

Women and social reform movements in modern India

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Abstract

Women movements in India worked in two phases first women upliftment and second fight for equal rights for men and women. By studying a variety of historical documents which touch upon the Indian Women's movement a comparative prospective will come to make modest contribution towards the construction of propositions on feminist movements in India. Through this paper my main objective will be to research women movements from all dimensions and by going through different ideological socio-religious reform movements of nineteenth and twentieth India and to study women as a subject and issue. My paper will also include how women issues remained inseparable in social reform movements during British period.

Keywords: orientalist, *devdasi*, utilitarian, evangelical, *kanyaci*

1. Introduction

In nineteenth century, the Women Question was center of all socio-religious reform movements. But their core question was not 'what do women want?' but rather 'how can they be modernized?'. Under their civilizing mission they condemned Indian religion, Culture and Society for their behavior towards women. The reformist and renaissance ideals of the enlightenment in Europe have usually been cited by historians as the inspiration for social reforms initiated in nineteenth century India. In the 19th century the problems of society's behavior towards women in India bidden the attention of Western humanitarian thinkers, Christian missionaries and Indian socio-religious reformers. Under socio-religious reform movements reformers raised their voice against the evil practices towards women of Indian societies such as sati, child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, polygamy, dowry and devadasi system. Their views were strengthened when the British government collected data from their own old religious inscriptions and exposed the evils of such social customs. Further, some of the enlightened British officials in India and England also initiated measures to remove those social evils. They mobilized the public opinion in support of the abolition of it against the stiff opposition from the reactionary section of the Hindu Society. Educated women who were now becoming conscious of their natural rights, also came forward to liberate the rest of the women. So, nineteenth century in India gave many voices to torpor women and stood for their natural rights and places that become very first base stone of those rights which in future uprooted many evils of our society.

Sati Practice

Britishers who were greatly influenced by reformation with scientific outlook of the eighteenth century, came to India as a colonialists. While achieving their economic and political gains they tried to bring some changes or reforms in current Indian society. Britishers first established their government in Bengal in 1765. Very soon it become clear to them that

without learning traditions and norms of Indian societies they can never be successful in administration. This is how they started reading Indian history and its sources. Being the political supreme they passed many laws related to rigid and fixed social norms. Early writings by the Europeans aimed to highlight the peculiarities of Hindu traditions. They tried to raise the issues related to women issues. The first negative aspect of Bengali society they came across was the practice of Sati. The focused attack of the Evangelicals, Utilitarian's and Anglicists in India were on those practices which were declared indicative of the sexual depravities of the Indian people. For a long time Britishers refused to legislate on sati under their noninterference economic policies. But soon many Indian social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy also started social movement against this cruel practice. The first records related to govt inquiry for this issue was done in 1789. It was declared unlawful in Bengal by 1798. But this practice continued in other parts of India. Between 1815 to 1824 approximately 6632 cases were reported in only three presidencies of British Empire. Out of which 80% cases were only from Bengal. Now a strong moment started to collect evidences from Indian inscriptions to defended the law for the abolition of this cruel system. Roy's Persian work *Tuhfat al Muwahiddin* (A Gift to Deists) was the best work done for its time. He gave reason in ways that came close to denying religion altogether. He tried to replace the notion of sectioned widow immolation with ascetic widowhood. Thus, practice of sati was prohibited officially by the "Regulation XVII" of 4th December 1829 in Bengal and then in Madras on 2nd February 1830. Regulation XVII of 4th December 1829 says 'declaring the practice of suttee, or of burning or burying alive the widows of Hindus, illegal and punishable by the criminal courts.'

