



## **A STUDY ON CHANGING THE ROLE AND POSITION OF INDIAN WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

It was established that Indians' social and religious backwardness was caused by a lack of education and awareness, making the advancement of women's education imperative. Therefore, women's education was valued by all socio-religious reformers, whether they were Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, or Parsi. They thought that the best way to advance Indian society was through education for women. The earliest girls' schools were founded by missionaries, but Indian reformers soon overtook them. Despite their heroic efforts, female education did not really improve until the second part of the nineteenth century, when the government began to provide financial assistance. Up until the urban professional class joined reformers in supporting formal education for girls, efforts to establish girls' schools stalled even then. Institutions rose in number and the proportion of educated women progressively increased in the final part of the nineteenth century. The topic of what kind of education was best for women became the focus of the discussion. A few women spoke up before the century was over to share their opinions on female education. Women were prepared to create a curriculum and organize girls' schools by the 20th century. A training course in physical education was accessible and well-liked, vocational topics were necessary to impart the value of manual labor, and Hindu and Christian priests provided moral and religious instruction. Sister Subbalakshmi was eventually forced to establish Sarada Vidyalaya, a high school and boarding facility for adult widows.

**KEY WORDS:** *Indian Women, Education, Hindu, Christian, Muslims, Government.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

For a very long time, women's education had been disregarded in India. Indian women have historically had far lower status and position than men. Even the most fundamental rights to life had been denied to them, in addition to schooling. A common belief was that women didn't need an education because they didn't have to work to support themselves; instead, education was for producing white collared clerks for the new administrative system set up by Britain in India.

As a result, women's educational advancement remained sluggish in the early years of British rule. Up to the turn of the 20th century, not much was accomplished. The missionaries were interested in female education because they believed that in order to make conversions permanent, women needed to be included. However, because men made decisions, women's education was secondary. Thus, Christian missionaries had labored for the aim of women's education prior to the government's efforts to promote it, but their methods were constrained.

For a variety of reasons, women were denied an education. Child marriage was very common in Indian society at the time. Before they reached adolescence, girls were wedded to middle-aged men. There is a widespread misconception in Indian society that if a girl is taught to read and write, her husband will pass away soon after they get married, leaving her a widow.

In order to live a happy life, it was thought that women should pray for their husbands' long lives rather than contributing to his demise by pursuing an education. Muslim women were once viewed as the upholders of wrong traditions and the main cause of subsequent generations' decline, along with their ignorance. Addressing this 'ignorance' would assist to improve Muslim society's backwardness and assure social advancement because it was believed that women's roles as mothers and wives had a significant impact on the husband and children in the home, which had a ripple effect on society as a whole and the Muslim community.

The pioneers of women's education in India were widely regarded to be Christian missionaries. The missionaries opened a girls school in Bombay in 1824. The basis for females' higher education in Madras was set by foreign Christian missions.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The Universe of the Study Area is roughly created by the Districts under the Colonial British Rule of the former Madras Presidency or the present Tamil Nadu. Madras, Chengalpattu, South Arcot, North Arcot, Tanjore, Madurai, Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Salem, Dharmapuri, Tiruchirappalli, Pudukkottai, Coimbatore and the Nilgiris as Revenue Districts were the Tamil-Speaking portions of the Madras Presidency. This jurisdictional restriction allowed the scholar, for the purpose of a crisp and thorough analysis, to cut the size of the vast material available for the entire Madras Presidency into a manageable proportion. Within the chronologically scripted related events, this study aims to explore the above theme. In the Tamil Speaking Districts of the former Madras Presidency during the Colonial British Rule, the scope of the study includes all progressive educational activities under the Administration of Missionaries, the Madras Government and the Imperial Government. It also includes all kinds of education provided with the aid of Missionaries, Private Organizations and Philanthropists by the Colonial

Administrators. The research was carried out on the consultation of primary sources such as records, administrative papers, and statistical abstracts of different Commissions such as the Indian Education Commission, Commission Indian Universities, Census Reports, and District Gazetteers at different offices, manuals, Native News Paper Reports such as Zarnin Ryot, Zanana Patrika, Andhra Patrika, Krishna Patrika and Krishna Patrika. Materials such as the Administration of the District Boards in the Madras Presidency 1884-1945 have been studied along with many writings by individual authors. Numerous libraries and state archives have been visited for the compilation of knowledge listed above.

