Changing Role of Indian Women with changing Socio-economic condition of the country
CHAPTER II
CHANGING ROLE OF INDIAN WOMAN WITH CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

In order to understand the social, economic, religious and political status of present day women an overview of the status of women over the past is essential. ‘As a matter of fact, within the Indian sub-continent there have been infinite variations on the status of women diverging according to cultural milieu, family structure, class, caste, property rights and morals.’

‘One of the best ways to understand the spirit of a civilization...is to study the history of the position and status of its women in it...The history of the position and status of women is therefore of vital importance...and can be taken back to prehistoric times. The data for some of the subsequent centuries are still incomplete and unsatisfactory; nevertheless we can trace the development of women’s position through the subsequent periods with a fair amount of confidence and reliability.’

We will review from the Vedic period to have a comprehensive understanding of the status of women and the consequent reasons that led to the change in the status. ‘The study material of the life and position of women in the Rig-Vedic age are very scanty; any observation is...bound to be based more on indirect evidence like literary allusions than on direct and systematic data’.

The position of women in a society can be judged to a large extent in the way the birth of a girl child is received. In the Rig-Veda we find a number of names denoting a girl child in her various stages of life and her different roles.

71 Altekar, A.S., ’Position of Women in Hindu Civilization', From prehistoric times to present day, Motiram Banarsidas, Delhi, 1987, pp.1-3.
72...it would be convenient to divide the period...into four divisions:
(1) The age of the Rigveda, from c.2500 to c.1500 B.C.
(2) The age of the Later Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads, from c.1500 B.C.to c.500 B.C.
(3) The age of the Sutras, Epic and the early Smritis, from c. 500 B.C. to c.A.D. 500.
(4) The age of later Smritis, Commentators and Digest Writers, from c. A.D 500 to A.D.1800.”
74 Shastri, Shakuntala Rao, ‘Status of Women during the Rig-Veda’, pp.1
in life. Women were treated at par\textsuperscript{74} with men and that house was considered happy where there were both a son and a daughter.

The Rig Vedic times were enviable as the intellectual development of women was as important as of the men.\textsuperscript{75} Women enjoyed considerable freedom during the Vedic period in matters of marriage, participation in religious rituals. Marital status of girls was not a norm and girls received military and administrative training. They were at par in the area of education and in the choice of a spouse they had the freedom, like the males, to choose their partner.

During the time of the Atharva-Veda\textsuperscript{76} there was a drastic change in the status of women as the rituals regarding marriage and death had been considerably developed and was operational in the society. The major change was that till the Rig-Vedic period the dead were buried but at the time of the Atharva-Veda cremation was the means adopted. “…funeral rites necessitated an obligation; and a son being the nearest to the dead, came to be chosen for the purpose…”\textsuperscript{77}

The son was then considered a gateway to salvation so the birth of a son became a very important issue. This ideology of son preference, backed by

\textsuperscript{74} Altekar,A.S., ‘The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation: From Prehistoric Times to the Present Day.’ Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1978, p.51. “Girls were educated like boys and had to pass through a period of brahmacharya...Women had an absolute equality with men in the eye of religion: they could perform sacrifices independently and were not regarded as an impediment in religious pursuits...The position of the wife was an honored one in the family...The ‘sati’ custom was not in vogue...a widow could remarry... The only disability from which a woman suffered was that she could not hold or inherit property.”

\textsuperscript{75} Ed. by Meena Klekar& Deepi Ganavane, ‘Feminism in search of an Indian Identity’, Rawat Publication, New Delhi,2003,p.50-55. ‘We come across Vedic hymns written by female rishis’\textsuperscript{75} during the Rig-Vedic period. The names of Gargi and Maitreyi as the great woman philosophers of the Vedic period are taken with great respect even today. Such is their reverence that… ‘The list of seers to whom tarpana is offered at the time of sraddhas includes the names of three women Shulbha, Gargi, Maitreyi’

\textsuperscript{76} The Atharva Veda also contains material from the Rig Veda, but of interest are the numerous incantations and metaphysical texts. The Atharva Veda was written down much later than the rest of the Vedas, about 200 B.C.; it may have been composed about 1000 B.C. As for the status and position of women during that period, there was a drastic change. ‘The Atharvaveda contains charms and rituals to ensure the birth of a son in preference to that of a daughter (III, 23; VI, II) …in the Vedic and Upanishadic ages. This led to the decline in the status of woman as secondary to men. ‘...with the importance of ancestor worship increasing sons alone were regarded as eligible for offering oblations... daughters could not perform this very important religious duty...’\textsuperscript{70} Then hymns and rituals were performed to have a son and the prime purpose of a woman was to produce a son.

