CHAPTER II
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THE EMERGENCE OF NEW MEIJI WOMEN

In the previous chapter the major Western influence on Meiji Japan and its subsequent effect on the social, political, educational and economical spheres of the country was briefly discussed. Analytical study of any of the literary works of Meiji era demands such an exercise as it is not possible to evaluate a work written in this period, without referring to the influence of Western civilization. Specially, it is true in the case of Toson, because he himself had been immensely influenced by the Western thought and civilization during his stay in Tokyo as a student of Meiji gaku-in. Toson had written a number of poems, short stories and novels keeping women as the central characters in which he had shown his concern for women in the society. However, it was Kyushujin and Rojo in which he dealt seriously with the changing attitude of urban born and educated modern women, who challenged the existing male dominated society. As we shall see later on, Aya of Kyushujin and Uryu Natsuko and Sawa Sekiko of Rojo are highly educated women, and, in order to, understand their attitude and behaviour, it is essential to

1 Ito Kazuo, Shimazaki Toson Jiten, p.439. Also see, Shincho Nihon Bungaku Album ‘Shimazaki Toson’, p.10; Fukuda Kiyoto and Sasaki Toru, Shimazaki Toson, Hito to Sakuhin, p.23.
look into the historical background of emergence of modern women in the Meiji period. Traditionally Japanese women had a low status in the society as they were considered as only subordinates to males and were treated only as an object for men’s pleasure and procreation. However, modernization of Japanese society and spread of universal education during the Meiji period had made the Japanese women to awaken and fight against this social discrimination which was imposed upon them by the society oriented by Confucian philosophy. Aya, and Uryu Natsuko are the typical representatives of this genre of enlightened modern women. Both of them challenged the traditional family system based on marriage, where a husband has every right and freedom to indulge in any kind of pleasure or sexual fantasy despite his status as a husband, but restricted the wife into the four walls of the house, demanding her to serve her husband obediently and lookafter her children till the end of her life. Before going into the details of enlightenment of Meiji women, I would like to give a brief account of the status of Japanese woman during the Tokugawa and Pre-Tokugawa periods.


3 Eiichi Kiyooka, op.cit., p.39.
Status of Women in the Tokugawa and Pre-Tokugawa Societies

The status of Heian women was not as low as the status of women in the Tokugawa period. Heian women, especially the court ladies, were the champions of literature and letters. But even these high-born court ladies dressed in heavy colourful gowns of many layers, long streaming glossy, black hair, shaved eyebrows, blackened teeth and languid manners, seldom come out of their mansions, but spent much of their time writing poetry and having love adventures with their admirers. As against it, the wife of a warrior had various responsibilities and duties. She took care of the household, educated the children and conducted the administration of the property. When her husband was absent or sick, she lead the soldiers in the defense of her house and property. Certainly life of a warrior woman of Heian or Kamakura period was entirely different from the court ladies, but as she had been bestowed with responsibilities and duties, she had power and enjoyed various rights which the warrior women of Tokugawa period were deprived of. Even the wife of a farmer had higher status and position in the society compared to her counterpart.

4 For a detailed discussion on this subject, please refer Janette Tandin Chabot, Women in Japanese Literature - A View on Tokugawa Women and Literature; and Dorothy Robins Mowry, The Hidden Sun: Women of Modern Japan.

5 Inoue Yasushi, Nihon Josei-shi, pp.61-105.
in the Tokugawa period. This does not mean that women were considered as equal members of the society during this period. Certainly they were never accorded equal respect and power as their male counterparts, but they enjoyed a kind of freedom although they were regarded as convenient instruments. They were not kept from associating with people, nor were they prohibited from going outdoors. They were not very educated or cultured but were active and at the same time, they had the opportunity for much enjoyment. Particularly in marriage, they were very free, never restricted by the confining doctrines of later years.

