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	+	SOCIO ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF
	+	WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN GUJARAT
	+	IN THE MODERN PERIOD
	+	(19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES)
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3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter we surveyed in historical perspective several factors and forces that affected women's access to education. In cultural, social, political and educational matters, as they affect the life of the people - their beliefs, customs, values, practices - there prevailed in the different parts of the country a remarkable degree of living unity and affinity. The position of women in the Hindu civilization and period of Muslim rule in India as a whole, did not differ materially, excepting a few local shades here and there, from any one or the other part of the country. The favourable factors and obstacles to the growth of women's education that we described in the last chapter on the national level would hold good, with

some difference of intensity rather than of fundamental nature in Gujarat, too. Very little detailed and specific types of data that would be of significance for the purpose of our study are available about women's access to education in Gujarat in ancient and medieval time. There are some studies on Gujarati literature, cultural history of Gujarat, life and education in Western India which provide broad and sketchy picture of socio-economic conditions in Gujarat in ancient and medieval times and they provide some general references to the social status and learning of women in those days. But they are not detailed and adequate enough to be used to build any definite hypothesis regarding women's access to education in Gujarat in ancient and medieval times. The socio-economic, cultural, political and educational picture regarding Gujarati females emerging from such studies do not materially differ from the one presented by us in the previous chapter. Among the few studies that are done and which throw side light on social status and learning of women in ancient and medieval Gujarat, mention must be made of "The Cities of Gujarat" by H.G. Briggs, (1849), two studies by K.M. Munshi, viz., "Gujarat and Its Literature, (1935), and "Glory that was Gujarat Desh, (1955), "Studies in the History of Gujarat" by M.S. Commissariate, (1937), "Arvachin Gujaratnu Rekha Darshan, Part I By H.T. Parekh (1935), "Prachin Itihas", Part I-IV by G.H. Desai (1954), "Gruh Jivanman Strimu Sthan" by Sarojini Mehta (1958), "Culture" section of the Souvenir

published by the Indian National Congress at its Bhavnagar Session (19), "History of Education in Gujarat from 1000 A.D. till the Formation of the Gujarat State" by Neela Surati (1964), some studies published by Gujarat Vernacular Society on different aspects of life in Gujarat, Ahmedabad, "Some Studies in Jain Literature in Gujarat" by Professor Bhogilal Sandesara and "Studies in Muslim Learning in Gujarat" by Professor M.A. Quraishi. These studies make some references to the socio-cultural status of women in ancient and medieval Gujarat and to the general level of learning among women in general terms. We have preferred to pass over the ancient and medieval period in Gujarat chiefly for two reasons, viz., (1) the cultural, socio-economic and political factors that might have affected women's access to education in ancient and medieval Gujarat were more or less the same as described in the previous chapter, and (2) our major concern in this study is with the modern period and our objective is to understand how some of the present handicaps to women's access to secondary education have their roots in the social conditions and social prejudices that existed in the Gujarati society from the beginning of the nineteenth century when the modern type of education in India began and how social conditions, nationalism, improved economic picture, awakening among women, etc. helped the growth of female secondary education in Gujarat. Our main interest is also to note the efforts made by social reformers and Gujarati writers, poets, and

dramatists to improve social lot of women and thereby to pave the way for increased access to education for women. A background study of the changing socio-economic climate for women's education in the tradition-bound society of Gujarat is calculated to provide a meaningful background for a more comprehensive and critical study of secondary education for girls in Gujarat and its present day problems.

3.2 SOME FACTS ABOUT GUJARAT

Gujarat is a part of the western sea-board of India. In Ancient time*, North Gujarat was known by the name Anartta. It was one of the earliest settlements of the Aryan immigrants. The next wave of Aryan immigrants settled in Kathiawad, which is now the Saurashtra component of Gujarat. Gujarat's history for several centuries after the ~~Maharashtra~~ Epic period is in dark. Under the Mauryan Empire, Anartta and Saurashtra were brought under the same fold. The Saka-Kshatrapas ruled long over Gujarat. Then it fell to the Gupta emperors. For ^a hundred years Gujarat formed the part of the Gupta Empire.

* This history of Gujarat is built up from the chapter "The Aryan Colonies of the West" in K.M. Munshi's Gujarat and Its Literature, Longmans, 1935.

Gujarat, then, came under the Valbhi Kings in the sixth century A.D. The famous ancient University of Valabhi flourished at this time (746 A.D.) Vanaraj Chavda founded Anahilwada Patan (C. 765) which remained as ~~the~~ capital of Gujarat for a long time. Maitrak rulers ~~whose~~ reign continued till 789 A.D. The Chavada Kings ruled over Gujarat till 942 A.D. The Solanki Dynasty then took over the Government of Gujarat. The foundation of modern Gujarat was laid during Mulraja Solanki, a Chalukya in 961 A.D. During ^{the rule of} his successors, the Chalukya Kings, the name Gurjara Bhumi or Gurjara Desh stuck to the land. On the death of Vishaldeva in 1261, the brilliant period in the history of Gujarat which began with Mularaja Solanki in 961 came to an end.

In 1297, Ulughkhan, the brother of All-a-uddin Khilji of Delhi conquered Gujarat. Gujarat then came under Muslim domination. From 1411 to 1573, Gujarat was ruled by the Sultans of Ahmedabad. It was a province of the Moghul Empire from 1573 to 1707. The period between 1707 and 1818 was one of wretchedness, disorder and misery under the raids of the Marathas. The Maratha power under the Peshva dominated Gujarat till 1818. With the battle of Kirkee, in 1818, the East India Company finally stepped into the place of the Peshva in Gujarat.

When Gujarat passed on into the hands of the East India Company - the British, the modern period and the formation of Gujarat began. Gujarat consisted of four districts, viz., Surat, Broach, Kaira and Ahmedabad. The fifth district - the Panchmahal was formed at a later stage. Bombay city, as far as its trade and commerce was concerned, was largely Gujarati. Ceaseless mercantile and maritime activities of the people of Gujarat were going on, because of an undisturbed coast line on its western boundary. In fact, before the advent of the British, the flag of Gujarat could be seen flying on 84 ports, 23 of which were on the western coast and the rest in foreign lands.

The whole of Kathiawad consisted of a number of small States (~~601 in number~~) under the administration of Indian princes. These States were under the Agent to the Governor General, for Western India States Agency. In the mainland of Gujarat, too, there were as many as 81 small States under Indian princes. Baroda State was the biggest native State. It had one of its districts - the Amreli district located in Kathiawad. Kutch with an area of 8000 square miles was a separate State, situated to the north of Kathiawad.

The first census in Gujarat was taken in 1872. The population of Gujarat was 91,29,722 (1). There were a number of castes, perhaps over three hundred, which did not inter-dine or inter-marry. In a number of caste-groups

males showed a tendency to be in excess of females. Bombay, with its suburbs, was, as it is today, a place of abode for many Gujaratis and a great centre of its intellectual, business and educational life. In fact, Bombay was the cultural, intellectual and economic capital of Gujarat. The link between Bombay and Gujarat was from the beginning close and strong. Bombay has remained as a unique factor in the life of the people of Gujarat. Eighty-nine per cent of the people are Hindus, and about 9 per cent Musalmans. They are distributed unevenly over the province.

The average density of population per mile in the Presidency is 160; in Gujarat 290; in the Baroda State 299; in Kathiawad 150; in Junagadha it is as low as 163; in Surat District 410 and in its Gandevi Taluka as high as 865 (2).

In old days, the Gujaratis were divided into higher caste and lower castes. "The basic racial stock of Gujarat is powerful and tenacious, and has shown an extra-ordinary range of adaptability..... The most powerful of the unconscious processes of the past in Gujarat, as elsewhere in India, was caste-consciousness. It included consciousness of one's own caste as the fixed orbit in which the life was predestined to move, belief in Chaturvarnya as the divinely appointed harmony of functional groups, and loyalty to the guidance of the Brahmins." (3)

The traditions on which the Puranic view of life was based had a strong hold on the minds of the people.

The Jains and the Bhatias among the Hindus were highly enterprising business communities. Gujarat was a strong centre of the Vaishnava religious sect and the hold of the Vaishnava Gosai Maharajas - priests on their followers was very great.

Against such few facts of Gujarat of the early British period, we will now attempt in the next section to review the socio-economic forces that affected women's access to education in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Very little detailed socio-economic data relating to Saurashtra and Kutch regions of present-day Gujarat that have relevance as determinants of educational progress are available. Again, in the territories ruled by Indian princes, excepting the Baroda State, the public awakening was small and educational progress limited. We will, therefore, limit our discussion to the Gujarat districts under the British rule. These districts were 5 in number. They were Ahmedabad, Kheda, Broach, Surat, and Panchmahal covering 8683 square miles.

3.3 PERIOD OF TURMOIL AND SOCIAL STAGNATION UNDER THE MUSLIM AND THE MARATHA RULE IN GUJARAT

Our major interest in this chapter is to survey, in a general way, the cultural and socio-economic conditions in Gujarat in the modern period with a view to understanding the determinants of women's access to education in general and more particularly at the secondary school stage. We would like to preface our survey of these determinants in the form of forces and factors with a brief review of the political and social conditions obtaining in Gujarat before the British established their rule in Gujarat in the early years of the nineteenth century. We propose to do this because the cultural and social life in Gujarat was so much disturbed and impoverished in these two periods that the ill-effects thereof dragged on even during the British period, a fact which considerably affected women's access to education in Gujarat in the nineteenth century.

Before the foundations of the Sultanate of Gujarat were laid in 1299, the province had powerful cultural traditions and trends of social progress. As Munshi observes -

"The social structure does not appear to have been very rigid. Caste was not so hidebound as at a later period, and inter-marriages were frequent. Remarriage of widows were not banned. Adult marriage appears to have been the rule. The people on the whole were spirited and happy, and at the same time cultured. Under the strong rule of Patan, they became united and powerful; and the name Gurjaradesa, adopted for the country from its kings gave them conscious unity."(4)

These cultural, social, economic and political conditions were favourable for the spread of education in good measure both among men and women. The Brahmanas of Vadnagar, who came to be called Nagars, possessed high Brahmanical learning and their women, too, were highly educated and cultured. The influence of Nagars was considerable in the public life and culture of the time. The Gujarati community was economically well off. People were liberal-minded and allowed to settle communities from Rajputana and Malwa. There was a kind of social autonomy. Munshi refers to the equality of opportunity of advancement for high and low (5). There was respect for women. Learning was highly honoured by the society.