\textsuperscript{77} Altekar,A.S., \textit{op.cit}, 1978, p.69.
religious belief became very predominant and providing a son became the primary responsibility and marital duty of the wife. The birth of daughters came to be considered as inauspicious and hymns and rituals were being performed to have a son. Within the social boundaries, women in the household were conditioning the women to want and produce a male child. The paradoxical social ideology prevailed with woman being worshipped and at the same time considered the private property of man. This also reflected upon the highly dualistic ideology prevalent in Indian society.

The Age of the Later Samhitas, Brahmans and Upanishads endorsed the son preference ideology, strengthening the belief of the attainment of salvation was only through the son. These stringent ideologies supported by rituals and religious beliefs circumscribed the freedom and status of women. Women did not attend public assemblies and could not inherit property on their own. Polyandry was discouraged, but polygamy, adultery, and prostitution were generally accepted except during certain rituals.

However the name of two women philosophers such as Gayatri and Maitreyi is taken with pride and reverence even today. ‘Almost contemporaneous with these remarkable women are the Buddhist nuns, called Theris…meaning one who has grown old with knowledge and Gatha means a song…They were admitted into the order of the nuns and were the first of their sex to join in Gautama’s time their utterances have survived and have come to be known as Their-Gatha…”

The Vedic texts had a vast influence upon the philosophies of Jainism and Buddhism that took roots in the 6th century B.C. These religions emerged

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78 The Upanishads are a continuation of the Vedic philosophy, and were written between 800 and 400 B.C. They elaborate on how the soul (Atman) can be united with the ultimate truth (Brahman) through contemplation and meditation, as well as the doctrine of Karma—the cumulative effects of a person’s actions(c.1500 BC to c.500 BC) “In the range of Sanskrit literature, the Sama and the Yajur Vedas follow the Rig-Veda…The importance of the Atharva Veda is two-fold: religious and historical’ The Sama veda and the Yajur Veda are of secondary importance. The Sama Veda contains the musical hymns, the Yajur Veda contains ritual formulas for the priests to be used in the sacrifices the society was highly patriarchal ‘Samihitas’ is a collection of the Vedic mantras and sacrificial formulas. ‘The main context of description of any ‘Brahmana’ text is ‘yajna’…in the rituals, elements of the male and female as the elements of creation were worshipped…so the female was part of the ritual…but always subordinate to the male…”

79 Shastri, Shakuntala Rao, op.cit., pp88-99(Their-Gatha is known as the song of the Theris. It forms a part of the Buddhist Canon and it consists of compositions by seventy-three nuns—These Theris come from all walks of life and these songs give us a small account of their lives.)
due to the ritualistic domination of the priestly class of Brahmins. During Jainism, women were drawn from various backgrounds into the monastic order. Buddhism also recognized the individuality and independence of women and did not discourage women towards ‘salvation in their own right.’ Women were also given ‘an honorable place in the society by the Buddhists ….’

The period around 200 B.C. to about 300 A.D. was perhaps a dismal one, especially for the Punjab and the Gangatic plain. The successive attacks by foreigners led to a major setback to the people and to the cultural changes among the people. With the Aryan rule established some centuries before the beginning of this period, a further decline in the status of women is noticed. The Aryans kept female slaves and polygamy was prevalent. This led to further deterioration of the life, position and status of women. During this time period the Aryans had established themselves in the Gangatic plane and owing to their prosperous life started marrying inter-caste in the lower shudra women. This had disastrous implications and to avoid this, the priests declared that the non-Aryan woman could not participate in the rituals, curtailting women from Vedic studies. The repercussions of this being that women were not encouraged in the Vedic studies and that marriage was considered equivalent to Upaynayna for the girls and they need not study, leading to the curtailment in the educational pursuits of girls during that period. To facilitate this order, the age of the ceremony of Upaynayna was reduced, leading to the age of marriage being as early as 9 or 10 years.

Just like in Vedic references we find women seers, Buddhism too did not discourage women towards asceticism ‘...like the Brahmavadinis in Brahminical circles, several ladies in the Buddhist families used to lead a life of celibacy with the aim of understanding and following the eternal truths of religion and philosophy...eg. Sanghamitra, Subha, Anupama and Samudha were examples of women seers...’

