CHAPTER 2
Tilak's Critique of Women's Emancipation and Women's Education

Tilak's entry into the intellectual arena of Poona in 1881 was unprecedented. Tilak with a sound background in English education and an absolute belief in the greatness of Brahmanical Hinduism along with a control of two newspapers, he was in a position to take on the reformers with logic and reason. Before Tilak, Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar had begun the task of attacking the reformers and defending Brahmanism in all its glory. Chiplunkar's attack was primarily aimed at Lokhitwadi G.H. Deshmukh's Shatpatre which had begun a scathing attack on the various shortcomings of Brahmanism like child marriage, conditions of the widows, hallowness of traditional learning, rigid caste differences, denial of education to women and shudras and untouchability. Lokhitwadi considered the nineteenth century Brahmin priests as unholy as they repeated things without understanding their meaning, questioned the Brahmin exclusive education and argued that all men were equal and everybody had a right to acquire knowledge. He severely criticised the position of women within the Brahmanical religion. He called the Brahmans the killers and butchers of their daughters and suggested that if the Hindu Shastras did not support widow remarriage, they should be replaced by new laws and asked his contemporaries to make a critical study of the Hindu scriptures. His call for reason and pragmatism created an

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3 ibid, p.102.
entire generation of Chitpavan middle-class English educated youth, which accepted the role of reformers and became the leading advocates of social reformation.

The task before Chiplunkar and Tilak was to end Lokhitwadi's influence on the younger generation. Chiplunkar published Nibandmala, a string of essays, criticising Lokhitwadi's social reform doctrines. Chiplunkar stated that the degeneration of Indian life was a direct result of foreign rule, which repudiated Lokhitwadi's contention that the deterioration in the status of women and the Shudras was due to the intellectual monopoly of Brahmins. Chiplunkar criticised the "juvenile essays of the Lokhitwadi" because "he was afraid that youths of his time, fresh from the college, would worship Lokhitwadi." Chiplunkar had taken over the responsibility of containing the social reformist ideas of an individual i.e. Lokhitwadi, and Tilak took over the task of eliminating the influence of Prarthana Samaj.

The Prarthana Samaj started by Atmaram Pandurang pioneered the social reform movement in Western India. As the first generation English educated youth, the Samajists began the task of self-interrogation. They realized that the treatment of women by the Hindu society was far from being satisfactory. They were awakened to the fact that the existence of a large number of widows, among whom a number of them child widow's, represented the inhuman face of Hindu religion. Hence their first effort was towards the encouragement of widow remarriage. They began to refer and quote the scriptures supporting the claim that the scriptures did not oppose

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the widow re-marriage. The first widow re-marriage took place in 1869\(^8\) which was attended by Lokhitwadi, M.G. Ranade and Vishnu Shastri Pandit, as a result they had to face severe criticism, from the orthodox anti-reformers and were threatened with excommunication from the caste. The social pressure on the reformers was so great that even an uncompromising reformer like Lokhitwadi had to publicly undergo penance. The efforts in favour of Widow remarriage brought out the strengths and the weaknesses of both the reformers and the anti-reformers. The reformers were still living within the joint family structures and social boycott and expulsion from the caste could hurt them individually and personally. Lokhitwadi's daughter's mother-in-law threatened to send his daughter back if he did not undergo penance.\(^9\) This made them realise that the radical reform, though urgently needed, had to come about gradually and without radical breaks with the past.\(^10\) The reformers began now to concentrate on imparting education to women.

The Christian missionaries made the earliest efforts in the direction of women's education. The American Mission Society opened the first girls' school in 1824. By 1828 the Mission had nine schools with four hundred pupils. The Church Missionary Society was another mission, which undertook the work of girl's education. These two societies established schools at Bombay, Ahmadnagar, Nasik and Thana. Between 1840 and 1845 the Scottish Mission established schools for girls in Poona. Primarily these schools were meant for converts and attracted a negligible part of the non-Christian population.\(^11\)

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\(^8\) ibid, p.3.
\(^10\) ibid, p.108.
Jotirao Phule was the first Maharashtrian intellectual to emphasise the importance of educating women. Phule started a school for girls in 1848 and undertook the task of teaching there. He opened two more schools in 1851-52. The difficulty in obtaining teachers for his school encouraged him to teach his wife Savitri Bai. She began to teach in these schools as a result she had to face intense hostility of the orthodox people. Phule had the most radical ideas on educating women. He considered that women had been kept unenlightened by men in order to preserve their own superiority. He considered that if a holy woman had written any scripture, then men would not have been able to ignore the due rights of women and they would not also have waxed so eloquent about their own rights. If women were learned enough, then men would never have been able to be so partial and deceitful. His efforts at educating women had limited success as children of Brahmin and other upper caste families did not enter these schools. The government also made a halfhearted effort to open schools for girls. The children attending those schools were mere infants studying mostly upto primary A and B standards. Parents were reluctant to send teenaged girls to schools taught by male teachers. This held back the spread of secondary education among the girls. Lokhitwadi and Ranade were the first to address the problem of educating women among the upper castes. They approached Mary Carpenter, a leading educationalist from England, who had been involved

14 C H Heimsath, (1964) p.103.
for some time establishing teacher’s training schools in Bengal\textsuperscript{16} to establish the first primary teacher's training college for women in Poona in 1870. Inspite of these efforts the growth of women's education was slow. By 1882, there was only one secondary school for girls in Poona.\textsuperscript{17} The reformers realised that basic hindrance to women's education was the institution of child marriage. Children as young as one year were married, though the most favoured age for marriage was between eight to ten years.\textsuperscript{18} They began to advocate a rise in the marriageable age of girls and argued that early marriage not only prevented girls from acquiring education, but the early cohabitation which was a direct result of child marriage was injurious to the child bride and would also result in producing weak progeny. The reformers forcefully argued that women as individuals were entitled to the normal span of childhood protected against physical coercion. This new perspective, although confined within the overall patriarchal framework and limited in its scope, was significant in mitigating the harshness of patriarchal subjugation.\textsuperscript{19}

Tilak's understanding of the question of child marriage differed from that of the reformers. Tilak's patriarchal mind refused to accept the reformers argument that early motherhood ruined the health of both the mother and the child and the existence of large number of child widows

\textsuperscript{16} An Article in Bengalee dated Dec. 22, 1866 in Mannmathnath Ghosh (ed.) \textit{Selections from the writings of Girish Chunder Ghosh} (Calcutta, 1912), pp.656-658.

\textsuperscript{17} Bengal Presidency was more advanced regarding women's education. By 1881-82, there were 41,349 girls in schools and 1,051 in Secondary Schools one of which Bethune had a College department with 6 girl students. Barbara Southard "Bengal Women's Education League: Pressure Group and Professional Associations". \textit{Modern Asian Studies} 18,1 (1984), p.34.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Mahratta}, Aug. 24, 1884, p.1.

\textsuperscript{19} Meera Kosambi, "Child Brides and Child Mothers: The Age of Consent Controversy in Maharashtra as a Conflict of Perspective on Women" in Anne Feldhaus (Ed) \textit{Status of Women in Maharashtrian Society} (1998), pp. 136, 149.
was the direct result of child marriage.\textsuperscript{20} Tilak argued that raising the marriageable age of girls was hardly an issue concerning women, it was more to do with "young boys (as it was they) who had to discontinue education to take up the responsibility at an early age". This had made men "physically weak" which resulted in the lack of "the spirit of enterprise and working out new modes of industry". This denied the society its possible strong leadership and the national regeneration was possible if the young men were to devote time and energy towards the nation building.\textsuperscript{21} Tilak supported the issue of raising the marriageable age of girls but remained silent on the issue raised by the reformers that the additional years secured in a girl's life by raising the age of marriage could be used for educating her. So in the initial stages, this tactical support provided by Tilak continued the atmosphere of healthy debate and discussion in the elite circles of Poona.

The year 1884 changed this healthy atmosphere into an atmosphere of intense hostility. Two incidents were responsible. Firstly, Ranade and other reformers founded the Huzur Paga school, a girls high school, in July 1884. It was instantly attacked by the anti-reformers, who saw it as a threat to traditional Hindu values.\textsuperscript{22} Secondly, in August 1884 B.M. Malabari, a Parsi reformer published his notes on infant marriage and enforced widowhood, in which he appealed very effectively to the public conscience that the condition of child wives and child widows was inhuman. Malabari argued that the Hindu Shastras did not support child marriages and


\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Mahratta}, May 29, 1881, p.1, The Evils of Child Marriage.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Mahratta Aug.} 17. 1884, p.1, High School for Native Girls.
perpetual widowhood. This started a public debate and reformers and anti-reformers began to write extensively on subjects like Shastric injunctions in matters related to marriage and widowhood and actual age of the consummation of marriage. He proposed for legislation to raise the age of marriage for girls and asked the government to assure all widows of their right to remarry. Malabari suggested firstly, that no Hindu girl who has lost her husband or her betrothed, if she is a minor shall be condemned to life long widowhood against her will. Secondly, arrangements should be made to ascertain whether a widow has adopted perpetual seclusion voluntarily or whether it has been forced upon her. Thirdly, every widow of whatever the age should have the right to complain to the authorities. Fourthly, the priest should have no right to excommunicate the relations and the families. He also proposed that the universities should refuse to admit married boys. The reformers who till now were trying ways to avoid a direct conflict with the orthodoxy, began to support Malabari's efforts for securing legislative action. The publication of Malabari's Notes had a tremendous impact like a volcanic eruption as the orthodoxy of various denominations, who came together as a monolithic obstruction for change, a unity which Tilak had been trying to bring about for sometime. At this stage Tilak was clear and original in his attack on imparting English education to girls whereas his anti-Malabari hence anti-consent attack was entirely borrowed from the writings of Rajendralal Mitra. When Malabari's Notes were published Tilak welcomed it.