However, the Japanese society gradually changed into a feudal society based on a rigid Confucian philosophy. By the thirteenth century, a hierarchical society on the guidelines of Confucian ideologies of submissiveness, duty, loyalty, and obedience was taking shape and the five basic social relationships, between father and child, ruler and subject, elder brothers and younger brothers, husband and wife, and between friends, governed the society. The feudal lords found it necessary to restrict the movements of women and confined them within the four walls of their castles. Women were deprived of their social status and rights and reduced

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into a mere instrument for satisfying the sensual pleasures of their husbands and giving birth to their offsprings. They were branded as 'covetous and sinful' and were accorded a lowly status in the social strata, without any right to property or inheritance. Shinran, the thirteenth century priest who founded the most important 'pure land' sect of Buddhism, even went on to the extent of saying that since women are covetous and sinful by nature, they must always think of this fact and exert themselves to cleanse themselves of their sinful nature. Without that they cannot enter into the world of Buddha. Buddhism even stressed the need for the common women to undergo manual hardships, like working in the field etc., even when their husbands are sitting idle, if they are really interested in getting salvation. Suppression of women was an inevitable necessity for the perpetuation of feudal system and those who dare to oppose the government policy were punished and branded as social outcasts.

Neo-Confucianism, which became the official philosophy of Tokugawa period, propagated the theory of 'preponderance of power' in all kinds of human relationships. According to it, heaven is above and earth is below. Similarly, there is an order of high and low in everything, including the husband-wife relationship. It characterizes men as yang (positive)
and women as yin (negative),7 that is, men are like the heavens and the sun and women are like the earth and the moon. In other words, the former is high and the latter is low and humble, and therefore, it is natural for the latter to subordinate to the former. In matrimonial relationship it is the wife's responsibility to preserve harmony in the house. Hence, however much Japanese husbands might neglect or ill-treat their wives, they were never blamed. But if ever the wife should disturb the harmony of the matrimonial relation by any word of complaint, however justified, she was censured for jealously, ill temper, wilfulness or disobedience. Women, in the feudal age had no right on the property as the saying goes: "Joshi wa Sangai ni ie nashi" a woman has no house in all the three worlds, because the house she lived in was never her own, but the property of her father, husband or son.8

'Onna Daigaku' (The Greater Learning for Women) a book written by Kaibara Ekken in the eighteenth century (1790), on the basis of Confucian principles and teachings laid down a list of injection, women should strictly follow in their daily life. According to it, a woman should get up early and go to bed late, should never lie down during the day, should busy herself about the house, not neglecting her spinning, weaving

8 Ibid, p.10.
and serving. She should avoid drinking much of beverages, such as tea or sake, and should never see or hear Kabuki plays, kouta, joruri and other such wanton entertainments. She should avoid going to shrines, temples, and other crowded places before she is forty years old. She need not have any extra-familial social life and any contact with men outside the family, as such activities will disrupt the harmony in the family life. She should serve her husband with utmost sincerity and respect and refrain from making any complaint against him even if she is aware of his illicit affairs and sexual indulgence. She should always obey him and follow his instructions in complete subordination and suppress her emotions for the sake of harmony in the family. One of the synonym for wife even now in Japanese is 'Kanai', literally meaning 'inside or within the house'. One's wife was supposed to be always within the four walls of the house, taking care of the whole family, especially her husband and children. She was prohibited from any kind of social contact outside the family circle. Even when she knows that her husband keeps a concubine, she is not supposed to question him or seek for a divorce. This was the condition during the feudal period. Even today, this practice of keeping concubines is very much

9 Ibid, p.4; Also see, Carmen Blacker, The Japanese Enlightenment: A Study of the Writing of Fukuzawa Yukichi (Quoted from Onna Daigaku).
prevalent among males in Japanese society, and in majority of cases, their wives often pretend ignorance of the fact or behave in such a manner that, that will not invite any disharmony in the family life.