### **PERIOD OF THE STUDY**

The focus of the study is the growth of education in Colonial Tamil Nadu from 1854 to 1937. A total of eighty-three years is covered. The research starts its investigation with the 1854 Wood's Despatch, which is called the 'English Education Magna Carta in India'. It also marked the beginning of the Western way of educating people. The study ends in 1937, when in 1937 the Congress Party established the ministry in Madra's presidency. Occasional references to the former presidency of Madras and other parts of India have been made, as the issue under discussion spills over to the presidency of Madras and the rest of India.

### **SOURCES**

The primary sources are Government Orders, Education Census Reports, Public Instruction Reports, Administration Reports, Recommendations of the Reports of the Educational Commissions, Trials, Dispatches, Excerpts of Letters of the Court of Directors, Governor-General and Governor, etc., and Publications of the Governments of the Imperial and Madras. Annual reports from educational departments and universities provide a great deal of information on the growth of education in Tamil Nadu, as well as a great deal of information on progress in various fields. Good information about the different phases of growth is given in government proceedings. For specific observations on education in general and in particular, the studies of the Educational Commissions are noted. The secondary sources, along with the skeleton content, are helpful in constructing this dissertation.

### **METHODS**

Both historical and empirical approaches are adopted in writing this thesis and chronology is observed to the highest degree. This study analyses the different steps taken between 1854 and 1937 by the Colonial Government of the Presidency of Madras and the Imperial Government of India to advance education and its growth.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **NATURE OF EDUCATION**

Traditional education, which includes studying sacred literature, was initially implemented. Brahman received all forms of sacred education. Vaishyas and Kshatriyas acquired practical skills. Women and Shudras were prohibited from reading sacred texts. However, later on, some women received reading instruction. The Quran was taught to Muslim females, but upper class Muslim women were rigorously forbidden from going to school. At home, they received their religious education from their families or tutors. At the turn of the century, Bengal had just eleven Quran schools for girls, serving 142 students. Women received informal education, and the majority of their education was focused on practical issues. High class ladies engaged in "pious recreation" by studying classical or popular literature. Girls from wealthy families received training in bookkeeping. The majority of women simply studied domestic arts.

### **EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS FOR INDIAN WOMEN**

The expansion of education for women in India was also facilitated by enlightened Indian reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen, Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekanand, and others. It received a lot of fuel from current reform movements like the Brahma Samaj. Several prominent samaj members published publications to advance women's education, including Umesh Chandra Datta's "Brahman Pradhini," Girish Chandra Sen's "Mohala," and two graduate sisters, Kamudini and Basanti Mitra's "Suprabhate." The Brahma Samaj movement also promoted women's education. Their aim was the Anglo Vernacular Girl's School, the most prosperous institution in Lahore. The students received a small amount of instruction in Hindi. The girls were also taught the practical skills of knitting and sewing in addition to reading and ciphering. Only those who were literate or among the elite of the Punjab who had recently received an education received the Brahma Samaj's message. Their agenda was viewed as being too radical and posing a direct threat to traditional Hinduism. They were branded as Hindu Christians and those who couldn't support her in big numbers boycotted them.

The Mahakanya Vidyalaya in the Punjab is one of the institutions that the Arya Samaj used to organize women's education. All around India, elementary and secondary schools have emerged. The Arya Samajists started opening girls' schools in various Punjabi cities in the early 1880s. Schools for girls were established in Amritsar in 1885–1886 at Jullundur and Lahore, and in Ferozepur in 1889. Along with fundamental literacy skills, the Pathshala's

curriculum also covered sewing, needlework, sketching, cooking, music, poetry, games, arithmetic, cleanliness, and religious literature from the samaj.