27 Telang K.T. A Memoir, (Bombay, 1951) p.78.
Now we have no hesitation to say that to Infant marriage and enforced widowhood, many of the evils, which we suffer from, may be attributed. Infant marriage has done incalculable harm to us and it behoves us all to exert all our energies to do away with it.²⁹

However, Tilak opposed legislative action by stating that the "foreign government should never be entrusted with such a delicate task", but was willing to discuss with the reformers the ways and means of implementing a raise in the marriageable age of girls. But within a week, Tilak turned entirely hostile to the proposals. The clue to this change is available in the reply given to a letter to the editor by an anti-reformist writer. The letter opposed imparting English education to girls and argued that it amounted to loss of nationality. Tilak agreed with the writer and stated that he had discussions with the managing committee of the female high school and suggested that English would be at best an obligatory subject and not compulsory one. Tilak hoped that the managing committee would give due consideration to this question.³⁰ The committee consisting of Ranade, Gokhale, Agarkar and other reformers who were also deeply involved in supporting Malabari's proposal refused to accept Tilak's proposals. Tilak immediately turned hostile to both Malabari's proposal and the Girls High School. This brought about a change in the contents, the tone and character of the articles in the *Mahratta*. Henceforth the editorials, the articles, the letter to the editor and notes from the correspondents contained predominantly anti-reformist's point of view and demolished the reformers point of view with an equal amount of scholarship and sarcasm.

The question of infant marriage and enforced widowhood and imparting


³⁰ *Mahratta*, Aug. 24, 1884, p.3.
English education to girls were discussed simultaneously sometimes in the same articles and sometimes on the same page.

Reactions in *Maharatta* against the proposals of Malabari were diversified but vehemently critical. It argued that Malabari being a Parsi could not understand the Hindu Society and in fact had "created wrong impressions on the minds of the readers, and made Hindus appear as very backward people." *Maharatta* argued that "there were only eight percent of boys and twenty eight percent of girls married under the age of fifteen. So it was a trivial issue". *Maharatta* also argued "that anyone intending to reform Hindu society has to be a Hindu in order to understand the intricacies of the matter". *Maharatta* attempted to convince the reformers that with the spread of education, the custom would automatically disappear. Statistics were drawn from the 1880 census reports to prove that there were less number of child brides and child widows than claimed by the reformers, so Tilak declared that "the very thought of seeking government help was revolting to a reasonable mind".

As a counter attack on Malabari's proposal for legislative action, Tilak published a front-page article titled "some further considerations on Mr. Malabari's notes". The article quoted extensively from an article by Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitra in the Hindu Patriot of Calcutta. Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitra argued that,

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the enforced widowhood is in a way, nature's, own way of balancing the disparity in numbers of women and men... some men would remain single and some husbands earlier were able and willing to accommodate the spare stock of maids left in the society. Since the ability and willingness to marry a plurality of wives is dwindling... the inevitable result is that some women should remain single. Every widow married takes away a husband from a maid, hence the more number of widows we re-marry we render it more difficult for maids to find husbands... single women, whether maids or widows can not but be unchaste and the question was which of them was preferable. Since there is already severe social restriction on widows it is easier to control their 'natural desire'. If widow marriages are encouraged more and more maids would become unchaste. So it is wrong to force reforms upon such a society, which it would afterwards see reasons to discard.

He argued that the stress on social reform was mainly by the people "who had been educated in a manner which was thoroughly opposed to their home influences". Hence "all foreign element be weeded away from education". Efforts were to be made to make "their hearts thoroughly Hindu." Only then, the reforms were welcome.

According to the writers in *Mahratta* raising the marriageable age of girls was not an issue of immediate importance but "raising ourselves politically" was an issue of immense importance. They refused to be identified with the orthodox Hindus and called themselves nationalists who had immense pride in their nation. The anti-reformers opposed the reformers because,

the latter raised the question of the interest of the minor, the degeneration of the society, the determination of valid texts, the history and the antiquity of the present social customs.

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36 *Mahratta*, Sept. 21, 1884, p.2.
38 *Mahratta*, Sept. 21, 1884, p.2.
Tilak considered them as different ways of appealing to the common people according to their susceptibilities, though the society was not ready for it. Tilak instead suggested that the marriageable age for boys should be raised to eighteen years.³⁹ Countering the reformer's contention that the majority could be persuaded to accept the reforms, Tilak stated that,

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\text{it is our firm conviction that a precedent of legal interference... will pave the way for others. The success of the present agitators is sure to rouse into action others of the same or perhaps more sanguine temper.}^{40}
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Tilak argued that,

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\text{in the times of Ashvalayan and Manu, when the nation was living and all our social institutions had in them the freshness and the vigour of life... the rishis used animal food without any objection; they did not worship idols; they drank soma freely and so on. But would the reformers be willing to seek legislation to revive all these?}^{41}
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Tilak argued that various arguments to convince the people were mere garbs under which the reform was to be presented to the ignorant and unthinking masses and called it hypocrisy. Tilak considered that the very thought of coercing a community to accept reform was absurd. This effort was undignified and even mean.⁴² The reformers were using various means to force the society as though the salvation of the entire Hindu race depended upon this reform.⁴³ The articles in Mahratta often began by stating that they felt for the girls⁴⁴ and they were certainly not against

⁴¹ Mahratta, Dec. 21, 1884, p.1 Early Marriage Controversy at Poona III.
⁴² ibid.
⁴³ Mahratta, Oct. 26, 1890.
⁴⁴ Mahratta Oct. 12, 1890, p.2.
reforms. These articles often ended with violent attacks on the reformers particularly on the *Prarthana Samaj* for “producing Mushroom reformers” and “perverting the Shastras and using the questionable means” to impose the reforms on the society.

In the early stages of the anti-reform movement, attacks were less personal and individual and more on the reformers as a group. The reformers were better educated, well connected and economically independent. Some like M.G. Ranade and K.T. Telang were in influential government positions, hence they were closer to power centers. As a result they could always find priests and others to help them in religious functions when required. So social boycott did not mean much, on the contrary the anti-reformers were relatively less educated, hence less closer to power centers with their influences limited to their respective localities. Hence the attacks were not on the individuals but on M.G. Ranade’s party i.e. “*Prarthana Samaj*, for lending their weight and support whenever a

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45 *Mahratta*, Feb. 15, 1891.
46 *Mahratta*, April 17, 1887, p.1.
49 Tilak wrote that "the Sudharaks are fortunately placed in high official positions are forcing their ideas upon us" *Mahratta*, May 10 1891, p.2. In 1870 a widow re-marriage took place in Bombay the Judges of the High Court attended and the boy got a lucrative job at the High Court. N.K. Wagle (ed.) (1999), *Writers, Editors and Reformers; Social and Political, Transformation of Maharashtra, 1830-1930*, (New Delhi, 1999), p.214.
50 Jagirdar P.S. M.G. Ranade, (New Delhi, 1971), p.41. Tilak admitted in the context of establishing a home for the widows that "opposition to a moneyed man is a rare sight and even if it exist, the possession of wealth will enable the possessor of it to set it at naught." *Mahratta* Sept. 18, 1887, p.3. This was true in the all India Context too. G. Subramanya Aiyer, the editor of the Hindu, conducted his widowed daughter's re-marriage in 1889. There was no excommuniation as expected by him and his associates, though the couple were living with him. Within four months of marriage Aiyer's wife died and he was able to obtain a priest to conduct the ceremonies. R. Parthasarthi, *A Hundred Year of Hindu*, (Madras, 1979), pp.70-71.
bold rash and impatient Malabari who had stoodup to advocate the course of reform or when a widow was to be wedded to an innocent person". Tilak argued that the reformers were testing the limit of tolerance among the anti-reformers\(^5\) and no reconciliation was possible between the two as the reformers were bent upon bringing women out of the house to which the Hindu law givers had confined her to.\(^5\) It was the, attempt at changing the position of women which became the bone of contention between the reformers and the anti-reformers rather than the actual issue of the Age of Consent Bill. The proposed bill was only an issue in the larger and more dynamic agenda of the reformers towards empowering women.

1. Tilak’s Opposition to High School Education for Women.

The reformers believed that since the society was hostile to the idea of widow remarriage and raising the marriageable age of girls, education was to be imparted to girls in order to enable them to free themselves from certain fixed ways of life and modes of thought.\(^5\) The basis of women’s education was individual freedom.\(^5\) Ranade considered that women’s education was essential to change the society and to bring about all round development of a national life as a nation could not have a politically advanced system while it was economically and socially backward.\(^5\) So women’s education in all branches of knowledge was needed hence he

\(^{51}\) Maharatta, Dec. 25, 1887, p.1. Some New Discoveries of our "Reformers".

\(^{52}\) Maharatta, April 17, 1887, p.1.