This action of campaigning for social reforms gave government supremacy in the political and ideological context. Though this Act was not able to stop this practice entirely. Even after getting independence from colonial

authority, the incidents of this system's practice are noticed. But when this law was implemented Hindu Society gave mixed response like, The Hindu Literary Society, Triplicane Literary Society, Progressive Citizen Society of Madras, etc., accepted it as the beginning of new era. The Hindu Literary Society's journal the 'Crescent' praised the Government for passing this Act, as it was a blessing to the Indian Women folk and hoped that it would relieve hundreds of young women from the painful social evils. The Triplicane Literary Society welcomed this as "a savior to the women folk of India since it would remove the social stigma perpetuated on women from the ancient period". On the other hand, some of the orthodox Hindus submitted a memorandum to the Governor-General of India, on 19th January 1830, claiming that 'sati' practice was an age-long one and sanctioned by Manu *Dharmashastra* and hence the Act was nothing but infringement on Hindu Law and hence the Government should withdraw it immediately. A memorandum was presented by them to the Governor of the Madras Presidency on 7th February 1832, in which they pointed out that this Act was against the 'non-interference policy' of the Government and this Act would demoralize the Hindu social customs. They further pointed out that the government through this Act seemed to convert Indians by way of abolishing the Hindu *Dharmah*. Whatsoever were the responses but it was true that this law had been passed onward there was a recognizable reformist ideology. The ideology which particularly in its view of women, was retained throughout much of the coming century.

Child Marriage

With the death of ten years old girl Phulmoni Das in the hands of her 35 years old husband Hari Mohan Maity and the case of Rakhmabai who refused to live with her uneducated, consumptive and unemployed husband Dadaji Bhikaji, government under the pressure of social reformers felt the need to fix the age of marriage. This struggle started in first half of nineteenth century. Great leaders like Keshab Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade etc. raised their voices. The reformers also felt that the practice of child marriage is the main cause of other social evils related to women of India. Social reform movements like Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj demanded the need for a special law to save the child wife from physical suffering and harassment at the hands of the husband. In the towns of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, it could become the case of rape and murder, so responsible person could be given death as punishment if girl is below eight years of age and it was declared punishable under the criminal code from 1828 onwards. In 1846 when Law Commissioners drafted the Indian Penal Code decided to extend the penalties of rape to husband who consummated marriages with underage wives. First, this issue from Indians side was raised by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar who took this issue through his writings. As a result, government in 1850, decided 10 years as the age of consent for sexual consummation with girl children whether married or unmarried and offender was considered rapist and was punishable under section 376 of the Indian Penal Code of 1860. Then Ishwar Chandra Sen, who in his institution under new marriage arrangements it made mandatory to take the consent not only from groom but from

bride as well. He requested government to take serious action against child marriages in India as he considered it as the root cause of many other social evils. He continued his efforts in 1870s and 80s. Under his highlighted efforts included the revision of marriage customs of Brahma Samaj in Native Marriage Act III of 1872. Which instituted prohibitions against polygamy, a legal right of women to get divorce, casteless marriage and instituted minimum age for marriage of 14 for girls and 18 for men. Earlier center for these reforms was Bengal but soon it shifted to other parts of India as well and specially to Maharashtra. Here this issue was strongly raised by Behramji Malabari, who was journalist by profession. His influential work was Notes on infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood, which was based on statistics generated by the census, and was an argument for regulating the age of consent. He compared protection of girl children in India and protection offered to English girls under a comparable regulation. For bringing about the reformative changes he advocated the following:

1. The formation of a National Association.
2. Introducing the lessons on the subjects of the child marriage and the problems of widows in educational books and
3. Enactment of a resolution by the University that after a certain number of years who were not bachelors would be considered eligible for university Degree. Hindu Worker's Remarriage Association solicited that every graduate should discourage child marriage.

His work was taken to certain height by Mahadev Govind Ranade, who was prominent theist and social reformer. He doubts the 'Smriti' and 'Sruti' and blamed them for lowering the age of marriage by three methods

- a. By prohibiting unmarried life to the girls,
- b. By making it compulsory for parents to get their daughters married before puberty,
- c. By inventing new meaning of the words like Kanyaci (feminine) etc.

Therefore, he concluded that the marriageable age was slowly brought down for the above said reasons.

Behramji Malabari of Bombay, widely known for his struggle against the custom of child marriage, considered many consequences occur due to early marriage, such as boys must give up their studies at quite a young age, the girls gave birth to sickly children and they had to face the difficulty for feeding too many months. It was also a hindrance to female education and women's progress. He fixed sixteen and twenty-five as the age of consummation for girls and boys respectively. He was in favor of governmental interference in these social problems.