Gujarat fell to the Muslim invaders in 1299. The period of earlier glory of Gujarat came to an end and a century of chaos and unsettled existence under the Muslims began. Before Ulugh Khan, the brother of Alla-ud-din invaded and captured Anahildwad Patan, the then capital of Gujarat, the province had, as recorded by a foreign traveller, 70,000 towns and villages, all populous, and the people abounding in wealth and luxuries. But Gujarat's decline set in thereafter.

"During the following century of the Muslim rule, Gujarat received neither respite nor mercy from the invaders. Her shrines were desecrated; her wealth was plundered; her women were violated or kidnapped. Forcible conversion was the mildest alternative offered by the invader to the children of the soil. Men, women and children were sold as slaves. People migrated from place to place

in vain search of security. Many castes like the Khadayatas, Nagars, Jharolas and Modhas, now settled in different parts of Gujarat, bear the names of North Gujarat from which they fled at this time. Priests, poets, and Sadhus sought refuge to obscure villages, placing themselves beyond the reach of the ruthless destroyer. All that terrified people could do was to lock up their women-folk indoors, and to barricade their world behind the bulworks of caste, panchayat and mahajans." (6)

Thus, the advent of the Muslim period was a terrific blow to the good social status and educational opportunities that women enjoyed in Gujarat till the end of the thirteenth century.

Another study in Gujarati on the social life during the period reviews the warping effect of the Muslim rule in Gujarat till the times of the Marathas on the stagnating the mental outlook and social traditions of the people in the following words :

Parekh in his review of the effect of the Muslim rule on the life of Gujarati people has noted stagnating attitude and rigid outlook having been developed among people. Social exclusiveness became the dominant feature of life and a narrow outlook of religious other worldliness developed.

"Since the Muslims invaded, conquered and settled down in our province, it can be said that broad changes took place in our former ancient culture and in our social life, and under the impact of the influences of the Muslim times, the outlook of people and their

social traditions and values became more suited to the circumstances and exigency of the contemporary times. The social life of the people became less flexible, traditional, dominated by limited perspective of the time, following local standards of life, burdened with local customs and prejudices. Like the proverbial frog in the well, the vision of the people did not reach beyond their local boundaries. They had become narrow-minded and utterly selfish. The social and public life of the people was so suffocated under the weight of traditions and superstitions that few could get out of it. Only a few with adventurous spirit or a searching, critical bend of mind could be found." (7)

The Muslim conquest of Gujarat had^a disastrous effect on promotion of Hindu learning and education. "Royal patronage was withdrawn from Samskr^uta. Learned assemblies, which maintained its traditions under royal patronage, were dissolved for want of support. Many Panditas fled to the sacred places, like Kashi and took to the life of a recluse; the race of poets disappeared, Devout Brahmins turned for support to their poverty-stricken followers in small towns and villages, and assumed the obscure role of family priests or puranikas" (8)

The Muslim rulers did not give State patronage, that could be considered effective, to Hindu learning and culture. This resulted in further isolation of Hindus culturally. Of course, some of the Hindu families, especially of the Nagar Brahmin families learned Persian and Urdu and made a name in these languages and even their ladies were also well-educated in these languages, the vast bulk of the Hindu~~x~~

masses developed various social barriers for themselves and took shelter behind them. "Gradually the situation grew so adverse that the Hindus felt themselves safe when sheltered by their own Panchayats. Social exclusiveness became prominent and acquired an unprogressive and narrow outlook - especially in religious and social affairs." (9) Towards the end of the Muslim rule, after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the central Mogul authority became weak, the Subas and Nawabs threw off their allegiance to Delhi and the Maratha raids became a normal feature of life. This must have adversely affected education of women.

However, it will not be true to say that during the Muslim rule in Gujarat, education was stagnant. Learning began to seek popular support through the medium of Gurjara bhasha or language; Brahmins forced to migrate to small towns and villages also organised indigenous types of schools and continued to provide a network of schools for the masses. There were ^agreat number of ^dma^krasahs where Muslim children received their schooling. However, "Mass education, as we understand by it today, was absent in Muslim Gujarat. Education, at that time, was a voluntary and spontaneous growth, and government did not regard it a part of its duties to impart education to all the people. Educational activities, though fairly spread over the land, were mainly confined to metropolitan centres. Pat^han,

Ahmedabad, Champaner, Cambay, Broach, and Surat catch our eyes as the head-quarters of Muslim education."(10)

Quraishi, in another study, affirms that girls were also imparted instruction. They also joined boys in Maktabas and Madrasahs run by voluntary agencies and patrons of learning. However, the emphasis on the education of girls seem to be on instruction in embroidery, moral and religious education and the art of writing. "The daughters of persons of the middle and high ranks were often instructed in the art of embroidery and in other ornamental work, which were taught in schools and in private houses."(11)

The social conditions of the people in general and the status of women in particular had deteriorated during the Muslim rule. During the sixteenth and ^{the} seventeenth centuries, social barriers were stiffened; the individual was sacrificed to the group; untouchability had become rigorous. Numerous sub-castes existed. Vimalprabhandha, a literary work of this period, bears a testimony to this. Inter-caste marriages had almost died out. The system of joint family was strongly entrenched into the social fabric of Gujarat. Munshi makes the following observations on the social status of women of Gujarat in the sixteenth and ^{the} seventeenth centuries.

"Wise men, poets and moralists moved to righteous indignation at young wives who, desirous of having a good time with their husbands, drove them to disrupt the family, and thereby, to restrain th

to destroy the protection which it afforded. No measures were too strong to restrain these centrifugal tendencies of women. They lost high status which they once enjoyed in the family, and were generally treated as slaves. Co-education in village schools came to an end. Marriage of infants became almost universal."(12)

Gujarati literary works of this period contain references to ridiculous child-marriages. Poets bewailed the degeneracy of the age in which girls were mothers at eight and widows at sixteen. Marriage of a grown-up girl with an infant husband was also by no means rare. The position of a girl in the house of her husband was insufferable. Re-marriage of widows, in early eighteenth century was regarded even by a poet like Premanand as an abomination.

Under such social conditions with so low a social status, it was understandable that girls had very limited access to education during the Muslim rule.

The Maratha raids in Gujarat began from 1664 when Shivaji first attacked and ravaged Surat. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the imperial authority of Delhi grew weak. Soon, the Maratha raids in Gujarat became a normal feature of life. Maratha power over-powered Muslim resistance in Gujarat and held Gujarat in their sway for almost a century (1707-1818). During the period of Maratha domination, Gujarat suffered from ^{the} worst disorder and misfortune. Irresponsible agents of Peshvas, the Gaekwads

and Sindhias almost ruined the masses by exporting revenues and allowances by all possible means. Trade and commerce were almost ruined.

Under such unsettled political situation and disrupted economic conditions, it was natural that the society became more tradition-bound, isolationist, rigid and superstition-ridden. Most of the social and public life of people was confined to their local villages or towns. There was little contact with the outside world. It was considered a religious sacrilege to cross a sea. Educational facilities for the people tended to be further restricted. Women were closed behind the four walls of their homes. Women suffered heavily in social status, security, economic rights and education.

It should be borne in mind that during the rule of both the Muslim and Marathas, there was no direct commitment on the part of the State to provide education of the people. However, the State did support some educational institutions of elementary and higher education type, where along with boys, girls must have been also receiving instruction. But girls went out to schools before they reached puberty and where life was more peaceful and secured. In well-to-do families, there must have been some kind of domestic instruction for girls either by their parents or by some venerable old Brahmin who must have been paid in kind for this kind of service rendered to the family.

Most of the educational efforts of these two periods was limited to private individuals who received support from the local people. But as the political, social and economic life of the people ~~was~~ so much disturbed by the Maratha raids and feuds and by a state of anarchy and social intranquility that the educational activities must ^{have} been at a very low ebb in Gujarat between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries. Whatever schools existed, they were of the indigenous type and mostly the advanced communities took advantage of them.

The plight of the lower communities was very miserable. Slavery was common among them and selling of children, including girls, was practised by the low castes. "The condition of Bhils, Baraiyas, and Raniparaj, the tribes living in jungles or places nearby, was no better than that of the beasts. They were completely neglected by the society as well as the State and nothing was even thought of doing to improve their conditions." (13)

With the overthrow of the Marathas by the British, old Gujarat came to an end.

3.4 CONTINUATION OF SOCIAL STAGNATION :

GUJARAT IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Peshva's rule over Gujarat ended on 3rd June 1818 and the British rule began. The British rule turned out to

be a blessing for the people of Gujarat. It put an end to political instability, economic exploitation and social insecurity of people. It put to an end the human atrocities of robbers and plunderers. Justice and systematic administration of civic life followed. "The people of Gujarat entered upon a long period of peace; they also acquired as their capital Bombay, a port of international importance which established a living contact with Western culture." (14) People were, by and large, very happy with the British way of governing people. Ganpatram Desai, in his work on "History of the Broach City", quotes an episode which throws very significant light on people's perception of the British administration. When the British decided to transfer the Broach City to Sindhia as a gesture of their good will to them, the citizens of Broach, on the receipt of this news, bemoaned their fate and performed various religious ceremonies, praying to God to prolong the period of the British rule over them (15). The Gujarati poet Dalpatram Kavi, later, echoes the same sentiment, in one of his poems which said, "Rejoice O Hindustan and thank God that those who tyrannised people and took revenge are gone for ever." (16)

When the British rule began, Gujarat was made a part of the Bombay Presidency. The Government of Bombay directly governed the five districts of Gujarat : Surat, Broach, Kaira, Panchmahals, and Ahmedabad. The peninsula of Kathiawad was a separate political unit, though culturally

it was part of Gujarat. The possessions of the Gaekwad of Baroda ran contiguous to the British districts. Kutch was also a cultural part of Gujarat though politically a separate unit under an Indian prince. There were other small States governed by Indian princes.