The only qualities that befit a woman are "gentle obedience, charity, mercy and quietness" according to the Confucian principles. She must observe the rules of decorum about maintaining physical distance between men and women, including her husband and brothers. She must form no friendship and no intimacy except when ordered to do so by her parents. She must not find any fault with her husband. She must look to her husband as her lord, and must serve him with all worship and reverence not despising or thinking lightly of him. In the Onna Daigaku, seven reasons are given for divorce if she should fail in her husband's house: (1) disobedience, (2) sterility, (3) lewdness, (4) jealousy (5) leprosy or foul disease, (6) talking overmuch or prattling disrespectfully and (7) stealing." Without her husband's permission she must go nowhere. She must guard against the five worst infirmities that afflict the female; indocility, discontent, slander, jealousy and silliness."


Marriage was purely a family affair during the Tokugawa period and the individuals did not have any say in the choice of their life partners. Especially, in the case of female children, it was the parents who decided whom should their daughter marry and when and how should the marriage ceremony be conducted. Even after marriage it is rare that the woman knows anything about her husband's reputation in society or his accomplishments or his friends and colleagues, because Confucian teachings even restricted the intimate association of husband and wife as a measure to preserve and perpetuate the hierarchical structure of the feudal society. Thus, the husband and wife always maintained a distance between them and often behaved like strangers. However, a wife was required to give due respect to her husband even if she has little love for him, and bow in front of him as he was her master. Onna Daigaku’s (The Greater Learning for Women) attack on woman is so severe that it may be branded as a spiteful work of literature full of curses and abuses heaped on women. The author, Kaibara Ekken, pronounces that most women, seven or eight out of ten, have the five faults of women - indocility and disobedience, discontent and spitefulness, slander, jealousy and shallow intellect - and, therefore, women are inferior to men. In short, The Greater Learning for Women had

12 Ibid (On the association of men and women), pp.110, 120.
formulated a doctrine placing men above women and this doctrine prevailed in the feudal society throughout the Tokugawa period.

As discussed above, women in the Tokugawa period neither possessed any right on property, nor had any civil right to seek a divorce even when their life was at risk. Whereas, the husband was allowed to practice polygamy and keep concubines. He was also allowed to divorce his legal wife, without any solid reason, whenever he wanted. In fact, the Tokugawa society dubbed the poor, oppressed but uncomplaining women as wise wives and faithful women. Only such faithful and obedient wives could survive in the feudal system. Women’s education was totally ignored during this period, because women’s education was considered a waste as their role was restricted within the four walls of the house. This pathetic situation continued till the Meiji restoration in 1896, when the country was opened to foreign trade and the social structure based on hierarchical feudal system was overthrown.

Post-Meiji Enlightenment of Women

The Tokugawa ideology, which upheld the preservation of a male dominated society in the lines of Neo-Confucianism, was the guiding spirit which perfected the early Meiji society also. Although the new Meiji government introduced various progressive policies to modernise the society by abolishing the age old feudal system based on class and hierarchy, it
gave little importance to the uplift and emancipation of women in the early years of Meiji. Same as Tokugawa rulers, Meiji rulers also upheld the Confucian view that, women were destined to serve and obey men, to be gentle and meek, pure and clean, and accomplished in housework. The mastery of these virtues was the ultimate aim of womanhood. However, the enlightened mass and intellectuals of the Meiji era could not compromise with this policy of the government. People's contact with Western learning and philosophy made them aware of concepts such as human rights, independence and individual freedom. Social equality, irrespective of sex, age, or social status became the war cry of the common people. Even the emperor himself had become aware of the necessity for women's education and emancipation although its motive was purely utilitarian. "Since our country has not yet established any institution for female education, our women are often not too sensible. As the upbringing of the children depends on the mother's guidance and is truly an urgent matter, it is certainly proper for those who now go abroad that they should take along with them wives or sisters, so that they may grasp the principles of female education there and also learn methods of child rearing." 13 This view of the emperor shows

13 "Imperial Edict delivered to the family heads of nobles on October 22, 1871; Meiji Japan Through Contemporary Sources, vol.3, 1869-1894."
the changing attitude of the new regime and finally, the charter Oath taken by the emperor in 1868, broke open the way for social equality, equal opportunity, purging of old and obsolete social customs, and seeking of knowledge throughout the world. The fifth article of the Charter Oath was particularly pertinent to the future of Japanese women, for it fostered education and encounters with western women and customs.