\(^{55}\) P.J. Jagirdar,(1971) p.185.
refused to discriminate between men and women about the kind of education to be imparted.\textsuperscript{56}

Viewed from Tilak's patriarchal orthodox position, women were not to be educated at all, as they along with the \textit{shudras} were traditionally denied the knowledge of sacred literature.\textsuperscript{57} Women had an extra infringement on their right to be literate by a cleverly used superstition that literate woman would become a widow, hence education was to be shunned as if it was a sin.\textsuperscript{58} Tilak and other anti-reformers argued that teaching Hindu women to read would ruin their precious traditional virtues and would make them immoral and insubordinate.\textsuperscript{59} Since a beginning was already made to educate women and since the reformers began to send their daughters and sisters to the Poona High School, efforts were directed towards controlling at least what was being taught there. Ranade did not see that any change was needed and the Female High School at Poona taught the same subjects as in other boys High Schools, namely English literature, arithmetic and science. This did not answer the purpose the anti-reformers had in view.\textsuperscript{60} A correspondent wrote \textit{Mahratta} that,

The method in which our delicate sex is to be moulded is far from being productive of immense good when I learnt that the girls were to be taught in English, that the softer sex was on the eve of receiving higher education to study the alphabet of that language which has ... impaired the health of many youths. The present system of education followed in schools and colleges is the source of a great evil. No true Hindu would like to see India lose its

\textsuperscript{57} S.P. Sen, (1979), p.314.
\textsuperscript{58} Ramabai Ranade, \textit{His wife's Reminiscence}, (New Delhi, 1963), p.38.
\textsuperscript{59} Rosalind O Hanlan, \textit{A Comparison between Women and men, Tarabai Shinde and the Critique of gender relations in Colonial India}, (Madras 1994), p.16.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Mahratta} Jan, 18, 1885.
of a great evil. No true Hindu would like to see India lose its nationality its individuality as a separate nation... Nobody can be ignorant of the fact that it is the fair sex that has to play a prominent and a difficult part in the work of increasing the human species. 61

Tilak entirely agreed with the correspondent and stated that "we give this communication a prominent place because it sets forth fully the merits of question English versus Marathi". 62 In another letter to the editor, signed by one GBL stated that,

Surrounded by environments as we are over which we have hardly any control we would rather give prominence to our own vernacular than to a language on more grounds than one, it would be better as regards our women to regard only second rate importance 63

The writer further continued to counter the reformers arguments that women well versed in both English and Marathi would immensely contribute to enrich vernacular literature by translating the English works into vernacular.

Do you seriously hope, are you really in earnest that our women will do anything in the direction of original literature for centuries to come? I know of very few female names who have added perceptibly to the stock of human knowledge or have modified by their brain production the current of human thought. 64

Tilak considered that women should not be taxed with subjects which are beyond their powers to understand, 65 as women well versed in English would have nothing substantial to offer the society, because

61 Mahratta, Aug. 24, 1884, p.2. Higher Female Education.
62 ibid.
63 Mahratta Aug. 31, 1884, p.6.
64 ibid.
65 Mahratta, Sept. 7, 1884, p.6, Higher Female Education.
English did not offer any tangible knowledge. However, Tilak's argument against the English education for boys was altogether different. English education was unsuitable to India because it failed to provide moral and religious instruction along with western science. Education under the colonial rule, instead of creating a Hindu nationhood had created a class of men who admired the western knowledge and science which was detrimental to the Indian nationality.

Tilak argued that "English education had dewomanising impact on women, which denied them a happy worldly life". It would "hinder her in performing wifely and maternal duties". It was "a threatening immediate problem that had to be tackled at once as every city and town of note was being provided with a girl's school". The articles urged the importance and gravity of the situation. Tilak agreed with the anti-reformist argument and held discussions with the reformers for initiating a change in the curriculum of the girls high school. The reformers refused to comply with Tilak and Agarkar continued to support English education for women in Kesari. Tilak removed Agarkar from the editorship of Kesari in 1887 and assumed the complete responsibility of both Kesari and Mahratta. The departure of Agarkar from Kesari removed even the semblance of rationality in the weekly's office. Henceforth both Kesari and Mahratta become organs of Tilak's anti-reformist agenda.

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66 Mahratta, Sept. 28, 1884.
67 Mahratta Oct. 27, 1901.
68 Mahratta Aug. 21, 1881.
69 Mahratta Aug. 24 1884.
70 Mahratta May 5, 1901.
71 Mahratta Jan. 18, 1885. Education in India.
Tilak expressing concern that women were being educated in English and attacked the curriculum of the female High School more vehemently and more comprehensively than the earlier articles and letters to the editor. Tilak wrote that,

The very first question that strikes us at the very onset of our inquiry is, what is the aim of the course of instruction? If the object be to change the state of the Hindu Household after the English model by the instruction given to our girls, we have nothing more to say; for we would condemn it most strongly as being dangerous and at the same time an almost impossible feat. If, however, the object be to fit in the education of females with the existing state and constitution of the Hindu community and Hindu household, to make our females useful helpmates of their husbands and not merely ornamental figure heads, then we dare say the present course of studies in the female high school is not much calculated to further that object. The object of the Board is not to educate the girls attending their school so as to be good clerks, good schoolmistresses or good English or Marathi authoresses.\(^7\)

Tilak argued that if the reformer's objective was not to make a clerk or a teacher out of every girl who attends the high school, then the subject taught had to undergo an extensive change.

Holding as we do, the opinion that men and women have different spheres of activity allotted to them in domestic economy, we think that the instruction which is to fit them for the duties pertaining to their respective spheres must be given on essentially different lines. In the first place, we fail to see the utility of teaching English to the majority of girls. There is one feature of this curriculum, which strikes us very forcibly; religious and moral instructions as can be conveyed by lessons inculcating high principles of ancient Aryan religious morality finds a place nowhere in the list of subjects taught... In other words, there is nothing that can constantly show the girls that there are high and more honorable duties allotted to them in this world, which do not

\(^7\) *Maharatta* Jan. 18, 1885, p.1. Curriculum of the Female High School, Is it in the right direction?
end with learning the 'Pathamala' or knowing the names of the Peshwa by heart.73

After criticising the curriculum, Tilak went on to criticise the concept of girls spending the entire day out of the house.

We are of the opinion that the practice of holding the school from 11 AM to 5 PM and the subjects which are useless to girls, be struck out from the curriculum and the necessary ones be finished by holding the school for three hours only everyday either in the morning from 7 AM to 10 AM or from 2 PM to 5 PM in the afternoon. Three hours of instruction will be quite sufficient and the girls will have time to devote to domestic duties. A girl preparing her lessons till 10 AM and remaining at school till 5 PM becomes a regular boy student and is quite likely to forget that their are other duties incumbent on her... Features above pointed out, are likely enough to develop in girls vain tastes and make them feel a sense of superiority to their partners. It is not we believe, necessary to point out, that if this side be allowed to develop in girls, we should not be surprised to find girls like Rakmabai ready to wash their hands clean of their husbands.74

The articles written against women's education centered around three inward looking yet powerful arguments. Firstly, English education was not required by women as they were physically delicate hence could not bear the burden of education. To them “the brain of a women on an average weighed less by five ounces than that of a man”.75 So their ability to make independent contribution to literature was doubted in a fashion very typical of the nineteenth century anti-women's education in England. This was the dominant line of thought expressed in the letters to the editor.

The second argument put forth by Tilak was more damaging to the cause of women's education than the earlier one. Tilak recognised that

73 "Subjects useless to girls were English, arithmetic, sciences and music. Subject useful to girls were vernacular, moral science, needle work, Mahratta Jan 18 1885, p.2.
74 Mahratta, Sept. 18, 1887, p.2
75 Mahratta, Nov. 13, 1887, p.3. Female Education.
women's education was a potential threat to male domination. The educated women would turn out to be another Rakhmabai or Ramabai, strong willed, with an independent understanding of her status in the Hindu Society and would acquire new ideas of dignity of womanhood.\textsuperscript{76} English education made "women equal to men...hence education was to be so planned as to give to their mind a minimum amount of useful culture and information".\textsuperscript{77} So when efforts were made to secure more grants. Tilak commented,

> It is a sad commentary on our zeal for social reform and female emancipation... is there any necessity of (it) at all of a female High School at the present time, especially of the Poona institution. There are still considerable differences of opinion as to whether our women need to be taught English and other ornamental subjects at all; why then should government contribute to a school expressly founded for such purpose... what is urgently wanted is primary schools for girls that would give them such knowledge as is useful in domestic life... teaching English would prove to turn out girls to be a dead weight on their husbands.\textsuperscript{78}

Tilak argued that the duties of men and women in the Hindu society were different, and education for women was to take this into account and be tailored accordingly. Hence forcibly giving the same education to women was disadvantageous.\textsuperscript{79} It was unacceptable to the majority of the people who would not allow their daughters to spend upto 15-16 years, from 11 to 5 with a Christian teacher mugging western knowledge without

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Mahratta}, Sep. 7, 1987, p.6 Higher Female Education.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Mahratta}, May 5, 1901.
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Mahratta}, Dec. 25, 1892, p.3
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Kesari}, Sep 28, 1887, When ever such efforts were made in western India the reformers quoted the example of the princely state of Baroda. To this Tilak retorted, "His Highness may have perhaps been over-sanguine in expecting a millenium during his lifetime when 90% of female population will be educated. \textit{Mahratta} Feb. 26, 1893 Editorial. The efforts of the Maharaja Gaikwad of Baroda paid its dividends. By 1911 Baroda had 79.6% boys and 47.6% girls of all school going age group where as British India had 21.5% boys and 4% girls. \textit{Mahratta} May 14.1911. p.234.
performing household duties. So “the money spent on such an unpopular measure is useless”. Otherwise, warned Tilak, “only poor women who are compelled to earn a living by becoming teachers will make use of the institution”.

The third important argument against women’s education was that they were surrounded by an environment over which they hardly had any control. To establish this control Swaraj was needed. Swaraj was essential for performing one’s duty i.e., Swadharma which was Varnashrama Dharma in which every man, women, Brahmin, non-Brahmin had perfectly assigned place in the society and Swaraj was to be the modern agency to enforce such a Dharma on the society. Until such time education, which would least likely, to interfere with the Hindu religious morality was to be introduced none other would be accepted and therefore should be attempted.