Arya Samaj of Jullundur established the girls' boarding school Arya Kanya Pathshala in 1890, which later developed into the ladies' high school Kanya Mahavidyalaya in 1896. It would be interesting to note that the Kanya Mahavidyalaya served as a school for reform, enlightenment, and the instillation of nationalist spirit in addition to serving as an educational institution. These women went on to become social activists and nationalist freedom warriors after receiving their education there. Numerous schools were established in various regions of Punjab in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including those at Patti, Ferozepur, Kapurthala, Moga, and Abhohar. Even one of the tiniest Arya Samajs, at Beghbanpura, was in charge of a females school. Women's education has advanced thanks to the work of the Prarthana Samaj and the Deccan Education Society, and the Indian Social Conference adopted a resolution calling for the expansion of this education.

In order to promote contemporary education for Muslims, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan established the Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College and called for the organization of the Mohammedan Educational Conference. Many of the first advocates of education and elevated social position for women were among the predominately male attendees. To develop women's knowledge and abilities, they promoted cooking and sewing classes. In doing so, they also hoped to promote Islamic principles. The development of women's literature, however, lagged much behind Hindu educational initiatives. There weren't many private organizations working to educate Muslim girls when I was 18 years old. They attended government, Christian, or Hindu schools for girls. In contrast to girls from other communities, the number of Muslim girls enrolled in these institutions and universities was really quite low. Purdah, which was rigidly enforced by the majority of Muslim girls in those days, was one factor in the tiny number.

Muslim girls' schools that were officially recognized were quite new. Three of these, though, were "Zenana Schools" that were held in nearby homes and attended by neighborhood residents. More similar schools were established in the Punjab than in other states. One of the first Provinces Muslim Girls Schools in India that has endured for a long time is the Malkajhet Girls School in Hyderabad, founded in 1881. Later, comparable elementary and secondary schools with Urdu as the predominant language of instruction were established in Hyderabad.

### **THE DISPATCH READ**

The overall number of girls' schools, according to Woods Dispatch, is 256 in Madras, 288 in Bengal, 65 in Bombay, and 17 in the North Western Provinces. The modern form of females school had only recently started to emerge in Punjab, where the traditional education for women was being maintained by indigenous efforts.. State monies were

used more freely to subsidize women's education after the 1857 Revolution. As a result, the number of girls pursuing higher education increased. In 1871, there were 134 high schools and 1,700 primary schools for girls in the entire nation. According to documents from 1873, there were only 1646 schools for girls in British India. There was a minor improvement between 1871 and 1882, although it only applied to primary education. The first Educational Commission, headed by Sir William Hunter in 1882, proposed the establishment of educational standards because they were sorely lacking in institutions at the time. According to the Commission, "the full extension of female education should be preferably promoted by affording liberal aid and encouragement to managers who show their personal interest in the work and only when such agency is not available by the establishment of schools under the management of the department or of Social or Municipal Boards." Lord Curzon appointed the following University Commission in 1902. Nothing unique was said by this Commission on women's education. The Calcutta University Commission was established in 1916. The Sadler Commission, led by Sir William Sadler, is known by this name.

### **ADVANCEMENT IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION**

There was a strong perceived demand for professional women, especially in the professions of education and medicine, as higher education expanded. Miss Harrison presented a very compelling case for nursing in Punjab. As a result of her efforts, other widows and senior citizens teamed up with Miss Simon and Miss Raynor to receive training in the practices of Dais (midwives). The Medical College in Lahore (1860) started offering midwifery courses in 1877–1878. Later, a number of welfare initiatives were launched, making the best use of the services of unfortunate women, including newborn welfare and baby clinics. Edith Brown founded the Women's Christian College in Ludhiana in 1894 to offer medical training, particularly to Christian women. In 1937, Dayanand Medical College, a further Arya Medical College, was established in Ludhiana. 229 women studied at these two institutes in Ludhiana in 1938–1939. The Amritsar Medical College, founded in 1938, prepared students for the L.S.M.F. (Licentiate of State Medical Faculty) and the Punjab State Medical Faculty's Diploma in Ophthalmology. In 1941, there were 105 female students enrolled in the medical school. For the first time in India's history, four female students of European and Anglo-Indian descent were admitted to a men's medical college in 1875 after much effort. As a result, Madras was a pioneer in the medical education of women, and ever since, women in Madras have continued to receive their university-level training in male-only colleges. Oddly, Bengal has lagged behind other countries in medical education. In 1885, after much protest, women were allowed to enroll in the Calcutta Medical College. Since 1883, seventeen women have attended the Grant Medical College in Bombay, which serves men. While the others were working toward the diploma of qualified practitioners, just two of them were fully matriculated and pursuing the Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery. Women's medical education proponents were