But it was the beginning of national movement which also resulted to refusal to all British reforms. Bal Ganga Dhar Tilak was one of the most vociferous opponents of reform of the Indian tradition. He was strongly against the reforms in Indian tradition. He even said that the case of Rakhmabai's refusal to live with her husband is an outcome of female education. The anti-western element of this revivalist strand had other pernicious implications including anti Muslim sentiments as well. Under such oppositional pressure in 1877 under Act XV, in Rakhmabai's case verdict went in favor of her husband.

After that attempts were made to introduce a concept of divorce which was finally permitted under the Act XXIX OF 1923.

Meantime same movements started in Muslims too. Even M.A. Jinnah opposed child marriage by saying that nowhere else in world Muslims are having such evil customs. It was the only result of Hindu society influence on them. Even prophet Mohammad has opposed discriminations against women and he himself was the best example of best man in this respect. In March 1891, both Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code were amended and the age of girl marriage was raised to 12. Practically this law hardly made any difference in Hindu society but this brought the issue in limelight. Now both social and political mass movements included this point in their referendum. Even princely states like Mysore tried to implement this law in their territories. The beginning of twentieth century in India is marked with strong shifts in the constellation of political forces and the emergence of women as a significant group within the congress. All India Women's Conference was set up in 1927. Under its strong demand in legislative Assembly finally Child Marriage Restraint Act XIX was passed in 1929. which in history of women liberation is known as Sharda act because this bill was introduced by Har Bilas Sarda in Legislative assembly in 1927.

Widow Remarriage and Property Law

In traditional Hindu society, a widow was required to live as a virtual outcast after her husband's death, which means she was expected to shave her head, discard her jewelry, live in seclusion, and undergo regular acts of penance. Upon that, child marriage and financial dependency made situation more critical. Many inhuman and unnatural customs remained highly prejudicial to the interest of morality.

First, the debate over volition in the practice of widow immolation brought to the foreground the deplorable position of upper caste widows in Indian Society. Their condition was so miserable that they preferred death through Sati custom rather than living life of hell. In 1830's the Law Commission under Thomas Macaulay, found a deep connection between high rate of infanticide and the prohibition of remarriage. The Sadr Nizamat court of North-West Province in 1837 informed the Law Commission that child murder was a prevalent crime and recommended that the endeavor of a woman to conceal the birth of her dead child by secretly disposing of the body, should be made illegal. But Law commission should not do further investigation in this connection so they only read what was in front of them. Whether it was female infanticide or health issues such causes were not investigated. So, Law commission through its letter of 1837 to Calcutta, Allahbad, Madras and Bombay asked the opinion regarding the reaction of public if law of remarriage is passed. All Sadre courts gave negative response along with strong warning of public reaction. It took about 18 years before the question of a legislative challenge to the customary status of widows was raised again. This time it was from Indians themselves. Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar, Sanskrit scholar, passionate social reformer and Western educated progressive Bengali writers, tried to raise his voice on this issue through his writings in Tatwabodhini patrika, a progressive journal. His best

articulation was through his book titled 'Marriage of Hindu Widows' He quoted shloka from Parashar Dharma Samhita, a set of Hindu laws in Kali Yuga, written by Saga Prashar.

'Gate Mrite Pravajite pleevacha patite patau...
Panchasvapatsu narinam patiranyo bidhiyate'...

Which means "women are at liberty to marry again, if their husband be not heard of, die, retire from the world, prove to be impotent or be an outcast."

He prepared a petition with 4000 signatures and submitted it before government with this hope that government will consider it as a demand of time and will pass widow remarriage law. His work took the attention of king of Bardhaman, Mahtabchand bahadur. He had strong supporters and as well opponents. Some called him the scholar of Hindu Laws than other condemned by saying it will lower the morality and were concerned about the sexuality of the dangerous non-wife, outside the protective influence of husband or father. Thus 784 petitions of U.P. and Calcutta was signed against this effort. During this period 991 professors of Hindu Law from Nadia, Trabani, Bhatparah and Bansbaruah cited inscriptions from Vedas, the Code of Manu, the First Book of Mahabharata, Aditya Purana, Ratnakara, Niranya Shudhos, Hemadri and Madan Parijata to favor the view that widow marriage, the larger portion of the elder brother and the carrying of an earthen pot as the token of an ascetic, these five are prohibited by Kaliyuga. Strong resistance was shown by Bengali society. 51,746 signed petitions against this law were send. Even then in 1856 The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act XV was passed with the argue of one member of Law Commission "if the learning, reason, and conscience of a single Hindu father directed him to save his little child from life of misery or vice the law of the country should not stand in the way".