The question of empowering women through normal education came to be coupled with the question of women’s rights in 1885 when Rakmabai, the daughter of Dr. Sakhram Arjun refused to join her husband Dadaji Bhikaji to whom she was married as a child. Rakmabai was the daughter of Jayantibai from her first husband, Janardhan Pandurang. When she was two and a half and her mother merely seventeen, Janardhan died.

80 Kesari, Oct. 11, 1887
81 Kesari, Oct. 25, 1887.
82 Kesari, Aug. 31, 1884, p.6.
84 Mahratta, Jan. 12, 1889, p.2.
85 The spelling Rakmabai as used in Mahratta has been retained
He left behind some property and willed it to his young widow. After six years of her husband's demise, Jayantibai married Dr. Sakharam Arjun, a reformer of repute and transferred her property to Rakmabai. When Rakmabai was eleven years of age, she was married to Dadaji Bhikaji the poor cousin of Sakharam Arjun with an understanding that Dadaji would educate himself and 'become a good man' and Sakharam Arjun had to take care of his expenses. Dadaji resented this and started living with his maternal uncle Narayan Dhurmaji who lived an immoral life and influenced Dadaji to slide into indolence and irresponsible existence. Dhurmaji had a mistress, whom he had brought to live with his other family members and as a result his wife attempted to commit suicide. In the meantime, Rakmabai acquired education and upon realising the futility of living with him, refused to join him. 86

Dadaji went to the court to seek restitution of conjugal rights. Dadaji blamed that Rakmabai's mother and grandfather had interest in property hence they would not let her go to join her husband. Rakmabai refuted the charges and held Dadaji's waywardness solely responsible for her refusal to join him. 87 Rakmabai argued that since the marriage had taken place without consent and since it was not uncommon in her caste for a woman to refuse to live with her husband, she wanted to wash her hands off Dadaji. 88 In fact, Rakhmabai had been writing in the Times of India under the name 'A Hindu lady', since 1885 on issues pertaining to women's education, child marriage and such women related issues. 89

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86 Sudhir Chandra, *Enslaved Daughters: Colonialism, Law and Women's Rights*, (Delhi, 1988) p.1-16

87 ibid. Appendix C p.225 and Appendix D, p.235


reaction to Rakhmabai was in confirmation with earlier stand on women's education. *Mahratta* wrote:

The letters which have evoked so much sympathy are not in all probability the production of a lady as they are represented to be, but that some irresponsible rash and ill informed enthusiast has probably caught hold of a school girl to subscribe for him as a Hindu lady in order to secure sympathy which he himself otherwise could not have done. At any rate, we are not inclined to believe the letter to be genuine production of a Hindu lady until better evidence is brought forward. And till then we do not hesitate to consider them as worthless and undeserving of the sympathy as they have evoked.90

The reformers at once threw their weight on the side of Rakhmabai to press for legislative action. A committee was formed under Prof. Wordsworth, a leading supporter of M.G. Ranade in Social reforms. The Committee began to advocate the urgency of passing of the Age of Consent Bill by the government. The lower court decided the case against Rakhmbai and ordered her to live with her husband or face imprisonment. Tilak argued that,

> the discipline of the Hindu religion is so strict that even under cruel treatment wives pull on with their husbands, simply because they consider that it is their duty to do so. In place of this noble sentiment our reformers would like to substitute the idea of a commercial bargain, both parties living together for mutual profit and dissolving partnership as soon as either of them feels disinclined to continue.91

Tilak considered that “the issues raised by the controversy were not individual but concerned the issues of vital importance to the whole Hindu race”. He advised Dadaji to “recover his costs and leave Rakmabai to her fate” and wrote that,

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90 *Mahratta*, Oct. 18, 1885.

91 *Mahratta*, March 27, 1887, p.1. Dadaji Vs Rakmabai once again!

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if Rakmabai refused to join her husband she should go to jail... because what Rakmabai stood for was liberty and not righteousness and therefore did not deserve our sympathy. 92

Rakhmabai decided to face imprisonment instead of living with a husband. When Dadaji and Rakmabai controversy was going on, a letter appeared in Mahratta signed as 'Athos' explaining a man's point of view. The writer stated that he was married as a child to a girl who turned out to be a "bundle of infirmities and was ugly as the Black Warf of Waverley". The writer wanted to divorcée her and marry again but was unwilling to pay maintenance. He “requested for personal attention from Malabari to solve his problem arguing that if he as a Parsi could help Rakmabai, he could also help him as the Parsis were the naturalised citizens of our mother country India”. 93

The restitution of conjugal rights in Rakmabai's case was not a novelty. As early as 1842, a Parsi woman by name Perozeboye sued her husband for restitution of Conjugal rights, when her husband refused to let her live with him. In 1870s a Hindu woman Yamunabai refused to return to her husband on the grounds that he was of unsound mind. The court ordered the wife to return to her husband. 94 Had Rakmabai not been educated, in all possibility would have become just an another case in the court. So it was the element of education particularly, the English education, that tilted the case in her favour. Rakmabai articulately expressed her predicament, thereby the fate of millions of child wives all

92 Mahratta, June 5. 1887, p.1, The Scope of the Rakmabai defence committee.
93 Mahratta, April 8. 1888, p.2.
94 Jim Masselos, “Sexual Property/Sexual Violence: Wives in late Nineteenth Century Bombay” in Anne Feldhaus (Ed.) Images of Women in Maharashtrian Society, (Albany, 1998), pp.115-116. Masselos discuss various cases of domestic violence prevalent in the 19th century, Majority of which were against young wives. These instances of violence were mainly to establish husband’s superiority over wives and to correct erring wives. English education deprived men of their superiority and power over their wives. So English education was major concern for Hindu patriarchy than the Age of Consent.
over India which mobilised the support of the reformers. A single woman defying the court orders and deciding to go to jail must have unnerved patriarchal Tilak. The Rakmabai episode strengthened Tilak's argument that English education to women would destroy the Hindu household. Henceforth, Tilak, though personally was willing to accept a raise in the marriageable age of girls, joined hands with anti-Age of Consent group and placed himself as its leader in western India.

Rakhmabai was the first rebel of the Hindu patriarchal society. She has very sensitively portrayed the position of women, particularly a daughter-in-law in her mother-in-law's house, suffering the loss of mental and physical freedom. Rakhmabai wrote that a daughter-in-law worked with the servants. She stated that the position of a daughter-in-law was so low that she was worse off than the servant because the servants had an option of refusing to work or change the masters whereas a daughter-in-law was bound for life. Hence, reforms were to be forced upon the society in a similar fashion that Manu's Code was forced upon the society centuries ago.

Rakhmabai's fight was the struggle of a lone woman against the male establishment. So women's ability to challenge male dominated ethos was acknowledged but not accepted. Hence, Mahratta constantly advocated the need to control her thought by inculcating in her the Aryan religious morality. She was to be reminded that there were duties high

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97 ibid.
and more honourable than that of class text books and under no circumstances women were to be allowed to feel that they were equal to men. 100

Rakmabai’s refusal to join Dadaji affected Mahratta so much that the entire edition of Mahratta, six out of eight pages 101 dealt with the issue on behalf of Dadaji and reported a speech delivered by one U.S Apte on the previous Sunday at Hirabagh. Summing together all possible authorities on Hindu law from Manu to Yagnavalkya, Apte went on to declare that according to the Hindu ideal of marriage, a husband and wife should so act as not to be separated from each other, that death only will separate them. 102 “Women are to live with their husbands though (the latter is) devoid of any merit and should seldom entertain the idea of separating themselves from their husbands, father, and sons otherwise they would bring both the families to disgrace”. Since a social revolt had already taken place “women were to be guarded and watched very carefully”. 103

Enforcing the Aryan religious morality was the basis of Tilak's politico-social philosophy. By advocating the late marriage and widow remarriage for girls the reformers had directly attacked the Aryan religious morality and proposed for the adoption of a lower caste morality for the higher castes. 104 Added to this was their emphasis on English education to girls, which was welcomed by a majority of poor Brahmins “for the additional income brought in by their daughters as teachers in the

100 Mahratta, Sep. 18, 1887, p.2.
101 Mahratta, June 12, 1887, p.2
102 Mahratta, June, 12 1887, p.3 The Law for the Restitution of Conjugal Rights.
103 Mahratta, June 12, 1887, p.6
This threatened the base of traditional patriarchal authority. Till now attempts were made to stop the aspiring lower caste groups by following the Brahmanical mode of behaviour. Now Mahratta refused to acknowledge the caste status of Rakmabai. Rakmabai who repeatedly stated that in her caste divorce and re-marriage were easy and widely accepted modes of social behaviour. Her own mother had married Dr. Sakherram Arjun after the death of her first husband. Mahratta failed to mention any of these and continued to argue the case drawing references from Manu to Yagnavalkya. Rakmabai’s behaviour was judged from the point of view of upper caste morality and the colonial agency was asked to enforce Brahmanical tradition. The reformers appeal to the same agency to enforce the lower caste religious morality was nothing short of a treachery.

The case of Rakmabai created so much euphoria that even Max Mueller joined hands with the reformers by supporting Rakmabai. Max Mueller wrote that Rakambai was a product of English education and having learnt the dignity of womenhood would rather die than to submit any longer to the mortal slavery to which custom had reduced them. Max Mueller had also proposed for establishing a widows home in Poona. Tilak stated that “such an effort had denationalising influence upon the society”. Max Mueller, whose knowledge of Rigveda was widely respected who inspired a generation of nationalists was to be “heard with

105 Mahratta, April 19, 1885, p.8.
106 Mahratta, June 12, 1887, p.6, and Mahratta, Sep 25 1887, p.7.
107 Kesari, July 22, 1890.
108 Mahratta, Sep. 18, 1887, p.7.
109 Quoted in Mahratta, Sep 18, 1887, p.7.
110 Ibid, p.2.
patience and respect though not with approval”, as “no Hindu who is not denationalised feels pleasure in contemplating the idea of a woman, especially a widow, living in the house of a stranger”. Tilak argued that “the Hindu widow, by her owes, imaginary and real, had unsettled the balance of mind of many a misguided philanthropists and learned men” and stated that “English gentlemen of light and leading, who have some authority to speak on Indian social questions might lead to mischievous results”. Tilak regarded Max Mueller as “a victims of the new race of quacks” whose purpose was to gain, “cheap notoriety by exposing the inner most recesses of the Hindu society”.