81 Horner, I.B., Women were admitted in the order of nuns and hence enjoyed respect in their life. We have examples of many women who gave up wealth and the comforts of life to pursue religion and a life of austerity in the order of Buddhism. ‘Some of these women are Dharmapala, Anupama, Queen Kshema, Chapa and others ‘Women Under Primitive Buddhism’, London, p. 104. [repd. Manmohan Kaur, ‘Women in India’s Freedom Struggle,’ Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1985, p. 1.]

82 This period can be broadly accorded as the age of the Sutras, Epics and Early Smrtis (c.500BC to c. AD 500)

83 Altekar, A.S., ‘The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization: Retrospect and Prospect,’ Manohar, New Delhi, 2005, p.58-59. ‘At about c.200 A.D. a majority of girls performed the Upanayana ceremony only as a formality before marriage...now by this time it was felt meaningless to continue this...it was declared that marriage was a substitute for ‘upanayana’...and they need not have any separate sacred initiation.'
By the beginning of the Christian era pre-puberty marriages became the order of the day, opposition of widow remarriage and customs like the ‘niyoga’\(^{84}\) was eliminated. There was revival of ‘sati’ which started spreading in the wider format of society, leading to a greater degeneration of the status of women.

Till today epics like The Mahabharata and The Ramayana have played a key role in shaping the ideological beliefs of the Hindu society and their attitude towards women as well. The women characters of these popular epics have played as strong role models for women over centuries. Women are often compared and they themselves identify with these characters. ‘Gandhari’s act of blindfolding herself lights the enormous approbation associated with being a chaste and pious wife. The epitome of chastity lay in unquestioning fidelity...’Madri the wife of King Pandu expresses her fidelity by dying with her husband and this becomes a strong reference point for supporters of Sati in the future years... Kunti retreating into the woods to do penance ... The social conditions and the fear of social rejection of having an illegitimate child led her to abandon the child... Draupadi achieved the same objectivity by her unflinching service to all of her five husbands and by giving up all royal comforts. Draupadi the prime character of the Mahabharata is projected as the ideal image of womanhood... ‘her role as a ‘dutiful wife’, a ‘pativarata’...and her character as a mother.\(^{85}\) ‘The crux of womanhood lies in the blind acceptance of the inequality imposed on woman... the ways of enslaving a woman in the patriarchal society are very subtle. The total sacrifice of personality is framed out in such a way that if she does not follow the code of

\(^{84}\) Niyoga is an ancient Hindu tradition, when a woman (whose husband is either incapable of fatherhood or has died without having a child) would request and appoint a person for helping her bear a child. According to this Hindu tradition the man who was appointed must be or would most likely be a Brahmín or Rishi or a revered person The most famous examples of Niyoga occurred in the Mahabharata. Dhritarashtra, Pandu and Vidura were the three children born by this process when Rishi Vedavyasa was the appointed man. Later Pandu himself was incapable of producing children. The five Pandavas, Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva were the offspring born out of Niyoga, the respective biological fathers being various Devas.

Hinduism has projected and championed upon the image of Sita as the submissive wife, as the role model and an epitome of domestic wifely duty towards one’s husband. ‘Sita’s ideal qualities are presented in the Ramayana to be her unquestioned subordination to the demands of her husband’. These mythological references became a role model for women to be conditioned upon, acting like these characters and emulating them. Any deviance from this ideology would deem them the woman with a ‘loose character’. The code of conduct was set up in the Manusmriti.

A woman, in her childhood is dependent on her father, in her youth on her husband and, in her old age on her sons’. The theory of Beeja-Kestra-Nyaya was further responsible in lowering the role and the status of women. It not only strengthened but in a way justified man’s supremacy and his right over women and children. Children, as in earlier matriarchal societies, were known by their mothers name, now became the property of the father. ‘...Women came to be regarded as a commodity, an object to be given as a gift...subduing women, capturing them in war, exchanging them for something else became a symbol of man’s gallantry...’

The Yagnavalkya, another important smriti, laid down that parents who did not marry their girls did an unpardonable sin. Hence ‘The ‘Upaynayna’ of women went completely out of vogue...Widow Remarriage had been prohibited during this period. The ‘sati’ custom was common in the fighter class...In the case of non-ksatriya girls, who were married at the age of 10 or 11, no education was imparted...about A.D. 1200, daughters of rich families

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88 The two most important Smritis also referred to as the Dharamshastras written around c.a.d.500 were the ManuSmriti and the Yagnavalkya Smriti. They became the most important source of reference for following the social norms in the society.