Various organizations, such as 'Keimo Undo' (Enlightenment movement), 'Jiyu Minken Undo' (Freedom and People's Rights movement) and individuals like Fukuzawa Yukichi, Ueki Emori etc. pioneered the women's liberation movement during the Meiji period. Fukuzawa Yukichi, who was the leader of Keimo Undo, argued for equal right and opportunity for women. He was highly critical of the custom of polygamy prevalent in his society. He propagated a doctrine in which family of one husband and one wife formed the basic unit of human society and the basis for moral human relationship. He criticised the feudal custom of placing men above women and argued that a wife should not serve her

14 G.B.Sansom, op.cit., p.318.
16 Inoue Kiyoshi, Nihon Joseishi, pp.212-13; G.B.Sansom, op.cit.,pp.311-12, 342-43; also see, H.Paul Varley, op.cit., p.213; I.Takamure, Josei no Rekishi-2, pp.536-41.
husband as if he were a lord and she a servant. He emphasized that the independence of a community could be achieved only if its citizens are independent and free of social oppression. "Society should afford women the same rank as men, the same rights, and concerning property, the same rights of ownership as men," he wrote in "Nihon Fujinron" (On Japanese women).\(^1\) Fukuzawa also called for equal rights for women in marriage and divorce. He was a strong proponent of women's education. He argued that there should not be any distinction between boys and girls as far as their education is concerned. He believed equality of both sexes in education, with no superiority or inferiority of either, which will ultimately make each individual, whether man or woman, aware of his rights. Fukuzwa wrote a series of articles on women, stressing mainly four points (1) equality of men and women and the independence and self-respect of women; (2) encouragement of practical education for women which would guide them to take up any field useful in actual life; (3) a realistic outlook that would lead to a gradual improvement in the position of women rather than a rapid transformation (4) the necessity for men to change their attitudes for any improvement of the position of women to take place. He

\(^{1}\) Eiichi Kiyooka, op.cit., pp.6-36.
criticized the 'Onna Daigaku' (Greater learning for women) severely, saying that a nation aiming to modernization cannot afford to stick on to an obsolete social set-up. The new society of Meiji has a different morality and therefore, it requires a new set of rules and regulations, modern and progressive, so that the nation would become rich and strong and its citizens would become independent. Although his philosophy was utilitarian in character, it exerted tremendous influence on the women's liberation and enlightenment movement of the Meiji period.

Another important organ which campaigned for women's liberation and equal rights between 1874-75 was 'Meiroku Zasshi', a journal published by 'Meirokusha', an association of scholars and intellectuals who supported the complete westernization of the country. It published several essays on women; to name a few; "On wives and concubines" by Mori Arinori; "Creating good mothers", by Nakamura Masanao; and "On destroying prostitution" by Tsuda Hamichi. By the middle of 1870s, the campaign for women's liberation and equality became a popular movement not only in the cities and urban areas but throughout the country, under the powerful leadership of leaders of 'Jiyuminken Undo' (Freedom and People's rights

19 Nakamura Mitsuo, Meiji Bungaku-shi, pp.44-45; H.Paul Varley, op.cit., p.211.

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movement) and many women activists. Activists of women's liberation under the influence of Herbert Spencer's "social statistics", which was translated and introduced into the Japanese society by this time, demanded complete freedom, liberty, and human rights for the individual irrespective of sex or social status. According to Spencer, an individual must be free to do everything which is directly or indirectly requisite for the due satisfaction of every mental and bodily want. The right to liberty and the corresponding right and duty to take it is not the right of a few privileged people but of all. Spencer asserted that granting equal freedom to all citizens in the society is a prerequisite to normal life in the society. Upholding this philosophy, the activists of women's liberation demanded the government to open equal opportunity for education for women and abolish all the laws and restrictions stipulated by the previous regime as a measure to oppress the women.