dissatisfied with this style of co-education. However, it was very difficult to proceed because to the financial issues, the insufficient number of students, and the difficulties in hiring female professors. In Agra, a pioneering doctor from India named Babu Ganga Prasad established a special school just for girls. The University of Punjab attempted to educate Indian women in medicine and surgery at the same time. In the Male Medical Schools, such as Babu Ganga Prasad's school, they started separate classes for girls. However, this school once more did not have much success.

## **NURSING**

In 1946, THE Government of India established a separate nursing college in New Delhi. It provides a four-year B.Sc. (honors) program. "Prepare young women for the health promoting, preventive, and curative aspects of nursing," it says. Additionally, it offers courses to qualified nurses to prepare them for senior and accountable roles as administrators and sister tutors.

Therefore, from 1947 to 1957, a capable woman minister was in charge of overseeing all aspects of health and medicine in the nation. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, whose tireless efforts to improve the nation's health were amazing. She was hence highly known both in India and internationally. She has an interest in providing Indian ladies with medical care. During the First World War, she worked in hospitals as a nurse. She served as both President of the Indian Council for Child Welfare and Vice President of the International Red Cross Society.

Chief Commissioner of the St. John Ambulance Brigade of India and President of the Child Health and Care Association of India. She served as the Indian Delegation's leader at the World Health Organization for four years in a row while also serving as the Deputy Leader of the Indian Delegations to UNESCO in London and Paris. She was chosen as the W.H.O. Assembly's President in 1950.

## **THE PROGRESS OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION**

Between 1849 and when Bethune School started, the Indian Education(Hunter) Commission strived to advance education in India and did its best to create elementary schools for girls and teacher-training facilities. In those days, 98 percent of females were able to attend school, but they were at home taking care of their families. Thus, the Hunter Commission Report advocated for increasing educational subsidies for girls. In the ensuing twenty years, higher education quickly grew. There were just 6 women enrolled in Indian universities in 1881–1882; at the turn of the century, there were 264. The number of girls enrolled in secondary schools increased throughout this time from 2054 to 415.

**PANDITA RAMABAI**

Pandita Ramabai, a trailblazer in women's education and an outspoken advocate for women's rights, was truly exceptional. She gave speeches about social change and women's education all over India. The elite of Calcutta were fascinated by her and gave her the name "Saraswati"—the Goddess of Learning—and the nickname "Pandita"—because she appeared to be just as knowledgeable as other Brahmin pandits. She made public appearances while traveling in the Bombay Presidency to advocate for women's education. She spoke in 1881 before the Sir William Hunter-led Education Commission, highlighting the urgency of reforms like the outlawing of child marriage and the promotion of women's education. Through the Arya Mahila Samaj (Aryan's Women's Society), she started collaborating with reformers to educate women. Ramabai's first attempt to teach widows in India remains her biggest contribution. The Kaiser-i-Hind medal was given to her by the Indian government in recognition of her contributions. She stood for the emergence of Indian femininity and bravely and persuasively expressed the need for her gender to live greater lives than were possible due to historical prejudices.

**MATAJI MAHARNI TAPASWINI**

With its link to missions and foreign funding, the Mahakali Pathshala (Great Mother Kali School) of Bengal contrasts sharply with Pandita Ramabai's educational institutions. Her Holiness Mataji Maharani Tapaswini established this institution and its several outposts in Calcutta in 1893 as a "genuine Indian attempt" to advance women's education. This institution did not hire any foreign teachers and only got financial aid from outsiders. The institution's founders supported the "school" model of female education but were against co-education and using a single curriculum for both sexes. Their mission statement stated that they wanted to educate "girls strictly along national lines in the hope that they might regenerate Hindu society." This was a project that was in line with that of nationalist "revivalists," who did not always oppose change "in the name of resisting colonial knowledge," according to historian Tanika Sarkar. Despite their differences with the liberal reformers, they shared the belief that advancement and female education go hand in hand and looked forward to the day when Indian women would be heavily involved in the nation's affairs.