In the Manusmriti code of conduct women were denounced from freedom. In his views The Beeja-Kestra-Nyaya as presented in Manuscript, in chapter 10, shloaka 68 to 70 and in chapter 9, shloka 32 to 52. The whole of Manusmriti speaks of the supreme importance of the Beeja the seed, essential for procreation. This theory propagated by Manu influenced all aspects of practical life. Be it morality, culture, art, religious practices, rituals and the marriage system of the society. ‘The Beeja-ksatra-Nyaya is a form of supremacy of Beeja...its glorified cosmological expression occurs in Bhagavad Gita, where Krishna calls himself the father of the world because he is the giver of the seed’
89 Bhagvad Gita, Shlokas 3&4, Adhayaya 14, Ibid., pp.93-94.
90 Klekar, Meena, op.cit., pp.93-95.
did get some literary education through special teachers...but with the coming of Muslim rule this practice also declined and literacy was confined among the dancing class of women. The Christian theologians were declaring during this time that the husband was the lord of the wife, as Christ was the head of the Church. Hindu Smritis advocated an exactly similar doctrine, and maintained that the husband was the wife’s god and her only duty was to obey and serve him... early marriages led to higher mortality rates among women due to early maternity and the code of conduct of Manusmriti allowed immediate remarriage of the widower and a man of 25 or 30 years would get a bride of 9 or 10 years, this disparity in mental and physical level led to the spread of concubines and dancing girls being allowed to dance with sacred ‘samskaras’ and temple worship by dancing girls became quite common in several parts of the country... Smritis wrote strict conduct for widows and some of them being young preferred the terrible ordeal of the ‘sati’ to the staunch and tiresome life of a widow, The tonsure of the widow came into vogue by about the eighth century A.D. a means of making the widow look unattractive by shaving the hair to ward away unwanted attention...with the advent of Muslims the ‘purdah’ got its footing, leading to more segregation of women...’

Whatever the conditions and the compulsions that women faced, they still were better placed and did have a better position in society until the Muslim invasions. The decline in their status was more pronounced with the coming of the Huns. The political instability with continuous invasions, economic depression, which continued for almost three centuries, adversely affected the position and status of women in India. For the Hindu society the honor of their women was of great importance. For this they adopted means which worked against the development for women. Infanticide, child marriage, sati, purdah, and prejudices against the education of women became commonly

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91 Manusmriti also known as Mānava-Dharmashāstra is the most important and earliest metrical work of the Dharmashastra textual tradition of Hinduism. Generally known in English as the Laws of Manu, it was first translated into English in 1794 by Sir William Jones, an English Orientalist and judge of the British Supreme Court of Judicature in Calcutta. 

practiced. This outlook towards the women of the Hindu society hampered their growth, welfare and development so severely that reforms for many centuries later on could not wipe out these prejudices prevalent against women.

During the Medieval period the status of woman was at its all time low. In the Medieval period, the status of women became linked ritually and philosophically with that of ‘sudras’...the reason for this being their lack of Vedic Knowledge\textsuperscript{93} and therefore their inability to perform Vedic rituals.\textsuperscript{94}

In Traditional Indian literature the portrayal of women has been as the enactment of the suffering, virtuous and self-sacrificing as projected in characters of \textit{Sita} and \textit{Savitri} in the ancient Indian texts. After the epics, there was a dearth of female role models in literary references. The ordinary Indian woman, asserting her right in the society had no moral support to help her defy the social norms prevalent against her. For this reason women became the silent custodians of customs and rituals in the society. Women over the ages have circumscribed their own boundaries and ... ‘the inheritance of Indian modes of thought and feeling rest with the women; for a definite philosophy is bound up with household ritual and traditional values...found expression in folk-tales, cradle-song and popular poetry...that Indian women ...have [93] ‘It is interesting to see the paradoxical images of femininity in the Mahabharata. From a helpless female to a destructive and powerful female the varying shades are visible in this epic story. The human personification of the female is projected as meek, helpless and one who surrenders to the situation, yet the divine personification of the female is projected as all powerful. This led to the visualization of the female deity, also satisfying the primordial tendencies of humans to the mother image. Thus the images of Durga and Kali as the embodiment of domineering female goddesses and the images of Paravati, Laxmi, and Saraswati emulating docility, submission to their counterparts is exemplified.