Ueki Emori, one of the pioneers of 'Jiyuminka Undo', campaigned for equal rights for man and women and stressed the importance for women's freedom and right to choose suitable life partner for marriage. "The problem of 19th century society is the problem of women. The history of 19th century civilization is the history of expansion of women's rights",  

20 Quoted in, Ai to Sei no Jiyu: "KE" Kara no Kaiho, by Esashi Akiko.
he wrote in the preface of 'Toyono fujo' a magazine brought out by Sasaki Toyoju, a women activist, in 1889. He argued that in order to acquire their rights, women should not depend on the male society, but they themselves should fight for it. As a result, many women activists, like Kishida Toshiko, Fukuda Hideko, Shimizu Shikin etc. started a movement which challenged the male domination in the society. These women were highly educated and were the leaders of women's liberation. They demanded equality for women and attacked the traditional marriage system in which a woman is traded like a commercial product for the convenience of the family, giving least consideration to the emotion, or feeling of the girl concerned. They also vigorously attacked the evil custom of polygamy prevailed in the society and campaigned for a family set up based on one husband and one wife and equal right for divorce. Similarly, the publication of "Jogaku Zasshi", Japan's first women's magazine, in 1885 by Iwamoto Yoshiharu, principal of Meiji Joyakko of that time, was the occasion for yet another campaign for women. Iwamoto was a Christian and believed in love and equality before god. His was a commoners' movement that shared the ideas of Fukuzawa and Mori Arinori and believed in monogamy, abolition of prostitution,

education for women and equality of men and women in the home. Consequently, in 1886, a group of Christian women founded the Tokyo Fujin Kyofukukai\(^2\) (Tokyo Women's Temperance Society) and advocated monogamy as well as supervision of Japanese prostitutes abroad and other related issues.

The government was finally partially acceded to the demands of these women's liberation activists and opened the door for compulsory education for all irrespective of gender in 1880.\(^3\) Many girls' schools were established in various parts of the country even before the promulgation of universal education. Some of them are Tokyo Jogakko (1873), Tokyo Joshi Shihan gakko (1876), Atomi Jojiku, Ferris Seminary etc.\(^4\) Execution of the "Koto Jogakko Rei"\(^2\) (Girls High School Ordinance) in 1900 had finally accorded full recognition to the education of women and high schools and training schools were founded in all parts of the country. There were only 26 public schools for girls at the time of promulgation of this Ordinance, but this number was increased to more than 66 (girls high school) after its execution,

\(22\) Inoue Kiyoshi, Nihon Josei-shi, p.218.


\(24\) Oida Yoshiaki, Ryokuyoshu no Josei, p.18. See also, Soma Kuromitsu, Mokui - Meiji Taisho Bungakushi Kaiso; Inoue Kiyoshi, Nihon Joseishi, p.214.

\(25\) Honda Masuko, Saishiki-Sareru Meiji - Jogakusei no Keifu.
although there were reactionary forces within the government who strongly protested against higher education of women. This group of people argued strongly that women's higher education is useless, and therefore, the fund for girls higher education must be diverted to the education of boys. After the Sino-Japanese war of 1895, even the Meiji government realized the need for orienting the society on the lines of imperialism by inculcating the spirit of nationalism in its citizens. For that, women must be educated in such a way that they will become "good wives and wise mothers" (Ryosai Kenbo). Hence, moral education of women on the lines of Confucian ideology started again in school although a majority of women resented it and revolted against the government policy. However, introduction of universal and compulsory education and various women's liberation movements had given rise to a new generation of women who changed the face of Meiji society. Education had enlightened them and made them aware of their rights and freedom. They no more wanted to be oppressed by the society.