The "Hindu Remarriage Society" was formed in Nagarkoil in 1873. Leaders like G. Subramania Iyer, Rao Bahadur P. Anandacharlu and others advocated the need for the widow remarriage. They not only advocated widow remarriage but also set an example by arranging marriage for his own daughter who had become a widow. The absence of right to own a property had a telling effect upon the widow remarriage because nobody came forward to spend on second marriage of their girls. Hence with the purpose of getting property right to young widows and thereby to execute the Widow Remarriage Act effectively the elite citizens organized a new association called Hindu Women's Remarriage Association in 1882 at Madras. This association celebrated its first widow remarriage on 7th June 1883. Vadalur Ramalingam Pillai asked the women not to wear white sarees after the death of their husbands and urged them to take up their own profession for their livelihood. The novels written in Tamil language reflected the concern of the reformers on the status of women. Vedanayagam Pillai's novels "Prathaba Mudaliar Charitram" and "Suguna Sundari", "Padmavathi Charithiram", "Kaincdambal Charithiram", etc., condemned the degraded position of women and appealed the society to give equal status to women. Despite all these efforts, it must be admitted that widow remarriage was not popular among people. The strongest opponents were women themselves whose orthodoxy might be summed up in these words, "we born once, we die once and we marry once". It must also be

admitted that Hindu public opinion did not look kindly on widow remarriage and many who sympathized with it did not dare to express their sympathy in positive action. Economic welfare measures It is felt that the miserable economic position of women was due to the denial of property right to women. Hence the progressives thought of getting property right to women would alleviate the sufferings of women. The Married Women's Property Act was enacted in 1874. Under the Act, the separate property of the women was included as follows:

1. Wages and earnings of married women in any employment, occupation or trade earned on by law.
2. Money acquired through literacy, artistic and scientific skill.
3. All savings from and investment of such wages and
4. A policy of insurance effected on her own behalf should be deemed to her separate property over which she should have absolute right.

Under Hindu Women's Right to Property Act XVIII of 1937, and the Hindu succession Act XXX of 1956, under both Dayabhaga and Mitakshara Law, the Widow "only succeeded her husband's estate in the absence of a son, son's son, son's son's son of the deceased and the estate which she took by succession to her husband was an estate which she held only for her lifetime." After her death, it goes to the nearest relative of her husband. But practically even today this law is only in papers. It is opposed even by women themselves. In Punjab region, the custom of widow remarriage is known as Karewa. In this custom widow is married to nearest male relative of her husband. Which will save the share of her husband and it will remain in family. Thus, by keeping Widow in the husband's house is a way of confirming the continued chastity of the women that to without losing share in property.

Law against devdasi practice

The movement which was started against Devdasi practice, in which girls were sent to temples as God's offering and by eighteenth century it had turned as more or less a prostitution profession, in history is known as Anti- Nautch movement. The first Anti Nautch movement was launched in eighteenth century by Reform campaigners mainly from renowned leaders of different social reform movements like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Periyar E.V.Ramaswamy, Muth Lakshmi Iyar, S. Muthiah Mudaliar, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyar, M. Krishnan Nair, C. N. Annadurai, Karunanidhi, Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Dhondo Keshav Karve, and other prominent social thinkers, who not only questioned the practice of devdasi system but strongly asked for its abolition. They admonished the abolition of all ceremonies and procedures by which girls dedicated themselves as Devadasis of Hindu shrines. They gathered public attention through their writings and public speeches to create a public opinion against the Devdasi system. In this concern, even an appeal was made in 1892 to the viceroy and governor general of India and to the governor of Madras. slowly through popular journals and newspapers like *The Indian Social Reformer* and *Lahore Purity Servant* reformers tried to gain public favor for the abolition of this practice. The movement motivated people to refuse to attend Nautch parties as well as to refuse to invite devadasis to festivities at their