Under the administration of the East India Company after 1818, Gujarat began to prosper politically, economically and culturally. But the social outlook, attitude, customs and values continued to remain traditional, narrow and rigid. The social position of the women also continued to be as unsatisfactory as before and women's access to education was almost completely sealed off.

In her study on "Women's Place in Domestic Life" (done in Gujarati), Sarojini Mehta observes that -

"It was forgotten at that time that a woman had an independent personality of her own. Till the first quarter of the nineteenth century, her social condition was extremely bad. The political chaos had its ugly effect on the social life of the period. In such unstable times, the woman in Gujarat was secluded behind the four walls of the house. Parents were impatient to get their daughters married as early as they could.....It was forgotten that she could be imparted education. Her right to inherit property was blown-off by laws based on Smrutis. Burning a widow forcibly with the dead body of her husband was a deeply rooted social custom."(17)

The hold of the caste system on the minds of the people was tremendous. Its effects were so intense, its ties were so severe and close and its terror was so much

penetrating and pervading that even the most powerful and the wealthy trembled before it.(18) There were numerous instances of severe persecution by the caste people - like those of Karsondas Mulji, Mahipatram Rupram for crossing the sea and of Dhankorbai and Madhavdas for the first widow-remarriage in the Kapor caste. The weapon of throwing the defaulter out of the fold of the caste proved most powerful and forbidding against any impulse for social reform. The institution of the caste, with its unchanging tradition, irrational beliefs and fanatical discipline, had blocked all ways to the progress of the people in the first half of the nineteenth century. It developed into such a steel frame of social life that the promotion of the economic well-being of the society and the progress of education, especially of girls and women considerably suffered. When different castes did not look upon education for girls with favour, it is no wonder that girls grew up mostly uneducated and ignorant.

There were certain inhuman social customs and practices prevalent in Gujarat in a very strong form during the first three decades of the eighteenth century. One of them was female infanticide. The condition of a woman was wretched in a Hindu family. The birth of a daughter was no event of rejoicing but of deep and lasting sorrow.

The social life of a woman as a wife was also so painful and a constant cause of worries that many parents had to lead a miserable life on account of the constant miseries of their daughters. A tendency, therefore, developed in the Hindu society to abhor the birth of a daughter in the family. An evil custom known as the Dudhpiti (female infanticide) came into operation in Gujarat and Kathiawad. This evil custom was especially prevalent among the Rajputs and the Kanabi (farmers) in Kathiawad. Colonel Walker was the first English officer who agitated to abolish it. He eventually succeeded in making the chieftains of the Jadeja, Jethava and other Rajput princely families of Kathiawad to abolish this inhuman practice.(19) Eventually, the Company had to resort to law to uproot this evil custom.

The second inhuman social custom of this period was the burning of the living widow with the corpse of her husband in the event of the latter's death, and thereby she would remain united with him in life, in death and in heaven. The hold of this custom was very strong on the minds of the people - men and women of the society. Not all widows burnt themselves to death with the corpse of their husband willingly. Many did so being overwhelmed by the weight of the social custom, some goaded by the idea of family tradition and prestige, some forced by their in-laws. It was with great difficulty and with the help of mighty and determined crusade that the British succeeded, under the

Viceroyalty of Lord Bentinckⁿ, in abolishing this custom and emancipated the woman.

Child marriages and enforced widowhood were other evil social customs. Social antagonism to widow-remarriage was very strong. Against these two latter evils the social reformers of this period began their crusade. The evils of female infanticide and the Sati custom were abolished by Government action.

Some of the brave social reformers of the period tried to change this dismal social picture. Their number was not much. But they were the valiant crusaders in the service of reforming the tradition-dominated, orthodox Gujarati society and improving the miserable lot of women. We will briefly review their efforts and contribution because, but for them perhaps, a beginning would not have been made to improve the social status of women and open, though to a very small extent, women's access to education.

Durgaram Mehtaji (1809-1876) was a towering personality among social reformers of this period. Of course, before Durgaram Mehtaji took to the field, social leaders like Ranchhoddas Zaveri (1803-1870) had already raised the battle-cry for social reforms. Fardunji Marzbanji (1787-1874) had already started Mumbai Samachar, a journal which he used partly as a forum for disseminating social progressive ideas. The task of the social reformers of this period was

extremely difficult, because traditionalism and conservatism were very strong, and to attempt to change social attitude and prejudices of the people of that time was like dashing the head against the wall.

Durgaram Mehtaji founded a society in Surat in 1844 which he named 'Manav Dharma Sabha'. Among the objectives of this society, the one that should interest us was the improvement of the social conditions of women. He particularly campaigned for the re-marriage of the child-widow. The Hindu widow, in those days, suffered from innumerable handicaps, one of which was deprivation of opportunity to receive education or to continue further studies after marriage. Durgaram also began attacking untouchability. This happened in 1844.

In 1827, the Bombay Education Society had founded the Elphinstone Institute to commemorate the retirement of the educationist-cum-administrator Governor of Bombay, Lord Mountstuart Elphinstone. To the products of this Institute, which included great names like that of Dadabhoy Naoroji, we owe the beginning of a change in social climate in the Gujarati society in Bombay which had its impact on social and cultural life in metropolitan cities of the mainland of Gujarat. The Gujarati Section of the Students' Society of the Elphinstone Institute started a monthly magazine, Ganena Parasaraka (the Disseminator of knowledge) in 1849.

In 1851, Gujarati young men in Bombay started another social reform association called 'The Buddhiyardhak Sabha' (The Augmentor of knowledge). This association turned out to be a nerve centre for all progressive thinking in social and educational practices of this time. Several social reform stalwarts and educationists like Durgaram Mehtaji, Mohanlal Ranchhoddas, Mahipatram Rupram, Sorabji Bengali, Ardeshir Moos, Nanabhai Ranina were members of this new Society. A stage was thus set for initiating moves to reform social practices which included the abolition of certain social handicaps ~~from~~ which women suffered such as early child-marriage, ban on widow-marriage, low position of women in society, etc.

The efforts of these pioneers succeeded only in making some sections of the Gujarati Society - the advanced sections like the Brahmins and the Banias - to think about the desirability of improving the lot of the women. The ^{bulk} vast of the masses was little moved. The social prejudices and superstition against educating women ~~was~~ too strong and deep-rooted to yield quickly to the pressure of social reforms. The Reports from Districts of Educational Inquiries ~~ordered~~ by Elphinstone in 1824 contained remarks such as "Native customs exclude females from the advantage of education", "education would bring widowhood to girls which women dreaded the most".(20)

Under such awfully repressive and oppressive social conditions there was no possibility for girls' education at all. Female education, therefore, continued to remain out of fashion in Gujarat as else where in the country during this period.

"Certain castes had a very strong prejudice against educated women. In those days of joint family system and child marriages, girls were often snubbed when trying to learn even the three R's..... Though imparting of instruction to woman was not considered inauspicious in Gujarat, yet it was considered shameful for women to read in the presence of male members of the family..... At times the character of ladies with such ability was suspected. Consequently getting a good husband for such a girl was very difficult." (21)

Rev. Robert Jafferay, writing about the women of Gujarat of this period, refers to a surprising paradox regarding their low social status and their high place in homes of individual families. "In many most important concerns, as wife and mother, she is the controlling spirit. Her will is the rule of the house-hold. In Western India, she enjoys larger liberty than is permitted in other districts..... Even Mahommedan women may be seen in streets without purdah. The Hindu woman's position is peculiar. She is at once a domestic slave and domestic autocrat. But her slavery is more than balanced by her autocracy. Were she only educated, her slavery would vanish." (22)

This paradoxical position could only be explained by the fact of very severe social prejudice against the education of women at this period of the history of Gujarat, though the earlier cultural traditions in certain high castes continued to give them a place of love and reverence in the house-hold.

In the later half of the nineteenth century, the struggle for social reform and the removal of at least some major social handicaps of women intensified. This resulted in opening the door of educational institutions to women in at least some communities and in some cities in Gujarat. This part of the story of the struggle for women's emancipation will be taken up in the following section.

3.5 SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT IN GUJARAT IN THE ^TLATER HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND FEMALE EDUCATION

During the second half of the nineteenth century, several events took place in the country and in Gujarat which resulted in reducing the rigore~~us~~ of the repressions of the fanatic social traditions and customs, slightly though it might be, and increased, to some extent, women's access to education. Firstly, the Widow-Remarriage Act was passed in 1856; the acceptance of the idea of the age of consent in the Indian Penal Code of 1860, its fixation at

10 years and its further extension to 12 years under the Act of 1891; the beginning of the operation of the three railway lines - the Bombay-Ahmedabad line, the Rajputana State Railway line, and the Bhavnagar-Gondal Railway line between 1860 and 1872 which increased the social mobility and the consequential rise of Gujarati journalism; the foundations of various social reform societies in Bombay, Surat and Ahmedabad and at other towns by western educated youngmen to argue and disseminate new knowledge and to bring about social reforms which included amelioration of the social and educational conditions of women, the use of the medium of Gujarati literature in the service of social reform; the improved economic condition of Gujarat; the establishment of a separate Department of Public Instruction in the Bombay Presidency which encouraged the opening of girls' schools; the availability of local fund cess which also helped towards opening some girls' educational institutions. These events helped towards improving social climate for making a beginning in female education in British Gujarat and in Native Princes' Gujarat.