The old practice of "Chignon" hair-do (or mage) and women's kimono were the first two things which were to be discarded by the enlightened women and high school students of

26 Takamura Itsue, Josei no Rekishi-II, pp.544-52; Gail Lee Bernstein, Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945, pp.7, 158.
early Meiji period. "Chignon" hairdo was considered a symbol of man’s oppression of woman. In 1886, a group of women in Tokyo formed an association, "Fujin Sokubatsu kai," to get rid of the traditional hairdo. It was a direct attack on article 39th of "Ishiki Kaii Jorei", a set of regulations promulgated by the Meiji government in 1871, which prohibited the hair-cut of women without permission. "Fujin Sokubatsukai" pressurised the government and ultimately they succeeded in getting the law withdrawn and women were free to make any kind of hairdo thereafter. The next major achievement was their success in do away with the traditional women’s kimono which again was inconvenient and restricted the free movement of women. However, as far as the adoption of Western dress was concerned, the Meiji government itself was in agreement for it, as an imperial ordinance in 1872 prescribed foreign dress for court and other official ceremonies, because foreign (western) dress was considered as a symbol of modernization. Girl students of early Meiji period for some time used to wear big obi, men’s hakama, and geta, and walked around the school campus and streets, with

27 See, Honda Masuko, Saishiki Sareru Meiji, Jogakusei no Keifu.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid. See also, Takamure Itsue, Josei no Rekishi-II, p.540.
30 G.B.Sansom, op.cit., p.382.
their sleeves rolled up like boys and carrying Western books. Such a scene was never seen during the Tokugawa period. Traditional dress was gradually replaced by the more simple and convenient Western dress and by 1880s Western dress was common among the general public. Escape from the traditional hair-do and heavy kimono naturally assured the Meiji women physical freedom, which enabled them to move around easily and freely.

As the literary rate increased, women started asserting themselves more and more. Those who have come into contact with Western culture and civilization attracted to the western music and dance, and the girl students of 1884-1887 completely got involved in the activities of 'Rokumei-kan', a place opened in November 1884 to entertain the Western (European) residents in Japan in Western style. During the Rokumeikan period, Western dance was even made a part of the school curriculum and young and enlightened girl students considered it as a part of their struggle to win complete freedom and liberty. Girl students, wearing western dress, decorating their hair with colourful ribbons, and riding on bicycles, were the objects of talk in the cities and villages and were the symbol of the period. They were engaged in playing tennis and created a typical conversational language of their own in

31 Takamure Itsue, op.cit., pp.531-41.
which English vocabularies were often mingled with Japanese. They had succeeded in creating a typical culture under the influence of Western civilization and their own enlightened world view. 'Love', hitherto had been considered as a forbidden fruit for women, had become one of the most popular words among the girl students. The Christian ideal of mutual love (ai) and the love (renai) between man and woman as preached by the romantic poet Kitamura Tokoku, who declared 'love' as the foundation for human existence, became the guiding spirit of girl students. They had questioned the traditional system of marriage and family where men had all kinds rights and power, and asserted their right to determine their own future. They strongly resented to the traditional custom of choosing marriage partners by their parents and family. 'We shall never marry' was the slogan among the enlightened educated women in the middle and end of Meiji period. They wanted to work instead of getting married and sacrificing their life for the sake of husband and his family. However, unfortunately, there were only few avenues which provided job opportunities to women. Therefore most of them either ended up as school teachers or got employment in low

32 Kitamura Tokoku, Ensei Shika to Josei, (Gendai Nihon Bungaku Taikei-6), pp.63-66.
33 Honda Masuko, op.cit.
34 Oida Yoshiaki, "Ryokuyoshu" no Josei, p.18.
paid and low status jobs or got involved in women’s liberation movements. Meiji government did not permit women in its military or government offices, because of the reactionary philosophy of "Ryosaikenbo" (good wives and wise mothers) which asserted that woman should take up only the household works including proper, disciplined upbringing of their offsprings, and therefore, their education must be aimed at achieving proper motherhood only.