homes. Around 1899, the anti-Nautch and puritan movement turned its attention to stopping dedications. The anti-Nautch movement paved the way for anti-dedication movement. This anti Davdasi movement got strong support from the Theosophical Society, which was based on western scientific temperament. With the help of renowned dancer Rukmini Devi Arundala who was theosophist, changed the dance form of Devadasi and gave it modern style known as Bharatnatyam. She tried to present the idealistic view of the institution of devadasi. According to their view, it was the model of the ancient temple dancer as pure, sacred, and chaste women, as they were originally. They stressed that the dance of devadasi was a form of "Natya Yoga" to enhance an individual's spiritual plane. As a result, Many Brahmin girls started to learn the dance from devadasis.

Along with this demand for the abolition of Devdasi in law continued and the first legal initiative to outlaw the devdasi system came as Bombay Devdasi Protection Act in 1934. This act pertained to the Bombay province as it existed in the British Raj. The Bombay Devdasi Protection Act made dedication of women illegal, whether consensual or not. According to this act, marriage by a devdasi was to be considered lawful and valid, and the children from such wedlock were to be treated as legitimate. The Act also laid down grounds for punitive action that could be taken against any person or persons found to be involved in dedications, except the woman who was being dedicated. Those found guilty of such acts could face a year's imprisonment, a fine, or both. The 1934 Act also provided rules, which were aimed at protecting the interests of the devdasis. Whenever there was a dispute over ownership of land involving a devdasi, the local Collector was expected to intervene. In 1947, the year of independence, the Madras Devdasi (Prevention of Dedication) Act outlawed dedication in the southern Madras Presidency. The devdasi system was outlawed in all of India in 1988, but unfortunately even today this practice of devdasis is practiced illegally in many parts of India.

Efforts for female education

Britishers came to India as merchants with economic aims. They hardly interfered in social traditional norms. But during their administrative setup they brought two big changes, first they allowed christen missionaries to work here and second, they introduced English education setup to Indians, which resulted in socio-cultural reform movements in India and central issue of these reforms was women. To begin with christen missionaries they raised voice for the infrastructure for women education. by the time Britishers entered Indian subcontinent, the ratio of women education was very low. Only women of upper castes were given education that too only included religious books and some basic education for household conduction. Women education was informal. Mostly they were taught practical matters. Only women from renounced families were supposed to learn classical or vernacular literature. Very few examples of this time tell that women were also taught some education in keeping accounts. Largely, majority liberated women only knew education of household matters. First, under the promotion of western education system, first Hindu College was opened in Calcutta in 1816. In coming three decades on the basis of patronage of

rich Indians many schools were opened throughout British India. But majority of them only promoted boy's education any they didn't seem interested in girl's education. the main reason of this was the selfishness of Britishers. They were promoting English education only to get some intermediaries who could understand not only their language but help them to translate native languages. It was the time when christen missionaries entered India and did lots of social work under the ideology of "White man's Burden". They put lots of pressure on government for the promotion of women education. The beneficiary part was they become teachers who taught Indian households. Slowly, educated first generation came forward and rigorously started their efforts in this direction. First lady Radha Kanta Deb, who was the secretary of Calcutta School Society, became a patron of girls' education. she assisted in the formation of the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society which was established in 1819. With the help of Christen Missionary Society in coming ten years, they opened thirty schools for Hindu girls. These schools got patronage from elite class. But they failed to attract girls' students. The main reason of it was the lack of proper policy. Christen missionaries did remarkable work in this concern. They provided free books and cloths etc. by 1840 the Scottish church society claimed six schools with 200 girls' students strength. But English education system was not strongly favored by Indians. They wanted education purely divided on sex lines means girls and boys should not study in one school. Girls should have separate educational institutions along with only female teacher and will get education in limited subjects, which will be beneficiary in hold duties. Even in many parts of the country *Parda sysem* was implemented. In which a *parda* or curtain was hanged between teacher and students. Eighteenth century history of India is marked with socio-religious reform movements. They did lots of works for the upliftment's of females. Many renounced reformers started these reforms from their own houses. It was clear for them that the root cause of all women sufferings like widowhood problems, Sati system, child marriage and *devdasi* system is lack of female education. They started teaching their own ladies and this is how first educated group of women leaders came out who in future fought for the rights of women. Many social reform movements like Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, theosophical Society and Dev Samaj etc. gave their voices in favor of female education. it is estimated that by 1854 there were approximately 626 girls' schools, in which 288 in Bengal, 256 in Madras, 65 in Bombay, 17 in NWFP and Oudh, with total 21, 755 number of students. This was very small number but was the sign of change in orthodox Hindu Society. Many Indians to bring social reforms welcomed female education. Britishers promoted education under Financial and administrative needs. Social reformers saw female education as social reform. They only wanted to educate them that they should read and write and if needed could stand with them for their movements. In them, first work was done by Brahma Samaj. They opened schools and colleges for girls. In 1883 first Kadambini Basu and Chandramkhi Basu received their BA degrees from here and became first graduates in the British India.