Social Condition of Women

Many of the social handicaps from which the Gujarati women suffered in the earlier period continued in this period also. The lot of the widow was the most tragic. Child-marriages continued to be the order of the day. Sometimes engagements of boys and girls took place even before they were born. Those who dared to break the existing social

customs had to face ^{the} severest kind of penalties and social persecution. To give an example, in 1871, Sheth Madhavdas Rughnathdas of the Kapol Bania community had dared to contract marriage with Dhankorbai, a child widow. This created a terrific commotion and upheaval in the community. "When invitations were issued to friends and relatives to attend the marriage ceremony of these two daring souls, their names were not mentioned in the invitation card. During the ceremony and for one month continuously after the marriage, they were given police protection..... For twenty years the caste-fellows of the two continued to harass them. When Dhankorbai's sister was on the death-bed, her own mother refused to permit her to see even the face of the dying sister despite many implorations." (23)

The barriers of caste and community were harmful as much to women as to men. But women had to suffer worse from them. Everyone - boy or girl - had to marry within the narrow fold of his or her sub-caste. Parents fondly looked forward to marrying their sons and daughters as early as they could. Most of the social reformers of Gujarat belonging to this period also had to suffer from the agony of early child marriages. Govardhanram Tripathi, the ace novelist of Gujarat was engaged before he was even born. Shardaben Mehta in her biographical memories describes the feelings ^{of} the Gujarati families of even advanced and educated ones about the early marriages of the girls :

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"Among castes that were considered high and among families, ^{we} were looked upon as progressive, the talks about the marriage of a girl would start as soon as she reached the age of 10 or 12 years. But even before that her engagement has mostly taken place. If no talk of her engagement is heard by the caste people when she becomes 12 years of age, curse would be showered on her parents." (24)

Shardaben illustrates this social attitude further in regard to her own case :

"As soon as I attained 12 years of age, our relatives got disturbed and they openly as well as behind our back started voicing their feelings of exasperation by saying that it was not proper to keep an unmarried daughter of such a big age in the home; it was as dangerous as preserving a bundle of snakes. Twelve years age was the highest limit to keep a daughter unmarried. But then, at such a high age, it might not be possible to engage her to an unmarried boy; efforts should be made to get a widower. Even names of persons with advanced age as bridegrooms were suggested for me." (25)

Sarojini Mehta also refers to a similar fact. She says :

"A boy can be allowed to grow, beyond 10 or 12 years of age unmarried, but not a girl. If a girl remains unmarried after her maidenhood, heavens would fall on her parents. Therefore, they were forced to give her in marriage to any available bridegroom - an old man, a man with another wife alive, a lame man, a man of ill-character and reputation, man of indifferent health. What really matters was the readiness of a male to accept the hand of a girl in marriage. The other factors did not matter at all." (26)

Such was the social climate in an advanced and educated community like the Nagar Brahmin in Gujarat in ^{the} eighties of the nineteenth century. The situation must have been worse in other less educated and lower caste groups in Gujarat.

Several other social evils in regard to the life of women prevailed in the Hindu society of this time. Young girls were sold in marriage. This was called Kanya Vikraya, which was also wide spread in many communities. In many castes, female infants were got rid of at birth to save the family the almost insoluble difficulty of finding husbands.

Such were the harsh realities of social life for women. The attitude of men towards them further aggravated their plight. Even educated persons were not free from uncharitable attitude to their own women. They mostly neglected them socially, culturally and educationally.

The Contribution of the Gujarati Press :

The Gujarati Press was one of the most potent of social forces at least till sixties, which sought to bring about social reforms, change women's position in society and open up opportunities for them for education and development.

Fardunji Marzban's 'Siri Mumbaina Samachar' (later renamed as 'Mumbai Samachar') had started in Gujarati publication since 1822. Its subscribers were spread over Bombay, Surat, Broach, Kheda, and Ahmedabad. (27) By 1832,

there were 9 other journals, 8 in Bombay and 1 in Surat.(28) But the Gujarati Press entered into the arena of social reform from 1851 onwards when the Grand Old man of India, Dadabhoy Naoroji, began publishing 'Rast Goftar', a weekly (29) He had the active support of the young members of the 'Students' Literary Society of the Elphinstone Institute which was started in 1848. In 1852, Karsondas Mulji, a fiery social reformer of Surat published another journal called 'Satya Prakash' which merged itself in 'Rast Goftar' in 1861. He also published a monthly called 'Buddhivardhak' by about 1852. Kavi Narmad and his other five literary friends started at Surat a fortnightly called 'Dandio' in October 1864. In 1872, a weekly called 'Arya Mitra' saw the light of the day. These journals were edited by very great intellectuals of the day. They were published with some mission, the most prominent aspect of which was social reform. Of course, among these newspapers, there were some black sheep also.(30)

The Gujarati Press gave a fillip to the reformist movement in Gujarat. Rast Goftar and Buddhi Prakash led the way. Rast Goftar began to include strong matter pertaining to reform among the Hindus and Parsis. Its main campaign was for widow-remarriage. It said in its issue of 27th March 1852, "the nerves of the Hindus, it seems, are made of iron. Ah, what a torture they inflict upon a widow!"(31) During 1860, Rast Goftar included by articles under

'reformism' while the news content formed about 68 pages out of a total of 364 pages per year.(32)

The Buddhi Prakash announced its objective in its very first issue published on 15th May 1850.

"Those who have launched this journal are convinced that the mind of the people should be turned towards learning and knowledge.....(but) it is not possible to do so..... It is rather difficult to 'enlighten' the people or 'reform' them.....without the help of a journal like this....; this Journal.....'Buddhi Prakash' aspires to cultivate a 'taste for reading among our people and to change their views.'"(33)

Buddhi Prakash had continued its efforts to disseminate knowledge among people, to banish superstition and to bring about reformism. In 1860, it published a poem in Gujarati which further reiterated its aims and objectives :

"An infant, I, Buddhi Prakash, full of zeal for reformism, have completed six years of my existence. O friends, come out to reform the country with all your might and tact; (because) if we do not help ourselves in that regard, we, the Gujaratis, will be deemed to have abandoned our great vows.

I entertain great hopes this year. I feel confident, the Gujaratis will not lag behind : I hope besides, the unwanted beliefs and practices will be banished : superstitions will disappear and the rays of the sun of knowledge will pervade all around."(34)

As mentioned earlier, there were a number of other Gujarati journals engaged in the fight against social evils and in improving the social lot of women. Sir Joseph Arnold, while delivering judgment on the famous Maharaja-Libel Case (1880) which involved the great social reformer of the time

Karsondas Mulji, had very aptly described the role that the Gujarati Press played in reforming orthodox beliefs and practices among the Gujarati Hindu Society :

"To expose and denounce evil and barbarous practices, to attack usages and customs inconsistent with moral purity and social progress, is one of its (of the Press) highest, its most imperative duties. When these evils and errors are consecrated by time, fenced round by custom, countenanced and supported by the highest and most influential class of society, when they are wholly beyond the control and supervision of any other tribunal, then it is the function and the duty of the Press to intervene, honestly endeavouring by all the powers of argument, denunciation and ridicule, to change and purify the public opinion which is the real basis on which these evils are built and the real power by which they are perpetuated."(35)

By 1861-62, the Gujarati Press had come to be deeply and actively involved in the reformist movement. The campaign for reformism was further reinforced through the publication of a number of more Gujarati dailies, weeklies and monthlies. The scope of the campaign carried out by the Gujarati Press also got widened. "These included dowry, child-marriage, seclusion of women, denial to women of the opportunities to receive education, the practice of breast-beating among the women in public and collective mourning, the ban on travel beyond certain limits, particularly travel overseas, etc."(36) The cause of women was very well served by the Press of these days. Female education movement considerably profit~~ed~~ed by the Press Campaigns.

Contribution of Literary and
Social Reform Societies :

In the reformist movement in the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century in Gujarat, the role of the literary and social reform Mandals, Sabhas or Societies was equally great. The members of these societies were mostly the product of English education educated in high schools and colleges at Bombay, Surat, and Ahmedabad. They were virile, zealous youngmen fired with imagination and new revolutionary ideas. They were bursting with fresh knowledge and unrepressed enthusiasm. They wanted to strike hard at social evils and regenerate the Hindu society.

The Elphinstone Institute at Bombay was divided into a High School and a College in 1856. A band of pioneers among these students, including Dadabhoy Naoroji had founded a Students' Society to spread knowledge, education and social reform. Its Gujarati Section was styled "Gujarati Gvena Parasarka Mandali" in 1849. A band of youngmen started another association called Buddhivardhaka Sabha in 1851. Several social reform leaders of this time, including Durgaram Mehtaji, Mohanlal Ranchhoddas, Mahipatram Rupram, Sorabji Bengally were the members of this Society. The Buddhivardhak Sabha remained, for many years, a humming centre of reformist activities in Ahmedabad.

The Ahmedabad Prarthna Samaj was founded in Ahmedabad by Mahipatram Rupram and Bholanath Sarabhai in 1871. About this, Rev. Mr. Andrews wrote in his book Renaissance in India: "This Society has been in the West of India the main centre of the social amelioration which has spread thence in wider and wider circles. Some of the greatest names in social reform have been among those of its past members".

Kavi Narmad himself had founded in 1860 Tatva Shodhak Sabha which offered its platform for discussing religious, social and educational issues.

Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati had founded Arya Samaj at Bombay on 10th April 1875. The Arya Samaj was instrumental in Gujarat for social awakening in the removal of distinctions and barriers of caste and for giving an impetus to women's education.

The Theosophical Society of Anna Beasant also contributed to social awakening in Gujarat to some extent.

Besides these there were other societies also which contributed profusely to social awakening among people and helped towards creating a better climate for opening an increased educational opportunity for women during this period. Among these other societies, the more prominent were the Gujarat Vernacular Society founded in 1948 through the initiative of Mr. A.K. Forbes, the Vidyabhāyasak Mandali, the Hindu Gnan Prasarak Mandali, and the Swadesh Hitecchhu

Mandali. They led and supported the reformist movement in Gujarat.

Contributions of the Social Reformers :

This period in the social history of Gujarat is called the period of reformist or of Sudharawala, a term coined by the Parsi journalists of the fifties.