Prominent Women Leaders of Women’s Liberation Movement

It is worth mentioning here brief accounts of activities by few prominent women leaders of women’s enlightenment movement of Meiji period. These women were typical representatives of the enlightened new woman of that period. Kishida Toshiko (1861-1901) joined the Jiyu Minken Undo (Freedom and People’s Rights Movement) in an young age of seventeen. She became a staunch supporter of women’s rights and liberation ever since she delivered her first speech on the subject in Osaka in 1882. She became a teacher in Ferris girl’s school in Yokohama in 1887 and contributed many articles regarding women’s rights and equality to "Jogaku Zasshi", published from Meiji Jogakko under the patronage of Iwamoto Yoshiharu. ‘Jogaku Zashi’ played a major role in

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spreading the new concept of 'love' between man and woman and
the importance of freedom to choose one's spouse by oneself
through love marriage. Kishida Toshiko very strongly
criticized the traditional custom of marriage in her
representative work, "Konin no Fukanzen". She argued that
woman (girl) should be given the right and freedom to choose
her own spouse and marriage should not be an act of
convenience. She also criticized the existing rule on
remarriage and divorce. "A woman cannot serve two husbands",
the old social custom prohibited a widow to remarry even if
her husband died when she was very young. Abstaining from a
second marriage was considered by the society as a virtue of
the widow. Whereas, a man could have divorced his wife
whenever he wanted and gone for a second marriage with any
woman he would prefer. Kishida Toshiko, through her writings
and speeches protested against this social discrimination
against women and strongly defended women's rights.

Shimizu Shikin (1868-1933) was another prominent member
of Jiyu Minken Undo and Joken Kakucho Undo (Women's Rights
Expansion Movement) who strongly advocated one husband-one
wife (monogamy) family set up. She got married in an early
age of eighteen but divorced at twenty-first. She joined as
a columnist in "Jogaku zasshi" in 1890 and published a short

36 Ibid.
novel "Koware Yubiwa", a novel based on her own real marriage which broke down, in 1891, in which she attacked severely the system of polygamy practiced by Japanese males. She, through her novel, instructed her readers, especially young girls, not to dream about married life, as the life in the inlaw's house is not as enjoyable or easy as they think, especially, if the husband is not honest and faithful to his wife. She attacked the existing criminal law which permitted married males to practice polygamy and illicit affairs, but punished married women for prostitution and immoral activities. Fukuda Hideko37 (1852-1927) was also a strong, representative and supporter of Jiyu Mioken Undo and Joken Kakucho Undo. She emphasised the political rights and awareness of Japanese woman. In her representative work "Danjo Michi O Koto ni su", she lamented that in Japan women are looked down by men because they (women) do not show any interest in politics. She argued for bestowing political powers to Japanese women as they too are as patriot as their male counterparts. She also demanded the authority to grant equal right to women for divorce, and exhausted her energy to the subject of women's education. She founded two educational institutions for the benefit of women, namely, the Joshi Kogei Gakko (Girl's arts

school) and the Joshi Gigei Gakko (Girls arts and crafts school). She protested against the Criminal law of 1883 which upheld the Confucian ideology of 'inequality' of men and women. Unless there is equality of sexes, she asserted, that it is not possible to realise a "smooth love marriage" and therefore removal of this inequality from the constitution is the first and foremost objective of women. The existing social structure and set up are not suitable for free love between men and women, hence, it is inevitable to have a revolutionary reorganization of the society, she argued. All these women were leaders of their generation, who were highly educated and were immensely influenced by western and Christian ideals of love, brotherhood, individual freedom and equality. Their relentless activities guided their fellow women to the path of modern civilization based on freedom, love, self-respect, equality and awareness of individual self.