**PROF. DHONDO KESHAV KARVE**

He was born on April 18, 1858, into a low-income family. He put a lot of effort into getting an education, and he began his career as a teacher in a protestant girl school in Bombay, where he first became aware of the need of women's education. After the death of his first wife, he decided to wed a widow in 1891 while working as a professor at Fergusson College in Poona, in spite of religious resistance. Following his marriage to a Brahmin widow, he



focused all of his efforts on helping Hindu widows. Many girls enrolled in the Mahila Vidyalaya when it first opened in 1907, not with the goal of preparing for any particular exam but rather, "to prepare themselves for becoming good wives, good mothers, and good neighbors." At this point, Professor Karve became aware of the demand for a special curriculum for these girls since he was of the opinion that an Indian girl on the average would not benefit from a model English-run school. So he created his own curriculum that was tailored specifically to the requirements of women, separate from that taught in other government-run schools.

The widowed sisters of Anandibai, Parvatibai Athavali, were crucial to the development and growth of Karve's school. Parvatibai stated her desire to pursue education, rejecting any talk of remarriage. She graduated from Karve's school, went on to become a teacher, and eventually rose to the position of Superintendent. The voluntary tonsured widow Parvatibai, who followed traditional eating practices, publicly opposed widow remarriage. Parvatibai insisted that getting married was a widow's ultimate calling in life. She supplemented Karve's school's curriculum with instruction in the local tongue and a focus on child care and domestic arts. Parvatibai cautioned women from abandoning their "natural roles" in order to participate in the oppressive market. However, she had already joined the market, and in her own words, not voluntarily. She shared Karve's view that women in public roles were an exception rather than the rule.

### **BEGUM ROKEYA SAKHAWAT HOSSAIN**

Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880–1922) founded a school for Muslim females in 1909 in the Bihar district town of Bhagalpur. After her husband passed away, she opened this school, but his family took offense. As a result of her stepdaughter forcing her out of her house, Begum Rokeya closed the school and relocated to Calcutta, where she started the Sakhawat Memorial Girls School in 1911. This was not the first school founded by a Muslim woman for Muslim girls, though. Begum Rokeya has gained the distinction of pioneer thanks to her methodical and unwavering dedication to the project. Despite Begum Rokeya writing and publicly speaking against the negative aspects of this practice, this school was created and arranged for children who observed purdah and used Urdu as the language of instruction. Only three years after their marriage, at the age of 21, Rokeya began writing articles regarding the plight of women. She refined her beliefs on the necessity to awaken women to their oppression and the significance of education in this process in a variety of articles, short tales, and novels she published over the years.

### **SISTER SUBBALAKSHMI**

In India, Sister Subbalakshmi (1886–1969) worked for social change and education. She was born in Madras in 1886 at Mylapore. In Madras, she founded a school for young high caste widows. Her goal was to transform these unhappy women into valuable contributors to society. She graduated from high school and registered for presidency college at Madras University. She earned her B.A. in 1911, being the first Hindu widow to accomplish so in the Madras presidency. She learned that Madras had almost 22,000 widows between the ages of five and fifteen, many of whom were Brahmans, and she became interested in helping widows. Sister Subbalakshmi served as the first principal of The Lady Willingdon Training College and Practice School, a facility for teacher preparation, when it first opened in 1922. Sister Subbalakshmi was able to put some of her educational theories into practice at this institution. Three programs were available at the college: post-graduate preparation for prospective high school teachers, secondary preparation for teaching up to the eighth grade, and preparation for elementary teachers. Because English-speaking teachers were in high demand, English was stressed.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, during the course of our debate, we concluded that women's education had advanced thanks to the efforts of British tyrants, missionaries, male reformers in India, and educated Indian women who saw the value of women's education. Women with education started supporting their husbands. They also gained the right to criticize the British government's bad policies. When males sought politics, educated women took on the responsibility of social reforms. The male member of the civil service was among them. They started some schools.

Women initially became educated then instructors during a period of significant social change. Therefore, up to the middle of the twentieth century, the early nineteenth century's bounds had been significantly expanded. India's ladies were ready to influence their future at the moment.

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