As mentioned earlier, several young social reformers had become active during this time. They were educated in the western ideas and had, therefore, developed a more rational outlook. They were vigorous and fearless of public opposition or hostility. All of them were moved by the miserable conditions and ignorance of women. They refused to toe the contemporary thinking that the woman was inferior to man; that her mission in life was to serve her men-folk; that woman deserved no freedom; she did not merit respect. These young reformers decided to swim against the social tide and work towards the amelioration of the conditions of women in Gujarat. Among these Champions of women, the names of Karsondas Mulji, Behramji Malbari, Tuljaram Sukharam, Nanabhai Ranina, Mohanlal Ranchhoddas, Ardesar Moos and several others stand prominent.

Karsondas Mulji (1832-1871) to use the words of Behramji Malbari was a spirit of patient heroism. He fought hard against the social evils of bigotry, hypocrisy and sin.

At the age of 19 years, he had written his first essay on widow remarriage. He not only carried on a constant verbal warfare in the Gujarati press and at the meetings of the Buddhivardhak Sabha, but he lent personal assistance and support to the first widow-remarriage contracted in Gujarat - the marriage between Madhavdas and the widow Dhankorbai. Karsondas and his several friends including the valiant bard of Surat, Narmadashankar, believed that social reforms should precede political reforms and the latter's foundation and main support lay in social reforms.

Kavi Narmadashanker (1833-1886) : He was another dominant reformist of this period. He used the medium of Gujarati prose and poetry to disseminate his ideas on social reforms. His articles are collected in a book called 'Narmad Gadya'. He was a fiery speaker and a fiery writer. He used to publish a newspaper entitled 'Dandio' which was his principal forum to express his views on social reforms and cultivate public opinion thereon. Narmadashanker firmly believed that a woman was in no way inferior to man - she stands on a footing of equality with him. She had equal natural rights with man. It is not true that she has not enough intelligence for studies (38) He pleaded for social justice for women. He began writing on women's education from 1853 and widow-remarriage from 1860. He also wrote on other aspects of education. He carried on a relentless campaign against social ills and particularly those

disabilities which crippled development of women.

Mahipatram Nilkantha (1830-1891) was another social leader of this time. His social reform activities were mainly confined to breaking barriers of oversea travel, organisation of Prarthana Samaj programmes and crusading against early child-marriages. Early child-marriage was a very widely prevalent system at this time. Social reformers of these days had their own marriage contracted very early. When Durgaram Mehta married he himself was 7 or 8 years old and his wife of 5 years. Narmadashanker's first wife at the time of her marriage was about 10 years old; and Mahipatram's wife was 5 years old and he himself was 6 years old when they were married. These were the days when parents began to entertain the idea of marriage of their girls and boys at or even before their birth. In the case of many, the engagement used to take place when the boy or girl was in the cradle.(39) Mahipatram worked as an active member of the Child-Marriage Prohibition Mandal. In 1871, he set up Prarthana Samaj. About Mahipatram, Dayaram Gidumal had said that "in Ahmedabad there was hardly any small or large social reform organization in which either directly or indirectly Mahipatram had not played a leading role."(40) He thus was the third main pillar of the Buddhi Vardhak Sabha of Bombay. But his main field of operation - his Karma Bhumi was Ahmedabad. He and his valiant colleagues - Bholanath Sarabhai, Poet Dalpatram Dahyabhai and Navalram Pandya played

a very important role in gradually trying to bring about a change in the social outlook of the people and prepare a helpful climate for the spread of education among girls. At that time social prejudice against reformist activities like child-marriage prohibition or contract of widow-remarriage was so great that it affected very much women's social status and their access to education. A mention of one incident to this effect would be illuminating. In 1874, one Lallubhai Khushal decided to marry a widow of his own caste, i.e. Jain Bai Jadav. Mahipatram actively helped in getting this marriage performed against strong social protest. The caste fellows of Lallubhai and Jadavben decided to retaliate against that atrocious social reform by resolving at the caste-meeting to throw the couple out of the fold of their caste, to refuse to rent or lend them any thing, to boycott the meetings of the Prarthana Samaj and to withdraw girls from schools. The result was that the married couple had to vacate the house that was rented to them, Lallubhai had to discontinue his business in cloth and the attendance in girls' schools in Ahmedabad dropped down by 40 per cent.(41)

Kavi Dalpatram Dahyabhai (1820-1898) was an active associate of Alexander Farbes, the Assistant Judge of Ahmedabad in his activities relating to the establishment and development of the Gujarat Vernacular Society. As Kavi Narmadashanker was considered, during his life time, a poet,

of social reform movement of Bombay and of Surat Centres, Kavi Dalpatram was a similar poet of social reform of the Ahmedabad Centre. All throughout his life he carried on campaign for social reform through his writings published by the Gujarat Vernacular Society. Kavi Dalpatram was a great believer in female education. About the importance of educating females he said in one of his poems :

"Good harvest will be reaped if the land is
cultivated; best result will be achieved
only if the lot of women is ameliorated."

He discussed the question of widow-remarriage in his poem 'Vencharita'. In the same poem, in 137 padas (verses) he outlined the curriculum for girls. For many years he continued to use the medium of the journal Buddhi Prakash for disseminating his views on social reforms and improvement of cultural, educational and economic conditions of women. He gave to the people of Gujarat a message of social progressivism in lucid, easy and flowing poetical compositions. The fourth chapter of Dalpat Kavva, Part I is full of description on the reform of social institutions. There was some significant difference in Kavi Dalpatram's approach to social reforms from the one adopted by his contemporary Kavi Narmadashanker. Dalpatram believed that social reform on a wide scale could be achieved only slowly whereas Narmadashanker advocated spirited attack and sudden onslaught on social evils and accomplishment of quick social reforms.

Bholanath Sarabhai (1823-1886) was the first devotional poet of the new age in Gujarat, a co-founder member of the Prarthana Samaj and a fearless social reformer. He was a strong opponent of the early child-marriage custom and was a leading and active member of the Child-marriage Prohibition Association of Ahmedabad. He married his own son and daughters at an age later than was customary in those days. He had proposed that every member of the Child-marriage Prohibition Association should commit himself not to marry a son before he attained the age of 16 years and that there should be at least a difference of 5 years between the ages of the bride-groom and the bride. He opposed forced austerity for widows and preached that willing widows should have opportunity to remarry. He also lent his mighty support for increasing women's access to education.

Navalram Lakshmiram (1836-1888) was another literary figure of Gujarat who combined in himself a poet, a dramatist, a prose artist, a literary critic and a social reformer. His centre of operation was Surat. He, too, was the product of English education. From young age he had aligned himself to progressive forces in social, literary and educational fields. In 1870, he went to Ahmedabad as the Vice-Principal of the Ahmedabad Training College. There he accepted the secretaryship of the Child-Marriage Prohibition Association. He published a booklet of poems entitled 'Bal-lagna Batrisi' by which he tried to cultivate public opinion against child-

marriages. About this booklet, the critic-poet Narsinhrao Divetia wrote that it combined the strength of the heart of a social reformer and the able art and subtlety of a poet. He regularly contributed articles in the 'Bal-lagna Nishedhak Patrika' being published by the Child-Marriage Prohibition Association. He ridiculed child-marriages in his another poem 'Bal Garbavali'. When Kavi Narmadashanker's views and zeal for social reforms dwindled towards the later part of his life, Navalram wrote fiery articles giving retort to the Poet. When Behram Malbari wrote his booklet on 'Child-Marriage and Forced Widowhood' in Gujarati, he ably commented on it. He differed from Malbari that social reforms should be effected through enacting Government laws. Navalram said that Indians should be capable of reforming their erring society by their own efforts and exhortion. He neither believed in a 'go-slow' policy in social reforms nor he advocated violent attack on social ills - in fact he believed in both but he believed more in sincere efforts.

Shri Manilal Dwivedi (1858-1898) : was a man of great learning and intellectual power. In Gujarati literature, he is known for his battle cry "No surrender to the West". He has also written about the importance of female education in 'Sudershan Gadyavali'. He asked, "Is there any harm in educating a woman ? Is a woman not human being ? She possesses intelligence, she does not differ from man so far as desires and instincts are concerned. A man can experience

or taste happiness in the company of an educated woman."

Govardhanram Tripathi (1855-1907) : was another intellectual giant of this period. Gujarat knows him as the master novelist of 'Sarasvatichandra' written in four volumes during 1887-1901. One fact of his life to which we had already referred earlier was that he was betrothed to his first wife Harilakshmi before he was actually born and the wife was older ^{than} ~~than~~ him by few months.(42) This sounds strange when one remembers that Govardhanram was a strong opponent of child-marriages and he took particular care that it did not happen in his own family. This sounds further strange because it happened in the Nagar Brahman Community which prided itself as the most cultured and the most enlightened. Similar thing was also reported to have happened in the case of another leading literary figure of Gujarat, Shri Chandrashankar Pandya.(43)

Govardhanram wrote at the age of 18 years a scholarly paper on the 'State of Hindu Society in the Bombay Presidency'. (1870). One gets the first glimpse of the mind of a social reformer in this paper. He believed in what he wrote. Govardhanram had great respect for women. He wrote : "Women are the very source of the improvement of society, the centre of our domestic bliss and the easy delight of the human heart". He raises his voice to give more educational facilities to women, to provide for a better contact and understanding between youngmen and women and to provide

equality of opportunity to women for development.(44)

In 1876, Govardhanram wrote another paper entitled "The Effects of the Custom of Early Marriages on the Educational Progress of the Natives of India". Again, in this paper, he advocated firm steps to abolish child-marriages so that girls have better access to education.

In his famous novel 'Saraswatichandra', Govardhanram showed the importance of women education. Through the characters of Rupali, Krashna-kalika he has described the low level to which an uneducated woman would sink. He has also given an illustration of the unwillingness of a family to send a girl to school through a letter written by Ganga to her husband Chandrakant.

Shri Govardhanram has also given a vivid picture of the activities of an educated woman of his time through the characters of Kumudsundari. The latter was proficient in dancing and swimming. Thus, he has tried to re-orient the masses' attitude towards women's education through his classical work 'Saraswatichandra'.

According to Shri Anantrai Rawal, Shri Tripathi believed that woman, being the centre of life in society, should be fully educated and should be endowed with feelings and vision, so that society might be happy and progressive. If the woman who is considered to be one half of a man is not educated, that half of society will remain paralysed.