The intervention of Malabari and Max Mueller on behalf of Hindu women threatened the anti-reformist control over the social issues. Their response to the social reform question was always the time-tested tactics of ridicule and boycott. Whenever the reformers raised the issue of improving the status of women and whenever attempts were made ridicule and abuse was heaped on them. When the reformers persisted in their cause, they faced the threat of excommunication. Living in a joint and extended families of the 19th century India, this was the severest blow. The reformers had to face a situation where their daughters and sisters would be deserted by their respective husbands, if they did not succumb to the orthodox pressure. Malabari and Max Mueller did not have to face it as they were non-Hindus, and Max Mueller in particular, being considered an

111 ibid, p.7.
112 Mahratta, Sept. 18, 1887, p.2, Home for the widows.
authority in Aryan language and sacred literature,\(^{116}\) had a wide influence and acceptance among the orthodox sections. His effort was more detrimental to the anti-reformist control than the Brahmin reformers. This posed a danger to Hinduism, which was to be contained before the “sentimental foreigners, misguided philanthropists”,\(^{117}\) Malabari’s and Samajists perverted the Shastras to ask for legislations, try their hands at Reforming\(^{118}\), but be sure warned Mahratta "they will never succeed".\(^{119}\) The Rakmabai controversy ended in 1887 when Dadaji failed to pursue the matter further.

The crystallization of the idea that Hindu Dharma was in danger and the need of the hour was to consolidate the Hindu identity was formed by 1886. Mahratta reported an event called Hemantotsva or autumn festival, organized by the Hindu Union Club of Bombay.\(^{120}\) Shastris and educated men from all sub castes of Brahmins\(^{121}\) were invited to discuss various theological questions, the condition of Hinduism, the interpretation of texts and the ways and means to counter the reformers. The sentiments echoed during the course of lectures and discussions were similar to the ones that Tilak had been writing in Mahratta since its very inception. The denationalising effect of English education and the deterioration of "the Hindu Dharma or Science of religion which had such a hold upon the Hindu mind has almost been forgotten." This was the unanimous opinion

\(^{116}\) Mahratta, Sep. 25, 1887, p.7.
\(^{117}\) Mahratta, Dec. 25, 1887, p.7
\(^{118}\) Mahratta, Dec. 25, 1887, p.1.
\(^{119}\) Mahratta, Sept. 25, 1887, p.7.
\(^{120}\) Eight lectures were delivered in February and March 1886 and nine lectures in February and March 1887.
\(^{121}\) K. T. Telang mentions their names as those who opposed the Age of Consent Bill. Speeches Writings of K. T. Telang, (Bombay, 1916) p.448 to 483.
of the speakers and participants, who also expressed concern regarding the abolition of the appointments of *Shastris* in British courts and the English men becoming authorities on Hindu law of inheritance. The declining importance of caste as an institution was extensively discussed. The meeting declared that caste was essential for the communities to remain in peace. The necessity of the taxpayers possessing the information as to the items on which expenditure was rising was also discussed in detail.

When Tilak was consolidating his position as a defender of orthodoxy and as a spokesman for the Hindus, the reformers were trying to carry on the propaganda throughout India through the newly found National Social Conference, which was formed after the Indian National Congress officially had resolved not to debate social questions. Malabari travelled extensively throughout India to gain support for his proposed reforms, and received whole hearted support in Punjab. He carried on his crusade simultaneously in England, where he rallied the support of many of the most powerful figures in the country. Tilak called Malabari's efforts as "reformation through tyranny" and warned that he would not be "allowed to continue to write as before", because Malabari in England was collecting ammunition "to blow up the cartel of our social

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124 *Maharatta*, Jan 30, 1887, p.5.


126 *Maharatta* reported his complete work in England, p.6.

127 *Kesari*, Aug 12 1890,

128 *Kesari*, Sep 2, 1890.
structure". Malabari's success intensified conflict in Poona. The orthodox forces came firmly under the leadership of Tilak.

When the discussions were still taking place regarding the age of consent, when the colonial government was undecided to support the cause, the death of Phulmanibai, a ten-year old girl at the time of intercourse with her husband stirred the conscious of the reformers. The National Social Conference, the reformist organ of the Indian National Congress urged the colonial government to immediately pass the Age of Consent Bill. *Mahratta* criticised it by stating that the Conference had no right to call itself national as the ideas advocated by it were against the national interest. The Social Conference consulted the Shankaracharya asking him to supply information, particularly the Shastric injunctions regarding the right-age for consummation of marriage. Accordingly a memorial was drafted by K.T. Talang and carried one hundred signatures which included M.G. Ranade, G.K. Gokhale. G.H. Deshmukh R. Raghunathrao, the Diwan of Baroda, G. subramanya Iyer, the editor of the Hindu and several lawyers, judges and educationists from Bombay and Madras Presidency. The memorial proposed that the right age for consummation of marriage was sixteen and discussed at length the number of rapes and deaths of girls below the age of fifteen at the hands of their husbands. In the meantime a criminal case was filed against Phulmanibai's husband, he was tried and sentenced to jail for a period of

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129 *Kesari*, Sep 30, 1890.
130 *Kesari*, July 22, 1890.
131 *Mahratta*, Aug 24, 1890.
133 *Mahratta*, Sept 28, 1890, p.3.
one year.\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Mahratta} supporting the husband advised the people not to "heap upon his head underserved abuse", as he had already suffered by losing his wife. The entire discussion of brutality was side lined by stating that,

it was not the issue of a brutal husband full of excessive lust. On the particular night in question, it is quite probable that his wife happened to be ill or suffering and in a weak state and the result of his act was so disastrous to the astonishment and grief of the husband.

Dispelling reformer opinion which called it rape \textit{Mahratta} argued that "the law of rape did not apply between husband and wife".\textsuperscript{136} Reaction to Phulmanhi's death among the orthodoxy was divided. An orthodox Pandit Sasedhar Tarkachuramani in Bengal stated that according to Manu such husbands should be laid bare on 'red hot iron bed and clasp in his hand red hot iron figure of a woman until death relieves him".\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Mahratta} published articles which discussed whether it was a rape or murder in disgusting details.\textsuperscript{138} However, with the death of Phulmanibai, the colonial government decided to act and the discussions began in the Imperial legislative council. Dayaram Gidumal, a friend and the biographer of Malabari, proposed to the government that the marriage age could be changed by a simple revision of the panel code making twelve, not ten, the minimal legal age for consummation. The Government accepted the proposal. Tilak attacked the reformers for making a "mad attempt" and hoped that the Viceroy would not "appreciate the illogical nature of its

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Mahratta}, Aug 10, 1890.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Mahratta}, Aug 10 1890. The Calcutta Child -Wife Murder Case, p.2 Editorial.

\textsuperscript{137} An article by T.N. Mukherjee in the Indian Nation reprinted in \textit{Mahratta} Aug. 24 1890* Tanika Sarkar in "Rhetoric against the Age of Consent" States that Pandit Sasedhar Tarkachuramani was doyen of Hindu orthodoxy. Sept 4 1993 \textit{EPW} pp.1869-1828

\textsuperscript{138} B.R. Ambedkar, \textit{Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah}, (Jullandhar, N.D.), p.35.
provisions." Tilak also warned that by punishing a husband with imprisonment for having intercourse before wife reached 12 years, the government was punishing the wife, as husband going to the jail was "a civil death" of a Hindu wife.

Tilak blamed that in their zeal for emancipating women, the reformers had misinterpreted the texts. The reformers had called for a meeting at Kridabhutan in Poona where they were attacked with brickbats and stones. Tilak criticised the reformers for misleading the government "by manufactured reports of Public meeting and by misinterpreting to them facts regarding the state of Public opinion". Tilak argued that,

> the Brahmans, we know are fighting for freedom and any measure that places restrictions upon the liberties of any body will not be acceptable to them.