The Indian Education Commission of 1882, on the question of girls' education remarked that the "Female education is still in

an extremely backward condition and needs to be fostered in every legitimate way."

But very soon the feeling of passive apathy was changed into active sympathy owing to sentimental and material causes. The Education Departments also took some active steps and devised new plans for spreading education viz separate schools for girls were started. Arrangements of conveyance for taking girls to schools were made. Inspectors were appointed, favourable grants were given to private girls' schools, and steps were taken to attract women to the teaching profession.

The above steps gave a great encouragement to girls' education. In 1884, Mrs. Annie Besant established the Central Hindu Girls School at Banaras (Varanasi) with the object of importing Western Education to girls quite separately from boys in a modernized school of Hinduism. In 1916 the first Medical College lady Hardinge College, Delhi was established for the faire sex in the country. The Women (SNDT) University was also established in the same year.

In south India, the main work in this concern was done by Theosophical Society. Led by Annie Besant, they started their work under the slogan "Return to Golden Age". They opened many schools and promoted their mission from door to door to transform them into the "lights of the Home. The South Indian Conference held at Madras in December 1884 passed resolutions favoring female education. Through its resolutions passed in the Tenth Conference held at Calcutta in 1895, Indian National Social Conference (INSC) stressed that

- a. Female teachers should be employed in female schools,
- b. Training schools for women to secure sufficient number of qualified female teachers, should be established c) Home classes for the grown up women should be conducted
- c. The text books for female schools should be published and
- d. (e) Instruction in needle work, hygiene, culinary art, domestic economy should be imparted to the females.

In north India Arya Samaj's name comes in front related to the promotion of female education. swami Vivekand Sarasvati opened Arya Kanya Pathshala in 1892 in Jalandhar district of Panjab. Where the principal was a lady.

The Dev Samaj worked greatly in Punjab. Reformers thought that the lack of female education was the cause for all social evils like sati, child marriage, widowhood, devadasi system, dowry, etc. So, they made efforts to educate girls to remove these evils and raise the status of women. The Dev Samaj society was the pioneer in the field of women education. They invariably noticed that they were not able to get more under their fold because their message did not reach the Indian women folk who were not allowed to cross the doors of their houses. The gross ignorance of the women folk was due to the absence of women education. Realizing this fact, the missionaries set upon them to build confidence among them by bringing the knowledge to their door steps. This paved the way not only for the diffusion of knowledge among the women folk but also the need for the establishment of Institutes for women. Founder Bhagwan Dev Atma opened first women school in 1905. This proved to be a great stimulus because it opened a useful career for women. But however,

