban areas and also varied in its penetration levels from Province to Province for historical reasons (exposure to western ideas, social reform movements etc.). Thus the picture of imbalance was not only confined to the gender ratio of school going children but also encompassed the urban-rural divide and provincial differences in terms of the spread of women's education concept. This, then, was the legacy left by the Colonial Government when India won her freedom. Even in the half-way mark of the 20th century, the base of education in general and the women's education in particular was very narrow for any meaningful reform to take off.