The Age of Consent Bill was passed on March 19th 1891 and immediately Tilak called for a ‘grand central organization based on self-preservation, self-protection and self-support to counter the reformers who had "mischievously and shamelessly represented as a nation of savages and the Sudharak had testified to it... These Sudharaks (reformers) formed a separate nationality and we ought no longer to allow to be amongst us... the real enemies of the country and the time has come when we should divide". Tilak declared that “the reformers had ceased to be Hindus” their action of supporting the Bill was a national evil. Tilak called,

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139 Mahratta, Jan 18, 1891, Editorial.
The passing of the age of Consent Act was a signal to divide and the country was divided into two parties - the party of 'benevolent despots' and the party of loyal constitutionalists. But the former would not separate. The people had disowned them in all their memorials against the Bill... The national existence had been the goal, national aspirations was the means and the national unity had been the way to the means.\textsuperscript{146}

Which was threatened by the passing of the Bill

\textit{in the age of consent agitation the opponents of the measure are fighting a covert attempt at changing the well-established relations of the rulers and the ruled.}\textsuperscript{147}

This Tilak argued,

\begin{quote}
\textit{Strikes a deathblow at the very fabric, which has interwoven us into the Hindu nation.}\textsuperscript{148}
\end{quote}

The passing of the bill was a victory to the reformers, inspire of aggressive stand taken by Tilak in the writings and speeches and physical violence used by his supporters against the reformers.\textsuperscript{149}

\begin{quote}
a nation whose religious traditions are noble and whose social fabric is so strong, a handful of men who with an unbridled tongue and uncontrolled pen manufacture stories... pray for a measure, which permanently leaves scandalous record against the character of innocent and God fearing and law-abiding people. In doing so the reformers made the Pundits who had the right of interpreting the \textit{Shastras} to the Hindu laity and who have laid down the\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textit{Maharatta}, March 1891, p.2, The Age of Consent, Editorial. \\
\item \textit{Maharatta}, July 26, 1891. \\
\item \textit{Maharatta}, April 26, 1891, p.2. \\
\item ibid. \\
\item \textit{Maharatta} Oct. 4, 1891, p.2. Editorial \\
\item The Biographers of Tilak have attempted to prove otherwise. They considered "that Tilak was an ardent advocate of Social reform who would not content himself with analysing the evils of the existing social order". T.L. Shay - \textit{The Legacy of the Lokmanya}, (Bombay, 1956), p.51. "Besides the mass of evidence to the contrary, the charge that Tilak was anti-reformist evaporates into thin air", Ram Gopal, \textit{Tilak- A Biography}, (Bombay, 1956), p.65. \\
\end{footnotes}
religious law for the Hindus for generations - into magnificent nobodies.\textsuperscript{150}

Tilak assessing the situation stated that,

The age of consent agitation has given us an accurate idea of our strength and our weakness and the longer we continue together (with the reformers) the earlier will be our ruin.

The passing of the bill led to the formation of *Dharma* Mandalis or the societies for the protection of *Dharma* throughout the country.\textsuperscript{151} The reformers control of educational institutions, the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and other associations remained strong. So Tilak suggested that,

We need not wait to establish schools and open colleges, to found now *Sabhas* and association organize new Conferences and Congresses. All those that exist are ours. So long we have lived in society just as we live in our Hindu families. Let those who are ashamed to own the Hindu character of our institutions walk out, or if they do not, drive them out by taking all work out of their hands\textsuperscript{152}

Tilak called upon the people not to trust the reformers,

Hold public meetings when you want them, taking care that you do not leave or entrust the important duties in connections therewith to men in whom you cannot and should not place confidence.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{150} Maharatta April 12 1890, p.3 Editorial.

\textsuperscript{151} Amiya P. Sen, *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal 1872-1905: Some Essays in Interpretation*, (Delhi, 1993) p.439. Since *Dharma* was essentially *Varnashrama Dharma*, the passing of the age of consent bill was perceived as a threat to caste system. Traditionally, women and the loss of caste was so closely linked that "men on the their own lost caste only on three accounts, conversion to other religion, committing murder and interdining with those who had undergone a loss of caste. However men would lose their caste due to the behaviour of women in their houses, from suspected caste status of wife or mother to the suspected illicit relations, adultery and such cases were more numerous and more likely to bring disrespect to the families. Hiroshi Fukazawa, *The Medieval Deccan: The Peasants, Social System and States*, (Delhi, 1991), p.94.

\textsuperscript{152} Maharatta, April 26, 1891, p.2.

\textsuperscript{153} ibid.
Because,

The *Sudharaks* will prosper with their motto of benevolent despotism on their banner and the Hindu will live on to seek his loyal nation slowly rising to eminence, his motto being self preservation, self-protection and self help.\(^{154}\)

Tilak's anguish against the reformers was not due to his opposition to the proposed rise of the marriageable age of girls, nor does his editorials mention the reformer's strategy of seeking the government's help in ensuring a legislation. None of the editorials written after the passing of the bill mentions these two aspects. Tilak's anguish was against the reformer's attempt to undermine the caste. *Mahratta* supported the Infant marriage prevention Bill in Mysore as "the Diwan has taken care to consult all the leading maths and also to ascertain the popular feeling on the subject.\(^{155}\)

Tilak declared that "we were then and are still, inclined to think, that if the Maths and the people through caste Panchayats, are given some power, in one capacity or the other, the proposed legislation would undoubtedly be popular".\(^{156}\) Tilak's editorial titled "The Caste and Caste Alone has Power" discussed clearly the efforts of the reformers in undermining the caste, because,

the reformers hold the institution of caste had done immense mischief whereas the Hindu nation believed that had it not been for the influence of the caste, the Hindu Nation would have long ceased to exist... Caste is a social combination of the members who were united by birth and not by enrollment. This is the real genius of the institution. The reformers are trying to substitute enrollment for birth and in doing so they are importing a glittering

\(^{154}\) ibid.


\(^{156}\) *Mahratta*, Aug. 20 1893. P.5. EdN
western principle a substitution for the sound, safe and prudent eastern one.\textsuperscript{157}

Tilak accused the reformers of "gradually surrendering the power of the caste into the hands of the rulers". They were "undermining the influence of caste by using a provision in the Penal code about defamation". Persons "drinking liqueur and creating disorder could be excommunicated", however "person celebrating remarriages could not be called as the enemies of Hindu religion' and the works of the 'Samajists' i.e. the person associated with the Prarthana Samaj could not be exposed for the same reason. "The orthodox Hindu believed that all the three mentioned above were equally dangerous". The reformers were "killing the caste and with it, killing the vitality of the nation".\textsuperscript{158} So as a community the Hindu had gone down due to their own faults.\textsuperscript{159} These faults were allowing the reformers to live within Hinduism, having allowed them to control institutions, the orthodox Hinduism had nourished the enemies.\textsuperscript{160}

As a result a situation had arisen in which it would be hard to tell the difference between the modern educated Brahmin and the modern educated non-Brahmin.... This inequality has come to be felt. The spirit of revolt is abroad. Unfortunately there is no one at the helm to understand the position truly and to foresee the natural consequences of such a state of things. We want a spiritual teacher now to guide us all right - a man of a superior mind, above all narrow feelings and jealousies of a commanding individuality, one whose guidance all will feel constrained to follow. We want a Shankaracharya once more who will combine together all the good elements in ancient

\textsuperscript{157} Mahratta, May 10, 1891, p.3. Editorial.
\textsuperscript{158} Mahratta, May 10, 1891, p.3.
\textsuperscript{159} Mahratta, July 26, 1891, p.2.
\textsuperscript{160} Mahratta, March 22, 1891.
and modern civilization and reconstruct our society on our improved basis and on enlightened and just principles.\textsuperscript{161}

Regeneration of Hinduism was to take place by "retaining the old Hindu institutions and by adding the aggressiveness of the new ones with which we have become familiar by now\textsuperscript{162} By stating this Tilak was echoing the sentiments of the Brahmanical orthodoxy throughout India. The passing of the Age of Consent Bill was followed by the rise of various \textit{Dharma Sabhas} throughout India to defend and protect Brahmanical religion. \textit{Mahratta} reported the establishment of \textit{Dharma Mandali} in Calcutta to remove moral evils resulting from English education". The \textit{Mandali} proposed to undertake "the education of Hindu boys after the spirit of the \textit{Shastras}\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Mahratta} also reported the establishment of the Bharat \textit{Dharma Mahamandal} by the Maharaja of Benaras, to discuss the deterioration of Hindu religion". The \textit{Mahamandal} proposed to establish "Sanskrit schools, to bring out a book containing all the rules of \textit{Swadharma} and to strengthen \textit{Sanatan Dharma} all over India\textsuperscript{164}"

The resurgent Hinduism under Tilak meant in social questions, direct attack on the \textit{Prarthana Samaj} and women's education and the attempts by women to emerge as independent entities. Tilak had already declared that the \textit{Prarthana Samaj} was a "very unpopular institution attacked by both the orthodox and the educated",\textsuperscript{165} because the people associated with it were "revivalists". Tilak called the \textit{Prarthana Samajists} as revivalists because according to him they proposed to 'revive' the vedic

\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Mahratta}, July 26, 1891, p.3.
\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Mahratta} July 26, 1891, p.2.
\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Mahratta}, July 26, 1891, p.6.
\textsuperscript{164} \textit{Mahratta}, March 27, 1892, p.4.
\textsuperscript{165} \textit{Mahratta}, May 15, 1887, p.2.
life and religion. Tilak was inconsistent in his attack when he called the *Prarthana Samaj* an association of men with western idea and taste, who found that the caste came in the way of their indulgence,\(^{166}\) hence they attacked and undermined the caste. *Mahratta* also ridiculed *Prarthana Samaj's emphasis on the Bhakti tradition*. If the *Samaj* had been actually inspired by the Bhakti Saints, "it would not have kicked at the restriction that bound them"\(^ {167}\) Since "violating the caste prejudices"\(^ {168}\) was the basic objective of the *Samaj*, the *Prarthana Samaj* "meant violence from its very inception"\(^ {169}\) As a body the *Samaj* was influenced by the western science and knowledge\(^ {170}\) and Hinduism was threatened by the western science and Christianity.\(^ {171}\) The *Samaj* "was a mess for libertines, where the tongue may aggrandize over the soul". The *Samaj* lacked the soul and consisted of dishonest men and since "they lacked inner strength" to convince the society they turned to the state machinery and legislation.\(^ {172}\)

The attacks on the *Prarthana Samaj* was less personal before N.C. Chandavarkar took over the reigns of the *Samaj*. Chandavarkar criticised the working of the *Samaj* on the line of least resistance\(^ {173}\) advocated a more substantial reform and asked men and women to stand against social persecution.\(^ {174}\) Tilak called him "a person with abused education"
responsible for "housing high class girls as well as low class girls in the same school." Tilak held him also responsible for "opening upon women the dazzling light of amenities of the life of educated English womanhood, which the possession of independence and riches alone could render enjoyable." According to Tilak the Samaj undertook unnecessary responsibilities upon themselves and ultimately failed to justify themselves.