Govardhanram by his example of Gunsundari who was educated by her husband and their daughters Kumudsundari and Kusumsundari, the former being given higher education and the latter being given still higher education under an English lady Miss Flora has, in fact, given his message of women's education. In 'Snehmudra' and 'Lilavati Jivankala', Govardhanram has made further advocacy of women's education, (45).

Not only literary men but social workers also tried to improve the social position of women and to develop girls' education. At the beginning of the 19th century, hardly any girl attended a public school in Gujarat and very few girls were educated at home. People were lukewarm in their enthusiasm in regard to girls' education; and the condition of girls in ^{the} social and economic sphere was most ⁿunevitable. At the close of the nineteenth century, the number of girls under instruction in Gujarat was about 19,300 (46), as against 93,000 girls under instruction in the whole of India. Prejudice against the primary education of girls had disappeared and people had become conscious of social injustice to women. Hindu widows were permitted to remarry by the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. Shree Malhari suggested that the Remarriage Act of 1856 should be made widely known and enforced in favour of widows. By the Act of 1891, the age of consent was raised to twelve but the social workers tried to raise the age of consent still

further. The pitiable condition of a woman attracted the attention of Christian missionaries, and they took a lead in providing education for destitute women and widows. The efforts made by Christian missionaries stimulated voluntary efforts among Indians to organise educational institutions for women. Raja Rammohan Roy, Ranade, and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar made efforts for the development of girls' education. Child marriages were decreasing in the middle and high class families and in urban areas on account of the efforts of social workers. People had become conscious of the evil of child marriages and when the marriageable age of boys was raised, girls got an opportunity for education. Some parents desired to educate their daughters. The attitude of the society towards widow, also ^{had} undergone a change for ^{the} better.

From 1882 to 1902 social workers like Shri Behramji Malbari and Shri Dayaram Gidumal had tried their level best to spread girls' education. Not only that they also tried to educate public opinion in that direction.

Such was the contribution of Gujarati authors and poets to creation of suitable social climate for the spread of female education in Gujarat.

Before we take up discussion of the socio-economic conditions in Gujarat as they affect women's access to education in the first half of the present century, i.e. till the end of the British period, we would like to emphasise a few facts of the period under review that have relevance to the subject of our study.

Firstly, the reform movement which was so strong and turbulent in the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century, became considerably weak and its tempo and pace slowed down thereafter. There were several reasons for this.

"The main one was that the social reformist movement was itself losing the momentum as it was opposed by quite a majority of people in Gujarat and also it was confined to cities like Bombay, Surat and Ahmedabad. The urban intelligentsia who were guiding it and who were contributing to the different journals were fast losing their leading lights. Some of them like Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, Mr. Mahipatram Rupram, Mr. Karsondas Mulji stayed abroad intermittently. Others were absorbed by the government educational service, which kept them away from the centres of reform." (46)

The coverage of social reform matter also decreased considerably thereafter. But that does not mean that there was no activity on the front of social reform. The movement continued, but its pace slowed down. The movement did not spread out to rural areas and therefore much could not be achieved in improving social status of women. Women in villages and in less advanced and backward castes and communities continued to live in the same oppressive orthodox social conditions as before.

Secondly, the economic fabric of the society had fluctuations of boom and depression after 1865. But the woman at this time had no economic implication and, therefore, the economic prosperity or depression in Gujarat either did not assist nor hinder women's access to education. The woman's place was still considered to be in home even in educated and advanced families. The only careers that were open to educated girls ~~were~~ teaching and in medicine. The Gujarati Society was not very much adverse to educated women taking teaching position in girls' schools; the prejudice still persisted to their working as teachers in boys' schools where male teachers also worked. A few primary training colleges for women had come into existence, but their intake and output was not commensurate with the demand for women teachers in girls' schools that were slowly coming up. Most of women teachers of girls' schools were Christian and Parsi women; the number of Hindu women teachers was very small, and that of Muslim women almost negligible.

Thirdly, the ties of the joint family system left very little time to women to continue their education if at all they did go to school for some years before marriage. Shardaben in her ^{memoirs} ~~memories~~ refers to the difficulties of her own mother when she and her elder sister ~~were~~ studying in the school. "In a middle class family, there cannot be any servant. All domestic work is to be done by her on her own individual help. When children are of tender age, the mother

would have some relief. Many mothers withdraw their daughters from school to get some help and reduce their load of work." (47)

Fourthly, by the end of the nineteenth century, primary education for girls had begun. The Baroda State had already made a small beginning in compulsory education for boys and girls in the Amreli Taluka in 1893. (48) The initial antagonism to girls' primary education on a voluntary basis was losing its edge. Girls of Brahmin and Bania communities had begun to attend even the secondary schools. Shardaben refers in her biographical memories that when she was in the matriculation class in 1897 in the English Section of the Mahalaxmi Female Training College, Ahmedabad, there were two other girl students besides her, one of whom was a Parsi girl and the other came from the Kharva (sailor) community. (49) Female secondary education was mostly in cities; and that too in a small measure. There was very strong opposition to co-education at this stage. Villages were beyond its reach. Much depended upon the enlightenment of the parents and the personal interest they took in the secondary and higher education of their daughters. Some women students had begun enrolling themselves as regular students in colleges. Vidyaben and Shardaben were the first two women who became university graduates in 1901.

Among different communities, Nagar ladies were in the fore-front in joining schools and colleges. Mazmudar notes two outstanding characteristics of Nagar women of this period. One was the position of importance and respect enjoyed by her in ^{the} family. "In the Nagar family, woman had a very important place. Reverence for the mother, respect for the wife and absence of discrimination in the upbringing of sons and daughters made a Nagar house a beautiful, warm and lofty place. The insult of a woman was considered a very mean act in the Nagar community. A husband who would raise his hand against his wife would be the most despised and ridiculous person in the caste..... Ignorance and illiteracy did not exist among the Nagar Women." (50)

3.6 THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY : A PERIOD OF AWAKENING AND PROGRESS OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION

The twentieth century opened Gujarat to strong political, social, economic and educational awakening. In the last week of December 1902, the 18th Session of the Indian National Congress met at Ahmedabad under the presidency of Sir Surendra Nath Banerji. The Ahmedabad Session of the Congress roused the intelligentsia of Gujarat. Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda went to Ahmedabad to inaugurate an industrial exhibition held at the time of the Congress session. The intemperate, provocative, egoistic and

bureaucratic utterances and actions of Lord Curzon, who was then the Viceroy of India, had stirred Gujarat politically as they did other parts of the country. The Gujarati press was fast expanding. In 1905, there were 40 Gujarati journals with a total number of 47,300 copies per issue in circulation. The proposed partition of Bengal had further aroused the whole country and national consciousness was growing fast every where including Gujarat. The holding of the 23rd Session of the Congress at Surat in December 1907 set the national spirit reverberating in Gujarat. It resulted in the triumph of the moderates.

Mrs. Annie Besant had set up a branch of her Home ^{Rule} League in Gujarat. Shri Indulal Yajnik and Shri Shankerlal Banker had begun organizing Gokhale Libraries movement together with Home Rule Movement in Gujarat.

Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa on 9th January 1915. He decided to stay permanently at Ahmedabad and set up an Ashram in a suburb of Ahmedabad. Gandhiji's influence on the public life in Gujarat and in the country began to spread thereafter. He presided over the Second All Gujarat Educational Conference held at Broach in 1915. He was also called upon to preside over the Gujarat Political Conference held at Godhra in the same year. He was elected as the president of the Gujarat Sabha functioning in Ahmedabad. In 1919, Gandhiji organised resistance to the Rowlatt Bills. His journals Navjivan and Young India started publications at

this time. The 36th Session of the Ahmedabad Session adopted a resolution approving the launching of the Non-cooperation Movement and vested Gandhiji with the exclusive authority for the conduct of the movement. Gujarat was turning a new page in her political, social and educational life under Gandhiji's magnetic influence. Several events, later on, in Gujarat such as the Bardoli Satyagrah, the emergence of Vallabhbhai Patel as the 'Sardar' of Gujarat, programmes of civil disobedience movement, etc. built up a new Gujarat. Women came out in a large number to participate in this national awakening. The climate created by these forces was very favourable for the growth of women's education at a faster rate than before.

Administrative factors also helped the cause of women's education. Under the Diarchy, education became a transferred portfolio under an Indian minister. Much greater attention than before came to be directed to problems of mass education, including that of female education. Vithalbhai Patel moved a resolution in the Bombay Legislative Council recommending that "an early beginning should be made in the directions of making elementary education free and compulsory throughout the presidency by introducing it, in the first instance, within the limits of its municipal districts." (51) On 25th July 1917, he moved his Bill on the same subject in the Bombay Legislative Council. The debate on the Bill showed a welcome change in the attitude of the legislators to the

principle of compulsion in education. The Bill was passed and became a law on 5th December 1917 for all the urban areas of the Bombay Presidency including Gujarat. It provided for the introduction of compulsory, free primary education for either or both the sexes by a municipality within the area of its jurisdiction.(52) In 1923, the Bombay Primary Education Act was passed. It applied to both urban and rural areas in the Presidency. Part of its preamble ran thus: "Whereas it is the declared policy of Government that universal, free and compulsory education for boys and girls be reached by a definite programme of progressive expansion." The Patel Act had not made it obligatory on Government to pay any definite part of expenditure on the primary education of boys and girls, but the 1923 Act made grant-in-aid for compulsory primary education at some fixed rate obligatory for Government. This introduction of compulsory primary education on a legal basis did help the cause of girls' primary education in Gujarat. In Surat city, for instance, compulsion was introduced in 1920. The number of girls attending primary schools in the year preceding the date of the introduction of compulsion was 2,112; in 1938 the strength of enrolment rose to 6,754.(53) In 1940, there were about 36 girls enrolled in primary schools in Gujarat to every 100 boys in schools. This was much better than many other provinces. For instance, this proportion was 35 in Bengal and Sindh, about 26 in Assam and Orissa, 23 in the

jab, 22 in C.P. and below 20 in U.P., Bihar and N.W.F.(54)

In the matter of compulsory primary education, His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwad of Baroda had taken a march over British Gujarat; or as a matter of fact British India and Native India. His Highness was an extremely enlightened ruler. He was a prince among educationists and an educationist among princes as someone had said about him. In one of his speeches made at this period, he said, "I have no hesitation in saying that we cannot do better than educate all subjects. This is absolutely necessary for the realisation of my ambitions and wishes for the future of my people." (55) He introduced compulsory primary education in the Amreli Taluka in 1903. All girls between the ages ^{of} 7 and 10 were required to attend the schools; the age-limit for boys was 7 and 12. The area of compulsion and the age-limit for boys and girls were extended later on. In 1904, the compulsory age for boys was refixed ^{of} 6 and 12. Compulsory education succeeded in the Baroda State to bring in increased number of both boys and girls in school. In 1928-29, it was judged that compulsory education for boys and girls was effective for over two-thirds of the State. (56) In 1947, in the Baroda State, there were 1,17,042 girls against 1,59,890 boys under instruction in primary schools which worked out at 10.8 per cent and 8.4 per cent of the total male and female population respectively. (57) An enrolment in primary school of 12 to 15 per cent of total population was considered an ideal position.