the progress of female education was confined to the primary stage. The demand for upper secondary education hardly existed since the girls were not permitted to go to schools after the age of ten. Thus, he opened first college for women in 1934 in Ferozepur district of Punjab. That gave a great stimulus to higher education of women. Many journals were brought out in support of women's liberation. Those magazines and journals of Dev Samaj also played an important role in promoting public opinion in support of elevation of women. This society opened maximum girl schools not only in Punjab but also in entire India. They opened more educational institutions in villages to reach maximum girls. Dev Samaj's experiment in women's education was appreciated and acknowledged at large level. Dev Samaj institutions not only provided a high standard of education, but also inculcated moral culture of the highest quality. Its students are believed to perform all roles in life whether as a daughter, wife, mother or general social individual at its best. They are taught to lead simple and serviceable life, a life of purity and loyalty in wedlock, in an exemplary degree. The prominent role which Dev Samaj played in women's education is indicated by the fact that Dev Samaj Girl's High school, Ferozepur, was the first Hindu girls' high school in the Punjab. This school produced the first MBBS in the Punjab, who later retired from the post of principal in Lady Harding's Medical College, Delhi. This girl's high school later upgraded to post-graduate and teacher training institutions and produced hundreds of graduates and thousands of teachers for the schools of across India.

In 1901 in the meeting with the directors of Public instruction at Shimla, discussion was made on unified education system for boys and girls. Some disagreed on the point that it will be of no use for girls. Other stressed that primary purpose of education is to grow critical thinking and not mere preparation for role socialization. Next proposal to this concern came in 1912 from Mr. A.L. Covernton, who was the principal of Elphinstone College Bombay by that time. Again, one argument came if girls will study with boys it will break rigid customs and old prejudice and it will be beneficiary for girls in turn of stimulating and widen their intellect.

By the turn of the twentieth century women enrollment in schools risen many folds. It brought great change in our country but educational revolution was ignored. On other hand, it got strong opposition that while accepting western pattern based education for Indian women, it was not purposed to make them equant to western women or train them for professionally. They are supposed to be educated for performing in better ways as mothers, sisters, daughters and wives. As a result, govt of Bombay, Educational Department Resolution no. 1143, Bombay Castle, 30th April 1917, states that in the lower primary standards girls should be taught how to read, write, along with needlework, religious principles and physical exercises. In higher primary standards, some knowledge of cookery should also be included. In 1919 resolution of the Government of India appreciated by Poona Seva Sadan who gave trained education in nurses, midwives, assistant surgeons, art and craft workshop to its girls' students. During this period, it was surveyed that more than sixty percent women are going to exclusive women institutions. As a result, many exclusively women institutions like oriental

college, Engineering colleges, Agricultural colleges and school of arts etc. were opened. By the end of the WWI, there were girls' schools in all states of India and girls' students' enrollment also increased. Now opinion was shifting towards the education making better wives and better mothers. In 1917 there were 12 arts colleges, four professionals' colleges and 166 secondary schools for girls. Most girls however did not continue their studies in schools for a long period. Between 1900-1947 India women being educated beneficiaries of the social reforms and educational efforts of the nineteenth century, a new change began.

Works done by women associations

The history of women associations in India marks a huge difference between the women of nineteenth century women and women of twentieth century. In the beginning, as we know, movements for reforms were for improving the position of women in Indian society and this work was done mainly by male reformers as being the representatives of change in British India. So, the early women's movement obstructed the kind of issues taken up for 'change'. The issues were largely those which wedged the higher castes and middle classes such as widow remarriage, dowry, polygamy and property rights. All women questions were at large a part of nation. During this phase issues that meant a change in the public life were accepted, the very notion of equal citizens in both caste and sex terms was not accepted. Predominantly, equality in the private sphere was not accepted, for example, inheritance rights, issues relating to domestic violence, etc. In the beginning, majority of women who participated in the movements for the women rights, were mostly those who were from those families where men were engaged in some social reform movements. Who not only raised voice for women but made their women capable of it. They gave education to their women and guided them to fight for their rights. These women came out of their houses and participated in different activities of social, religious, and political associations. For the educated elites, two issues were of central importance. These were the main factors motivating their action as their power and wealth grew. First was, how to justify ascendance and second was, how to create a new cultural identity. For this they developed or adopted an ideology and made a strategy to resolve their issues, which resulted in the formation of different associations. So, it came out at three levels, topmost were elite representation, at second level were vertical mass mobilization and at ground were mass mobilization. Women movements majority were centralized in elite class. Three were three main factors responsible for this. First, education which was the main reason of awareness was limited to the elite class, second in the beginning main works for women were done by christens missionaries and Indians did not allow their women to interact with them in fear of conversion and third was that British government didn't show their enthusiastic approach towards this issue as they feared of interference caused revolt. In such circumstances first efforts were done by individual Indian men like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Behramji Malabari etc. the next stage in efforts started by women active in reform associations like Brahma Samaj and Prarthana Samaj etc. these early associations faced high level of social opposition and response