The reformers in the first two decades of the 20th century both belonging to the Prarthana Samaj and those who were not associated with it, concentrated on encouraging women's education. Since they had witnessed a violent attack at the time of the Age of Consent Bill, they did not attempt any further reform in the Hindu society. They considered education to be the means through which a change in the society could be brought about. Countering this, Tilak proposed a system of national education, because the existing system of education eliminated moral and religious instruction. It was more detrimental to educate women without instructing her in moral and religion obligations. Since,

Women required a fund of energy to perform the wifely duties.... education was to be so planned as to give to their minds a minimum amount of useful culture and information with minimum expenditure of energy

_Mahratta_ always stressed that the purpose of women's education was not to make women equal to men. Whenever such situations arose _Mahratta_ was highly critical of such an assertiveness among women. The

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175 _Mahratta_, Nov 27, 1898, p.3.
176 ibid.
178 _Mahratta_, May 5, 1901, p.9. Letter to the Editor by "an observer from within."
women of Bombay organized a reception to the Prince of Wales in 1905. *Maharatta* "felt supreme contempt for these weaker Vessels" and "rued the day western education influenced Indian mind."179 Women as individuals and as a group whenever attempted to do simple tasks like educating widows come under violent attack by Tilak.180 The attacks were more severe in case of individual women. Women like Pandita Ramabai remained an enigma for Tilak. His patriarchal anti-reformist mind could not accept the fact that a woman could be well versed in Sanskrit and understand the scriptures from an independent point of view to be able to criticize it. Since Ramabai was doing exactly the same, it was not her capacity to understand and question, but a "mistake on the part of her parents to have given her the faculty of thinking".181

She was born of poor parents who, however imparted their faculty of thinking to their precious daughters. Perhaps, they were wrong therein, evidently they could not help it. But another mistake on their part, which they could have avoided, and would certainly have avoided if they had a glimpse of the future consequence of their action, was that they gave their daughter a smattering knowledge of Sanskrit.182

Tilak argued that, if her understanding of the scripture led Ramabai to doubt their credibility than,

179 *Maharatta* July 16, 1905, p.337.

180 *Maharatta* editorial wrote critically of an organization called *Sakhi Santuti*, set up in Calcutta to educate the widows *Maharatta* 12 Jan 1889, p.2.

181 When Anant Shastri, the father of Ramabai taught his wife Sanskrit, when Laxmibai taught her daughter, they each placed in a woman's hand the key to forbidden chamber of knowledge. Anant Shastri had already rebelled against the constraints of orthodoxy by his unorthodox living. His eldest daughter remained unmarried until the age of 21. Nicol Macnicol, *Builders of Modern India Pandita Ramabai* (Calcutta, 1926), p.33.

doubt should lead to inaction and not to rebellion. 183

Tilak considered that, she had applied her thinking powers to the little knowledge of Hindu Shartras,

The process of her mental conversion is also similarly ununderstandable. While she was a Hindu she was told to worship that God or this, to utter thousand names of God to visit sacred places and so on. Vainly however, she looked for God and prayed for him, but God did not present himself to her. But not so when she thought of Christ. He revealed himself to her in one night. No doubt the revelations of a night must always be very romantic in the case of an enthusiastic and interesting woman like Pandita, but never do they appear to have given out so much romance as in this case of Christ and Pandita 184

Pandita Ramabai a Chitpavan lady was born in 1858. Her father Ananta Shastri Dongre taught his wife and daughters Sanskrit. Anant Shastri had rebelled against the constraints of orthodoxy by his unorthodox living. His eldest daughter remained unmarried until the age of twenty-one. 185 Ramabai’s family was extremely poor and except for Ramabai and her brother, the entire family died of starvation. Ramabai and her brother reached Calcutta, where they were received by the social reformers and encouraged Ramabai to study the scriptures and give lecturers on female emancipation. 186 In Calcutta she faced the obstinate attitude of the orthodoxy for having married a person from the Shudra community. She also faced similar predicament when she became a widow. Later she moved to Poona with her infant daughter and established Sharada Sadana, a home for the widows and began the task of educating women in Bombay

183 She studied the books of Hindu law, so delighted were the leading Hindu of Calcutta with her extraordinary talent that they conferred on her the title "Saraswati." Rebecca J. Parkar - Pandita Ramabai, How they found the Christ? (Delhi, 1988), p.9.
184 Maharashtra, Jan 10, 1904, pp.18-19.
and Poona. She visited England embraced Christianity and stayed at Max Mueller's house.\textsuperscript{187} Later she visited America and was impressed with its educational system.\textsuperscript{188} She returned to Bombay and established Sharada \textit{Sadana} in 1889\textsuperscript{189}, which was shifted to Poona in 1890.\textsuperscript{190}

Ramabai was the first to emphasize that the denial of the right to knowledge to women and opportunities for growth enfeebled women, which also emasculated men and hence weakened the society. Ramabai elaborated the argument that men prevent women from acquiring knowledge at all costs, otherwise women would put a stop to their unrestrained behaviour and men would loose their position. In order to promote their objective, the men prepared \textit{Dharmasastras}, which propounded that women had no right to study the \textit{Sastras}.\textsuperscript{191} Ramabai's refusal to accept that the present stage of women as simply a degeneration and her skepticism on the status of women in the idealised version\textsuperscript{192} of the \textit{Vedic} period was possibly strengthened by the views expressed by the anti-reformist group led by Tilak regarding women's education. The anti-reformist group, particularly Tilak, had not been civil to her. Tilak wrote six articles between June 17\textsuperscript{th} and July 21\textsuperscript{st} 1891 the criticism was so menacing that her institution \textit{Sharada Sadan} was closed in 1893. It was reconstituted only in 1898 at the time of famine.\textsuperscript{193} She visited the famine-

\textsuperscript{188} Indian Christians \textit{Pandita Ramabai}, (Madras, N.D.) p.207.
\textsuperscript{190} \textit{Mahratta} Oct 12. 1890, p.8. Carried an advertisement for the post of resident lady teacher for Sharada Sadan to be shifted from Bombay to Poona on Nov. 1 1890.
\textsuperscript{193} A.B. Shah (Ed.) \textit{The Letter and Correspondence of Pandita Ramabai}, (Bombay, 1977), pp.xxiii-xxvi.
hit districts and brought back the widows to Poona and established a home for the widows at Khedgao where the widows got education and vocational training. She also visited Mathura and rescued 7 widowed girls who were living immoral life. Mahratta challenged her to publish the names of the Maths involved and the names of the girls. Her conversion to Christianity drew criticism from both the reformers and anti-reformers but Tilak was the severest and most sarcastic. The reasons for conversion, which she later explained, including the more convincing truths expounded by Christianity; its message of love and forgiveness; its egalitarian treatment of all people, in contrast to the inferiority assigned by Hinduism to women and shudras to the extent of denying them salvation; and the Christian orientation towards rehabilitation, as in the case of ‘fallen’ women, again in contrast to Hinduism which advocated dire punishment. She published A Testimony in 1907 which articulately dealt with the Hindu view of women. In the same text, she also discussed her struggles and the disadvantages of not having received secular education. Tilak immediately reacted,

The burden of the song of the siren is that the Hindu Society ill treated her, and the Hindu Society failed to give her peace of mind and whatever she wanted was given to her by Christ... if an exemplary life as a Christian were a guarantee of wealth and amplitude of resource than the Pandita who has met Christ before and perhaps meets the son of God everyday when she shuts the

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197 ibid, p.121.
door upon the rest of the world outside, should have been self reliant for the means to defray the expenses of her Sadan.199

Woman like Ramabai, educated independent and individualistic could not be accommodated in Tilak's scheme of things. Independent women capable of taking care of herself and manage to carve a niche was anathema to Tilak. When the agitation for female suffrage in England was opposed, Mahratta was delighted.200 Tilak argued that English women enjoyed a great measure of liberty "this is not enough for them. They must be allowed to vote for the members of the Parliament and also be eligible to sit in the House of Commons!" 201

To Tilak, Dharma was the focal point of his outlook. His traditionalism nationalism and social reform were all means to re-establish Dharma. To Tilak the idea of Dharma was related to universal welfare which was not outward looking individual welfare.202 It was protecting maintaining and regulating the individual.203 To establish this Swaraj was needed. Swaraj was essential for performing one's duty i.e. Swadharma that was Varnashrama Dharma in which every man, woman, Brahmin, non-Brahmin had a perfectly assigned place in the society and Swaraj was to be the modern agency to enforce such a Dharma up on the society. The question about Swaraj was "not who are to rule over us and according to whose leadership but by whose order and whose guidance that rule was to

200 Maharatta, June 30, 1889, p.2 A Counter Blast against Women's Suffrage.
201 Mahratta, Aug. 13, 1893. Mahratta's opinion had changed by 1910 regarding the women's suffrage due to the separate representation for Muslims. So when proposal for female suffrage was defeated in the House of Commons Mahratta expressed sympathy for women. Mahratta July 17, 1910, Editorial Female Suffrage Bill.
203 ibid.
Until such time education, which would least likely to interfere with the Hindu secular and religious morality was to be introduced none other would be accepted and therefore should be attempted. Tilak led opposition was so strong that between 1870 to 1915 there were only 55 cases of widow-remarriage.

Since India had not attained Swaraj, attempts at encouraging women's education were criticised on the lines of unnecessary diversions from the anti-colonial struggle. The reformer's emphasis on the construction of educated women, making better wives and better mothers was opposed by Tilak who considered that the position of women within the society and within the family was that of the daughter-in-law. Even within the patriarchal structure educated women as better wives and better mothers was needed for the anti-colonial struggle as they would provide intellectual stimulation to the freedom fighter husbands and mould young sons into patriotic youth. However to a patriarchal Tilak men were capable of taking care of themselves. Fathers and brothers were in a better position to inculcate patriotism within the family. The position of woman within the family was that of a daughter in law, who did not stand independently in her relations to any one including her husbands and children.