Thus, the attitude of government itself had materially changed to girls' primary education on compulsory basis. This was true in the Baroda State, and the British Gujarat, but more true in the former than the latter. The princely States of Kathiawad, of Cutch and those in North, Central and South Gujarat had no legislation yet on making primary education compulsory for boys and girls till the end of the British period.

The reconstitution of Indian legislatures under the Government of India Act of 1919 with large elected majorities made it possible, which the British administrators of the earlier period had generally avoided on grounds of social and religious neutrality.(58) The bold social legislation completed by Government brought about a change, though small and slow, in the social conditions of women and robbed some of the major obstacles to women's access to education of their severe intensity which marked the second half of the nineteenth century. The social legislation that should particularly interest us included the one under which the age of consent was raised to 14 in 1925 and the Sarda Act of 1929 which raised the minimum age for the marriage of girls to 14. Of course, the latter legislation was a rather half-hearted measure and its enforcement even to the present day, has never been sincere and vigorous. Though thereafter, child-marriages continued to take place in Gujarat, and

elsewhere, the very fact that a legal barrier was created to prevent the forced marriages of girls at an infant age had great educative influence on people of the advanced communities and the law-abiding sections of the community. Between 1929 and 1947, i.e. till the end of the British period, the percentage of child-marriages of boys and girls had considerably gone down.

The socio-economic conditions of the people - the masses also underwent great changes in the first half of the present century. The process of urbanisation had started and people from rural areas-villages were drifting on to the neighbouring cities to earn their living. Villages were breaking giving rise to towns. Again the joint family system which was a source of great strength had begun to break up. There arose increasing desire on the part of the educated boys to postpone marriage till after their education was completed and they were able to secure a job. This trend helped in increasing the age of marriage at least in advanced communities which had the wholesome effect of extending the period of schooling and also enabled them to go in for more secondary or higher education.

At this period the women of the State were also fortunate^{enough} to get political rights. "For the first time in the history of this State, women were able to vote in the elections to local bodies and the legislatures; and not only could

they contest elections to these bodies, but on most of them seats were even reserved for them."(59)

In the first half of the twentieth century, women's social status, economic position and educational opportunities went on increasing. We find a new Gujarati woman emerging on the scene in thirties. There are several reasons for this development. Firstly, there was powerful impact of the national movement under the leadership of the Indian National Congress; secondly, the joint-family idea, so strong in the earlier period began losing its strength. Munshi said about this in 1935, "Joint family is going from Gujarat; at places it has gone. Not even Govardhanram's fulsome praise could restore its vitality. Of the many causes which wrought this change, the noteworthy are the individual traits of Gujarati and the influence of women. The Gujaratis have been comparatively less subservient to hardening custom and narrow prejudice. Family life has rarely been so inflexible as in other parts of India."(60); thirdly, women have been comparatively free; fourthly, polygamy went out of fashion in the higher castes; fifthly, with the spread of education among women, "the old-world, one-sided bhakti of the wife for the divine lord and master became a thing of ^{the} past in many advanced communities and in urban families. Love has come, seen and conquered. Wedded life is being invested with romance"(61); sixthly, active participation of women has begun in many walks of life that ~~were~~ unknown in the

previous period; seventhly, women, at least educated ones, and in cities, have begun to work in private and government concerns.

Munshi gives the following picture of the Gujarati woman in the thirties of the present century :

"The active participation of Gujarati women in all walks of life has not been unknown in the past, and is an ordinary feature of modern life..... Some have been in the forefront of the Satyagraha Movement, risking all; many have braved lathi charges or risked picketting in areas full of strife and bloodshed. The peasant women of Bardoli in 1928, and again in 1930, exhibited fortitude, courage and determination to suffer in the cause of their country, which have few parallels in history. The women of cities have not been slow in the race. For instance, one can be seen dominating the public life of a large city; another controlling labour in a great industrial centre; a third organising a big semi-commercial concern on patriotic lines; a fourth guiding a political organisation of women; and many working and organising in their respective spheres of public activity." (62)

It is true that in the first half of the twentieth century, social, economic and political conditions of women considerably improved in Gujarat; their social status also was considerably raised. Women of the Brahmin and Bania communities and several other intermediate castes were socially and culturally much better off than they were in the earlier period under review. Still, this advancement and enlightenment ~~was~~ confined to hardly more than one quarter of their population. The lot of the vast majority of Gujarati women of lower castes and of scheduled tribes,

those living in small and remote villages, in backward areas or districts and in native States was still miserable and they had very limited access to education.

Some evil social customs had also persisted; child-marriages continued to take place in thousands, widow-marriages ^{were} still looked down with disapproval by the society; the ^hGumta System (covering the face) still persisted in many castes; the birth of a girl was looked upon by parents with less favour than that of a son; girls as soon as they reached the age of 10 or so were required to assist the mother in the house-hold work which would come in the way of their education; girls after they attain puberty were not permitted to go alone in public; mixed schools and male teachers in girls' schools still were looked upon with disfavour by many especially in rural areas; girls studying in schools and colleges had to undergo a lot of harassment and suffer jests and jokes at the hands of their male co-students; society suspected and even accused educated females of easy moral, wickedness, irreligiousness, scheming, selfishness, shirkers of house-hold and family duties and even breakers of homes and joint families. These and such other obstacles persisted till the end of the British period in 1947 and they persisted even thereafter in Independent India. Some of them persist even today.

Against these many handicaps and obstacles, there were some favourable factors also.

A new leadership had come forth in almost every caste, in every community, in every town, village and city. This leadership consisted of enlightened and public minded social workers, many of them belonged to the male sex, but quite a few of them were also women. A new leadership had emerged from women themselves - from the class of the educated ladies.

The Gujarati literature published in the twentieth century also made deep contribution to the improvement of social conditions of women and directly or indirectly advocated spread of education among women. Writings of Ranjitram Vavabhai (1882-1917), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Kanaiyalal Munshi (1887-1971), Hansa Mehta (b. 1897), Ramanlal Desai (1882-1954), Ramnarayan Pathak (1887-1947⁵⁵), Zaverchand Meghani (1897-19⁴⁷⁵⁵) and many others had contributed to public awakening about social position of women in their own characteristic way, to the movement of higher education for women beyond the secondary stage.

We would particularly like to mention the contribution of Sir Ramanbhai Nilkanth (1868-1928) who was, apart from a great literary figure, ~~was~~ a social reformer and an educator. Shardaben, in her life-memoirs gives copious examples of how he took personal interest in the education of her, her elder sister and ^{the} education of his own daughter. She writes about Ramanbhai :

"Ramanbhai began giving personal tuitions to both of us sisters in Sanskrit. The personal coaching that he began at that time continued till we appeared in the final B.A. Examination. Till we passed the matriculation examination, he would devote at least one hour in teaching us. He enjoyed teaching us." (63)

Sir Ramanbhai Nilkantha being aware of the importance of girls' education, gave his valuable contribution to the development of girls' education. His wife, Shrimati Vidyaben Nilkanth passed the Matriculation Examination in 1891 and got her B.A. degree in 1901. Shri Ramanbhai's contribution to her achievement was very great, as he gave facilities to her and encouraged her to receive higher education when most of the girls could not receive even primary education. Shri Ramanbhai had to face many difficulties on account of this, but he encouraged her to complete her college education and secured for her the honour and credit of being the first Gujarati lady graduate. This is how Shri Ramanbhai Nilkanth served the cause of women's education. He gave higher education to his daughters too. He strove for the improvement of the social status of girls and tried to give an incentive for the development of the education of girls. Through the example of his own family he showed that women could help in uplifting the society, if their social status was raised by giving them an opportunity to develop their latent abilities. He thus made it possible for the girls ^{of} ~~of~~ Gujarat to receive the benefit of college education. He also was ^{the} ~~the~~ first to compliment the daughters of his relatives or friends when they passed the Matriculation

Examination. He firmly believed that a woman who came to orphanages and widow's home should at least know the three R's.

Some social institutions of Gujarat also made valuable contribution to the spread and progress of girls' education and the improvement of the social status of women. The institutions which made outstanding contribution on this score were Gujarati Hindu Stri Mandal (1904) at Bombay, and the Mahila Vidyalaya, Bandhu Samaj (1904) at Ahmedabad, Vanita Vishrams at Surat, Bombay and Ahmedabad, and the Jain Sevika-shrams at Bombay and Ahmedabad. They contributed profusely and wholesomely for the improvement of ^{the} social position of women.