some association leaders began to portray their work with women in revivalist terms. But education given to women in late nineteenth and early twentieth century resulted in women coming out of their houses or communities and who started communicating their issues. They joined new clubs and associations formed for them. Now, great work was done in vernacular language. By reading it they could easily make out the common issues and sufferings they were going through along with their solutions. This also provided training ground for coming leaders of this movement. First women organization for women was made by dynamic leader Keshwa Chandra Sen of Brahma Samaj in Bengal. Similar kind of organization was opened in Bombay by Prarthana Samaj. Justice Ranade helped Pandita Ramabai Saraswati in establishing Arya Mahila Samaj in 1882. These included the Bharat Ashram (Indian Hermitage) in Bengal, formed by Keshab Chunder Sen (of Brahma Samaj) in the 1870s; Arya Mahila Samaj (The Aryan Women's Association) in Bombay, formed by Pandita Ramabai and Justice Ranade in the 1880s; Bharat Mahila Parishad (Ladies' Social Conference), formed as part of the National Social Conference in 1905;

Even local Muslim women's associations were founded in the early 20th Century by the upper class women in several parts of India. For example, Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e- Islam (The Muslim Women's Association) in Punjab, formed by Amir-un-Nisa of the Mian family. Some women members of the Shafi family started an association in Lahore. In 1916 Begum of Bhopal formed the All India Muslim Women's Conference, at which papers on social reforms and education were read and even resolutions were passed. In 1917, Abru Begum who was the sister of Abdul Kalam Azad, proposed a resolution against polygamy which provoked opposition.

Next important shove to these associations came during national movements. First, during Swadeshi movement, which worked for mass mobilization facilitated the participation of women at national level. Many renounced women leaders came in main national frame like Saraladevi Chaudhurani, known as "New Women", both as a feminists and as nationalists. She actively participated in both the social reform and nationalist movements. She was one of the first women to see the need for and start an association for women. She argued that women's issues could not be addressed adequately as an adjunct of the National Social Conference which was set up by the Indian National Congress in 1887. So, she founded the Bharat Stree Mahamandal (Great

Group of Indian Women) in Allahabad in 1910. Sarala Devi's efforts resulted in the formation of several women's clubs, groups, and associations in different parts of India.

Soon it resulted in organizing women-only associations (mostly called Mahila Samitis) in the early decades of the 20th century. These local associations laid the ground for national associations of women. During the early spurt of nationalist agitation, the Women's Indian Association was hurred (1917), followed by the National

Council of Indian Women (1925) and the All-India Women's Conference (1927). The characterstic of these associations was that they defined themselves as including and representing women of all races, cultures, and religions. It also opened branches in different parts of southern India and connected to the Madras Theosophical Society which was working for

women and was the most popular organization. Next step was the argument for the female franchise in 1917. As a result, by 1929, all the provincial legislatures had given the women the right to vote. This is the same year when All India Women Council was formed. In 1937 about 60 women became the members of provincial legislatures in various provinces. Thus, the women organizations fought for political rights and equality with men. Though their attempt managed to get partial success, they continued their movement for the uplift of women. It created awareness among the people of India.

Conclusion

The above discussions make it clear that the pitiable condition of women invited the reformers to decry and carry out propagation for the upliftment of women for a long period. However, in the 19th century very strong and practical steps were taken by the social reformers to mitigate the social sufferings of women. The women had the realization that their social sufferings were intertwined with their economic dependence and joint family system, but first they wanted to remove their social disabilities and enhance their health and social status. Thus, efforts created awareness on the necessity of elevation of women economically and then socially. The sustained work of the missionaries resulted in the creation of educated community even in the lower strata of the society of Punjab. Women became teachers, nurses; government officials and even missionary assistants. Thus, the whole of public opinion for female education was set in motion in the end of the 19th century. However, the 19th century social reform movements with the help of British government continued with the new idea of rehabilitation of the affected women in the 20th century.

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