During the Swadeshi movement Mahratta appreciated the Japanese women who "lived like Amazons, worthy of their husbands. They had no time to think of the liberties which the western women are agitating for, as their fathers and brothers were away in the field to offer their life in the

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204 Inamdar N.R., Political thought and leadership of Lok Tilak, (New Delhi, 1983), p.251.
205 Tilak wrote as late as 1919,"The Word Swaraj - yes unadultrated. Swaraj as used in Kesari was misunderstood by them (reformers) as meaning complete independence, which Kesari never advocated it, Mahratta 12-12-1999.
service of their feudal lords or in the service of their country... they were busy in defending their person and their home against the attacks of the unruly robbers". Their education "was warlike" and Mahratta compared them to Jijabai, the mother of Shivaji and hoped that "India would produce women who could teach patriotism to their children".207

3 Tilak's ideas on Women's Education during Home Rule League Period.

Tilak's ideas on women's education was shared by the Aligarh School of thought. Theodore Morrison, one of the founders of Anglo-Oriental College, gave a lecture on women's education. Morrison criticised the reformers who attacked the Zanana system and explained that "if the education of the women was to be ... a counterpart of purely western education that men received, what chances would remain of a survival of definitely Indian traditions?". Morrison accepted that women need to be educated but questioned "how could they be given an acquaintance with English books and English ideas and yet be preserved from the proselytising action of European thought?"208 A thought very similar to that of Tilak.

This being the corner stone of Tilak's approach to women's education, D.K. Karve's efforts to establish women's university came under attack.209 Karve was a radical social reformer who devoted his entire life for women's education and empowerment. He married a widow and

208 Mahratta March 3 1907, pp.105, 106. The Education of Indian Women.
209 Karve had earlier escaped severe criticism from Tilak for establishing a widow's home as he had maintained strict Brahmancical code of conduct. The inmates were Brahmin girls. When Vital Ramji Shinde who later founded depressed classes mission wanted to admit his sister in Karve's home. He was told that "the time for admitting non-Brahmin Hindu women had not yet come”. A.B. Shah (ed) (1977), p.xxvi.
established a home for the widows and a school for educating girls.\textsuperscript{210} In 1915 he proposed at the annual secession of social conference at Bombay, for the establishment of a women's university in India. Karve single handedly began to collect donations for the proposed university.\textsuperscript{211} The \textit{Mahratta}'s response to such a proposal was in continuation of its earlier opposition to women's education. Thirty years had lapsed between the starting of the first secondary school for girls in Poona and the proposal for starting the women's university and Tilak continued to hold the same ideas. The intellectual threat from women was perceived even more strongly than ever before. If the secondary education opened the floodgates of western ideas and showed the injustice meted out to her in the Hindu society, the women's university virtually placed women on par with men and posed an occupational threat. Attempts were made once again to create public opinion regarding the subjects to be taught to women. A series of articles in \textit{Mahratta} is a testimony to such an effort. \textit{Mahratta} wrote,

That the light of education must be so manipulated as to make the domain of women a blessed place... girls should be provided with a fair knowledge of hygiene, domestic economy, child nursing, cooking, sewing and so forth.\textsuperscript{212}

We hold that nature and social custom... have assigned to woman a distinct place and function in the social organism.... For generations to come, Home will be the chief centre and sphere of woman's work. She will appear at her best there. There she will perform the work, which will exalt her morally and socially... The

\textsuperscript{210} D.K. Karve, (1936), pp.81-84.

\textsuperscript{211} Karve having faced the obstinate attitude of the orthodoxy, encouraged widow marriage but discouraged the inter - caste marriage R.P. Paranjpe, \textit{D.K. Karve} (1915), p.44. So though Karve faced personal humiliation, he was able to run the widow's home without much opposition from the orthodoxy.

\textsuperscript{212} \textit{Mahratta}, Feb. 20. 1916, p.87. Indian Women's University.
Home will be a theatre large enough to allow her to give expression to all that is best in her.\textsuperscript{213}

\textit{Mahratta} argued,

We must contemplate the average Hindu girl as a daughter-in-law having special duties in that relation towards the inmates of her husband's household. She must be considered in this special relation... We are of opinion that the extra Home jurisdiction is peculiarly the duty and privilege of the strong sex... A Hindu woman's social usefulness will depend on her sympathy with and grasp of our traditional literature... Puranic and other religious literature.\textsuperscript{214}

\textit{Mahratta} suggested that,

A university, which caters to the intellect and lets, the religious instinct take care of itself is not worth the name. If our Hindu girls are to spend the most impressionable period of their lives in contact with school work which never appeals to their \textit{Hindu\textit{u}rva} as such, which places before them many a secular ambition without giving them the sacred touch stone to determine the relative worth of these ambitions - such an 'education' is in our opinion more of a curse than anything else.\textsuperscript{215}

\textit{Mahratta} proposed to name the university as the Hindu women's university\textsuperscript{216} and criticised D.K. Karve and the Widow's Home Association for taking over the responsibility of carrying out such a venture. \textit{Mahratta} suggested that, people would not have confidence if the university was to be associated with such a "dogma" and the management was to be handed over to an elected body\textsuperscript{217} who would make suitable changes in the courses taught in the university. The end of all education was to produce self-respecting and practical men and women imbied with a pride in the race.


\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Mahratta}, Feb. 20 . 1916, p.87. Indian Women's University.

\textsuperscript{215} \textit{Mahratta}, Feb. 27, 1916, p.97. Indian Women's University.

\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Mahratta}, Feb. 27, 1916, p. 87.

\textsuperscript{217} \textit{Mahratta}, Feb 20, 1916, p.87.
and religion and the community to which they belong.\textsuperscript{218} Inspite of vehement opposition by Tilakites a women's university was established in June 1916.\textsuperscript{219}

The position of women in the scheme of national education was to be home centered and subservient to men. The object of female education was not to make women equal to men but his complement.\textsuperscript{220} Since such a development was not possible under the existing colonial education, the concept of national education was introduced. Tilak's proposal of national education consisted of discarding English language, introduction of religious and moral education and education in politics. The only proposal of constructive education was the industrial education. "Without Swarajya", declared Tilak, "there will be no possibility of having any kind of education useful to the nation, either primary or higher". The education useful to the nation was "a knowledge of the experience of the ancestors and the religious and moral education.\textsuperscript{221}

Under the colonial educational system imparting such an education was impossible, hence education was to be kept away from women. As late as 1920 i.e. even after forty year's of public life, Tilak was still opposed to the proposal of making elementary education compulsory to girls. When the Poona municipality decided to make primary education compulsory to both boys and girls, he opposed it and wanted to make primary education compulsory for boys alone. The reformers opposed the move. They argued that they were willing to accept "compulsion for both or compulsion for

\textsuperscript{218} Mahratta, Feb 27, 1916, p.98.
\textsuperscript{220} Mahratta, May 5, 1901,p.6.
girls alone but never for compulsion for boys alone". *Mahratta* criticised the reformers "frenzied zeal" for women's education.\textsuperscript{222} A letter by N.C. Kelkar in *Mahratta* opposed the Bombay government proposal to make primary education compulsory to both boys and girls. Kelkar wrote that he was explaining the position of the nationalist councilors. Kelkar stated,\textsuperscript{223}

The cost of free compulsory education to boys and girls simultaneously would be too heavy for the municipality to bear at once in the present state of finances... Compulsion should not be applied for education till an appreciable percentage of the class of children to whom it is to be applied have already been encouraged to attend schools on a voluntary basis. Boys are already being educated so that, that class may now be regarded as ripe for compulsion, on the other hand not more than 25 percent of girls are attending the schools.

For the first time in history, the position of women came under scrutiny during the second half of the 19th century. The rights and wrongs of women became an important issue. Tilak's construct of Hindu woman as a subservient daughter-in-law was diametrically opposite to the reformist construct of emancipated and educated women. Tilak was favourably disposed towards the Age of Consent Bill provided the reformers sought the consent of religious heads and caste *Panchayats*. What Tilak opposed most was imparting English education to women. This is proved by the fact that Tilak showed enthusiasm for Malabari's proposal but turned against it only when the reformers refused to change the curriculum for the girls High School at Poona.


\textsuperscript{222} *Mahratta* Aug 17. 1919. P.392. Extremists in Female Education in Poona C.M. (city municipality).

\textsuperscript{223} *Mahratta*, Feb. 29, 1920, p.103.
Tilak's opposition to the Consent Bill was not based on religious acceptability of a raise in the marriageable age of girls from ten to twelve. He was willing to increase it to sixteen if the reformers accepted his leadership in the issue and helped him in the consolidation of divergent Hindu groups into a monolithic construct of Hinduism. His anti-consent critique drew heavily from the anti-consent argument prevalent in Bengal and his reaction to the passing of the Bill was not that it endangered Hinduism per se. He considered that the passing of the bill threatened Hinduism because the reformers placed the power of caste Panchayat into the hands of the colonial government. However what Tilak was extremely critical was educated and independent women like Rakmabai and Pandita Ramabai. His patriarchal mind refused to accept women as equals, so whenever efforts were made by reformers to educate and emancipate women and whenever such efforts were made by women themselves Tilak opposed it vehemently. In his scheme of things and in his version of Hindu Dharma, which was for all practical purposes varnashrama Dharma, women occupied subordinate place and any attempt to change that position was considered a threat to Hindutva.