The reasons for lowering the status of women during and after the Vedic period could be attributed to many reasons. This was done primarily by marginalizing women from participating in rituals, from the induction of Vedic knowledge, and from important social order towards the periphery of matrimony and household.

The first and foremost reason for the setback in the Vedic knowledge of women was self and family honor. Specialization of Vedic knowledge required long periods of study in the home of a male teacher, making a concern for the parents about the protection of virginity of their daughters and thus leading to the lowering of the marriageable age for girls. The second reason being the priestly desire to control more and more rituals, to take control of the religious and ritualistic practices, some of which were being performed by women in their homes. The third was the result of women’s real loss of Vedic knowledge.

remained the guardians of a spiritual culture which is of greater worth than the efficiency and information of the educated.  

The status of women in our country is culture, region and age specific. Her status also was interlinked with her marital status as ‘A woman’s position and prestige after marriage increased tremendously when she became, preferably, the mother of a son.’ The social institution of joint family curtailed the freedom and independence of not only the women but also of the men who would live their entire lives for the families. However history is a witness to women who have risen above, despite all odds for …. ‘It could only be in exceptional cases and under exceptional circumstances that the latter specialized, whether in divinity, like Auvvai, Mira Bai, or the Buddhist nuns, in science, like Lilavati, or in war, like Chand Bibi or Rani of Jhansi…for a majority of women have always, and naturally, preferred marriage and motherhood to either of these conditions.’

During the Pre-British era the status of women was at its lowest in the 18th century. The women suffered, especially the Hindu women because of lack of education, tradition of early or child marriage leading to early motherhood and many a times early widowhood. ‘Nowhere else in the world did religion dominate and determine the life of a woman as in Hinduism as in India. “Her economic activity, her social life, her marriage, birth and death, her physical movements was strictly and minutely controlled by religion,”’

Things were to change, though slowly, with the coming of the East India Company as ‘English education was introduced by the East India Company’ with this promise being very lucrative, people started learning the English education system.

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97 Coomaraswamy, A, op.cit., p.104.
99 The British needed clerks and translators. From 1813, the Company in the Charter of 1833 made English the official language. In 1844, Lord Harding announced that English educated Indians will be given preference for government appointments… with this promise being very lucrative, people started learning the English education system.
constraints. The British were able to make some headway with the Christian Missionary Schools.100

Despite the effort towards the education of women, the social attitude towards them did not change easily as the prevalent social evils were so deeply ingrained into the sociological and psychological mindset of the people. There were grave social evils like sati, jauhar, dowry, infanticide and female foeticide prevalent in the society in the 19th century, and almost all to the disadvantage of women. Thus ‘...the girl child from the moment of her birth to her death undergoes one continuous lifelong suffering as a child-wife, as a child-mother and very often as a child-widow.’”101 The British, by the mid 19th century, paid a lot of attention to social reforms and focused attention on abolition of Sati, Female infanticide, Purdah,102 Child Marriage, Polygamy and the Devdasi tradition. They gave a lot of importance to female education and this further gave an impetus to our own social reformers to work for the social reforms. The British indeed felt their superiority and ‘...Enamored with their “civilizing mission”, the influential British writers condemned Indian religious culture and society for their rules and customs regarding women.103 ‘During the British period, education became a tool of colonial power, enabling a small minority to

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100 ‘Unmarried female missionaries arrived in India in the 1840’s and were assigned to work with women and children. These missionary women, educated and eager to prove their worth, concentrated on converting adult married Indian women to Christianity.’100 Economic and Political Weekly, ‘Missionary Women in the Nineteenth Century,’(21)no.17 (April 26, 1986),p.WS2-WS8. The advantage these women missionaries had was that they were women and were able to interact with women in the confines of morality. These.... ‘Missionary women continued to teach and it was their students, Indian Women from Christian families who became teachers in a number of the new girl’s schools The success of these church missionaries was more in the south than in the north. ‘The first boarding school for girls in Tirunelveli in 1821 was opened. By 1840 the Scottish Church Society could claim six schools with a clientele of 200 Hindu girls. By mid century the missionaries in Madras were instructing nearly 8,000 girls, the majority of whom were Christians, in day schools and boarding schools.’1100 Dr.(Mrs.) R. Vishalakshmi Nedunchez, “Education of Girls and Women in Tamil Nadu,” Status of Women Souvenir , 1973, (Madras, Task Force Sub- Committee on Education, Tamil Nadu, 1975) repd. F., Geralind, op.cit. pp.34-36
102 The Purdha system, primarily followed by Muslim women was later followed by upper class Hindus.Though the purdha became a status symbol of the rich aristocratic middle class, the lower classes also followed them. Purdha led to the segregation of women,keeping them secluded from social activities and the outside world. This led to the curtailment in their education, freedoms and their status as inferior and subordinate to men.
103 Fobes, Geraldine ...cit. op. p.12.
have access to education and all the benefits it entails. The Social reformers of the 19th century raised the demand of women’s transformation, but to make them more capable of fulfilling the traditional roles. These reformers worked relentlessly towards wading away the social evils in the society and for the emancipation and empowerment of women.