We can roughly classify the newly emerged Meiji women into mainly two categories; the 'modern girls' of girls' schools and the women leaders of women's enlightenment and liberation. Many popular novels of later part of Meiji period depicted the newly emerged modern women as the central characters. Hagiwara Hatsuno of 'Makaze Koikaze' by Kosugi

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39 Esashi Akiko, op.cit.
Tengai, published in 1904, Ono Shigeru of 'Seishun' by Oguri Fuyo, written in 1906, Omiya of Konjikiyasha (1899) by Osaki Koyo, Aya of Kyushujin (1902), and Uryu Natsuko and Sawa Sekiko of 'Rojo' (1903) by Shimazaki Toson are typical examples of heroines of this genre. Especially, Aya and Uryu Natsuko are the symbol of emancipated Meiji women. Aya and Natsuko are representing the group of enlightened women who indulged in free love and questioned the customs of practice of marriage and family life, whereas, Sawa Sekiko of Rojo is representing the group of educated and enlightened women who although aware of their emancipated self, followed the traditional practice of society. Confrontation between this two groups of women was very common during that period in the society. Toson's heroines are not products of mere imagination but typical examples of a new generation of women in modern Japan, and there underlies the actual reason why I have chosen these two short stories as the object of my study.

Besides introducing the compulsory elementary education law in 1880, and Koto Jogakko Rei in 1900, the Meiji government had acceded to the demands and pressure of 'Jiyu Minken Undo' and 'Joken Kakucho Undo' and introduced several other laws for the benefit of Meiji women. In 1871, a law for abolishing sale of girls as prostitutes and geisha was
promulgated" and in 1872, people (mainly men) were directed to discontinue the old fashion of hair dressing," and this law was gradually made applicable to women too as a result of their relentless protest against the discriminatory regulations of the government. The new Meiji constitution also permitted women to be a household head or an owner of land or of public bonds, thus allowing her to possess moveable and immovable property. Since 1871, the government even started sending girls abroad for higher education, which was an unimaginable act during the pre Meiji periods. Moreover, the "right to personal liberty" and the "wife's right to seek divorce" were made legal in May 1873. Women were granted the right to go to court after consulting with their parents and brothers if their demand for divorce was rejected by their husbands. However, the real problem was lying in the execution of these laws and regulations as the majority of people in the male chauvinist society was not in agreement with the government's policy of granting such liberty and rights to the women folk.

By 1890s, the country was divided into two main campus - progressive who stood for freedom and the rights of the

40 G.B.Sansom, op.cit., p.386.
41 Ibid, p.330.
subjects irrespective of sex or social status, and the conservatives who believed in absolute rule by the emperor and resisted any kind of democratization of the country. These conservatives argued for a government and social set-up based upon the old Confucian ideology and morality, and protested strongly against granting women's rights or giving them equal education along with men. Especially after the Sino-Japanese war of 1895, the conservatives power increased, and ultimately, they succeeded in getting implemented the new education policy for women based on the revived Confucian approach on women, 'Ryosai Kenbo' (good wives and wise mothers). They argued that women's role in the society is different from men and therefore, they should be given education to nurture virtues for good "motherhood" and "faithful wives". Women's curriculum for education after the introduction of 'Imperial Rescript on Education' in 1890, contained mainly the study of Confucian 'morals', how to serve one's husband, how to bring up children, how to behave in front of others etc. Girls were instructed to wear kimono in place of the western style uniform. This was a setback in the women's liberation movement in Japan during the Meiji period. However, this setback did not discourage the Meiji women, who gained more strength day by day, and acquired most of the

civil rights one after another although they were still had a social status lower than the men and were denied of political rights such as voting right etc., and equal opportunity to work along with men. At least in the case of education, dress, hair-do, marriage and divorce, possession and inheritance of property, the Meiji women acquired equality. Their emancipated position assured them a certain amount of self-respect, self-reliance, and individual freedom compared to their predecessors of the feudal era.