Mahatma Gandhi, a great visionary, reformer and freedom fighter encouraged women to participate in the struggle for Indian independence. “Before Gandhi entered the Indian political scene, very few women took part in social welfare and revolutionary movements” He was an inspiration for millions of people and women were highly inspired by him to join Nationalist movement. Many women emerged in the socio-political fore-front and the formation of the women’s wing in the Indian National Congress opened the political doors for women, providing new opportunities to them. A lot of focus was on the education and upliftment of women started to happen. But

104 Some prominent Reformers of the 19th Century are Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chander Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati, M.G.Ramade, Kesab Chandra Sen, Ramakrishna Parmamhansa, Aurobindo Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore, M.K.Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and among the women social reformers we have very strong and committed women like Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu, Sucheta Kripalani, Kamla Devi Chattopadiyaya, Durgabai Deshmukh, Renuka Ray, Sarla Devi, Madam Cama, Margaret Cousins, Pandita Rama Bai and some others.


106 Ishwar Chander Vidyasagar fought against the social evil of child marriage and was the first to work in this direction in 1860 and various Indian and British reformers worked relentlessly in the area of female education. ‘The various reformist religious institutions came forward with their support, the major one being The Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, The Prarthana Samaj and then The Theosophical Society.’


108 “Kamla Devi worked for the formation of the All India Women’s Conference in 1927 and became its General Secretary.” Sarojini Naidu’s contribution to the renaissance of Indian womanhood needs to be applauded. She was not only the first Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress in the year 1925. But also lead the salt ‘satyagrah’ in 1930 when Gandhiji was arrested. The contributions and sacrifices of women like ‘ Raj Kunari Amrit Kaur,Mridula Sarabai, Sucheta Kriplani,Padma Naidu,Durgabai Deshmukh, Aruna Asif Ali,…worked with men during the times of test and endurance.

109 “Ten women attended the fourth session of the Congress at Bombay in 1889…among them was Swarnakumari Devi, sister of Rabindranath Tagore. She had discarded purdah, and together with her husband, edited the Bengali journal, Bharati, having earned the distinction of being the first woman editor. In 1886 she started “Sakh Samiti” [Ladies Association]…for Indian women...Kadambini Ganguli…the first doctor of Bengal…other women present were Pandita Ramabai, Mrs.Shevantibai Trimbak, Mrs.Shantabai Nikambe, Mrs.Kashibai Kantikar and Miss Manekjee Cursetjee, all of whom developed into renowned educationalists and social reformers. There were Hindu, Brahmo-Samaj, Parsi and Christian women representatives. Pandita Ramabai came on behalf of the Arya Mahila Samaj, Poona, and Swarnakumari…Bengali Ladies Association.”

110 The coming into politics of two very spirited, committed and talented women accelerated the participation of women in the freedom struggle. They were Mrs. Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu.
still it was an uphill task for the women from the ordinary middle class families, but it was significantly better for ‘women from respectable families who often studied classical or vernacular literature and painting as a “pious recreation”…’

   Though slowly but “The first generation of educated women found a voice: they wrote about their lives and about the condition of women. The second generation acted…The boundaries of the early 19th century had been stretched considerably by the early 20th century. What was deviant behaviour for one generation was acceptable behaviour for the next…by 20th century; Indian women were full participants in the redefinition of their future.” With the emergence of the ‘new educated women, in the next two decades, women could be seen voicing actively in social, political and economic matters and emerging strongly in the creative fields as well.

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111 Datta, Kalikinkar, ‘Survey of India’s Social Life and Economic Condition in the Eighteenth Century, [1707-1813] [Calcutta, Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay,1961], pp.23-4
112 Fobes, Geralindine. cit. op. p.60-63