It will be interesting to know the conditions under which the Vanita Vishram at Ahmedabad was founded. When Shrimati Sulochanaben, the grand-daughter of late D.B. Ambalal Sakarlal became a widow in 1906, her mother who tried her level best to console her was thinking hard how best to make her life comfortable. At this juncture she came to know of a widow who had given birth to a child. This incident set her thinking and after much deliberation, she decided to found a Widows' Home where widows could get asylum, and learn to be self-reliant and cultured. This is how 'Saraswati Mandir', afterwards known as 'Ahmedabad Vanita Vishram' was started by her. Later on Shree Somnath Bhuderbhai donated some amount to this institution which was renamed 'Jivkor Vanita Vishram Mahila

Vidyalaya' in 1916. At that time this institution was affiliated to professor Karve's Women's University. It should be noted that all these institutions played a very useful and vital role in the development of the Hindu society in general and in the upliftment of women in particular. Miss Cookery made the following report on the work of all these institutions as follows :

"The Surat institution is doing excellent work among widows and married women whose house-hold duties do not permit of their journey joining a full-time school. In addition to instruction in the Vernacular and English, industrial work is also taught, dyeing and needle-work (plain and embroidery) being the lines selected. The staff has been strengthened by volunteers from the servants of India Society. Prominent among whom is Mrs. Shardaben S. Mehta (the second Gujarati lady to take B.A. degree) with her little band of workers. She is doing much to brighten the lives of women to whom the doors of learning were formerly closed. The success of Surat institution has prompted the beginners to start work in Bombay." (64)

Shri Vithalbhai Patel, who was the first Indian Speaker of the Indian Legislature died in 1934. To perpetuate his memory the Kaira district decided to start a model girls' school. The residents of Kaira district held a meeting in Charotar Education Society at which a resolution to open a boarding school was passed. In 1934, Shri Vithal Kanya Kelavani Mandal was formed with the following aims and objectives :

1. To develop girls' education.
2. To impart physical, intellectual and moral education to girls and women.

3. To give such a bias to education that girls and women would be able to become economically independent;
4. To found schools and hostels for girls and women; and
5. To initiate and undertake activities pertaining to girls' education.

Shri Vithalbhai Smarak Samiti decided to start a girls' school in Nadiad which would not be affiliated to any university or Vidyapeeth. Thus, in 1935, the Vithal Kanya Vidyalaya came into existence. The Samiti appointed a curriculum committee on which Shri. Vidyaben Nilkanth, Shri. Shardaben Mehta, Shri Kishorlal Mashruwala, and Shri Ramnarayan Pathak were to work as members. The inauguration ceremony of the school was performed by Mahatma Gandhiji in 1935.

By the strenuous efforts of Shri Indulal Yajnik, Gujarat Stree Kelavani Mandal came into existence in Ahmedabad. The Mandal had all young members fired with the ideas of women emancipation. The Mandal established the first Women's College in Ahmedabad. Several distinguished teachers and educators gave their honorary service to this institution. Prominent among them were Prof. Ramnarayan Pathak, Shri Pranjivan Pathak, Keshavlal H. Dhruv, Sir Ramanbhai Nilkanth. In 1923, 202 women students were enrolled in the Mahila College. The College was affiliated to the Women's University founded by Maharshi Karve in 1918.

These were some of the major women's institutions that helped the cause of women's education in Gujarat. In several other places, more women's organisations, small or big, must have come up which carried on several activities which helped to raise the status of women and increase educational facilities for them. For female welfare and education, some journals devoted particularly to women's problems had also come into existence.

'Sunderi Subodh' was one of such journals. It began its publication from 1903. In the first issues of the journal, it sets forth its objective of providing useful and interesting reading material for women. The journal devoted itself to providing a forum for expanding and developing secondary, higher and vocational education for women. The Gujarati Hindu Stri Mandal had started a quarterly entitled "Stri Hitopadesh" in 1918. It was intended more for those grown up women who did not have the benefit of fuller schooling.(65) In 1923, the monthly 'Gunsunderi' saw the light of the day. To use the words of its editor :

"The objective of the monthly is to discuss such issues as would concern the life of the woman in the social, religious and political fields, to guide women in their public life, their duties and responsibilities, in the sphere of home management, child-upbringing, social service, initiate them in certain arts like sewing, embroidery, knitting, cookery, to build their character through life-stories of Satis, great men and women of the past and through interesting and moral stories. The journal will try to help the woman in her all sided development so that she can attain a high social status, be qualified for equal rights and opportunities and be a critical, thoughtful, dynamic New Woman."(67)

When India became free in 1947, Gujarat had comparatively very well progressed in girls' primary education. In the secondary education for girls it also made rapid strides after 1901. The higher education of girls had a modest beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Its expansion and development in the first half of the present century was slow but steady. It really gathered momentum after the attainment of independence. Women's literacy grew at a faster rate than that of men. In 1921, the literacy of women in British Gujarat was only 2.3 as against 14.9 per cent of male literacy; In 1951, the female literacy increased to 14.6 per cent, i.e. about seven times as against the male literacy of 34.9 which was a little more than twice the 1921 figures.(68)

3.7 THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN AND THEIR INCREASED ACCESS TO EDUCATION SUCCEEDS (1947-1970)

India became a free country on 15th August 1947. The British provinces and Indian States were reorganised. The Bombay Presidency became a Bombay State, Saurashtra a part of 'A' State. The territories of the former Baroda State merged into the mainland of Gujarat in 1949. The 200 or more native States* in the former Kathiawad were integrated and the United States

* The States fell into three broad patterns. The Western Indian States Agency exercised control over the States in Classes III-VII categories, which were directly administered by the Agent to the Governor-General. A few progressive Ist and IInd class States formed the second pattern, while the petty States constituted the third pattern.

of Saurashtra' with an area of 21,451 sq. miles and a population of 41.37 lakhs was carved out on 15th February 1948. When the new Constitution came into force, it became the State of Saurashtra on 26th January 1950. Saurashtra was a part 'B' State. Kutch with an area of 16,724 sq. miles including the two Runns and with a population of over 5.68 lakhs became a Part 'C' State with a Chief Commissioner as the Head of the State. Under the Reorganisation Scheme of 1956, Saurashtra and Kutch were merged with the ten Gujarati speaking districts of the bilingual Bombay State. The new integrated Gujarat region(68) had ten districts of the mainland of Gujarat, viz. Ahmedabad, Amreli, Banaskantha, Baroda, Broach, Kaira, Mehsana, Panchmahals, Sabarkantha, and Surat. These 10 districts had 147 urban areas with a total population of 29,36,036 and 16,350 rural habitations with a total population of 84,72,998. The Saurashtra-Cutch component consisted of 6 districts - Gohilwad, Halar, Kutch, Madhya Saurashtra, Sorath, and Zalawad having a total 99 urban areas with a total population of 15,24,215 and having a total of 5586 rural habitations with a total population of 32,08,298.

In 1960, the bilingual Bombay State was split up into two linguistic States of Gujarat and Maharashtra. The present State of Gujarat was born on 1st May 1960. The new State of Gujarat (69) had an area of 72,137 sq. miles and a population of 1.63 crores according to the 1951 census. The State had roughly 1/3 rd of population of the bilingual Bombay State or

4.5 per cent of the population of the Indian Union. This population lived in 243 town groups and 18729 villages spread over 183 talukas of the States. The Gujarat 1971 puts the area of the State at 1,87,091 sq. kilometres and population at 2.06 crores (1961 census).

In the post-independence years and particularly after the formation of a separate State for Gujarat, considerable progress has been achieved in the field of improvement of socio-economic conditions of women. In the preceding chapter we have already discussed how under the Indian Constitution, women all over the country got fundamental rights of equality as Indian citizens. We need not repeat these developments as applied to women in Gujarat. The award of equality of status to women was one of the greatest gifts of the Constitution to women.

In the past, women were given franchise. But, the adoption of property as the main basis for franchise put the women at a distinct disadvantage. Therefore, in the case of women of Gujarat, the number of voters was proportionately very small. The adoption of adult franchise under the Constitution removed this political disability for Indian women. Women all over the country have got political rights since 1950.

The highest offices in the State were made available to women. Women began to get at least one or two seats in the State Ministry. Women were also selected for high position of

Director of Education, Vice-Chancellor of Universities, Deans of Faculties, Principals of Colleges, District Collectors, District Education Officers, Mamlatdars, Secretaries of State level, district level and local level boards and such other organisations. The earlier policy of discrimination on the ground of sex in any public service under Government at any level has gone. This has improved women's access to gainful occupations and jobs and has consequently raised her social and economic status. Women began to come forward for honorary social work, part-time jobs. Special facilities for part-time paid work began to increase for women of the middle class and low income group.

The purdah system among Hindu women had almost disappeared except in villages and in certain lower communities. The average marriage age had gone up both for boys and girls. In advanced communities of Brahmin, Bania and other enlightened groups, the marriage-age for girls became 16 or even higher than that. This resulted not only in more girls going to middle schools, high schools and colleges and in staying back to complete education. And even if marriage took place, girls stood more chances than in the past to be allowed to complete their education. This became possible because schools and colleges came into existence in larger numbers than before and even in such rural areas which were closed to educational facilities for decades together in the past.

Under the Bombay Prevention of Hindu Bigamous Marriages Act of 1946 and the Bombay Divorce Act of 1947, women's social lot has been further improved.

Considerable change in the Gujarati society's thinking about women's status and role in life and their education began to take place. Firstly, the society - at least the educational and semi-educated masses of people in urban areas and bigger villages - began to talk that there could not be a progressive and productive society without widely spread education among women; secondly, general education for enlightened citizen should be same for men and women; thirdly, the distribution of general intelligence and abilities among women was almost same as among men; fourthly, women should have facilities and wide opportunities for participation in social and cultural activities but, the claims of family life on them were considered as important as those of public life; fifthly, education of women should include such knowledge and training ~~as~~ could equip them to be better as wife, mother and fruitful member of the society; sixthly, girls could study in the same primary and middle schools as boys, but society preferred high school education for girls in separate girls' high schools and they should be established wherever it was practicable to do so; seventhly, careers such as ^{those of} teachers, nurses, doctors, clerks, telephone operators, etc. for young girls were looked upon with favour by the society; eighthly, girls and women had begun to pick up courage, daring, adventurousness, sense of security in

the company of ^{the} opposite sex; ninthly, a general decline in orthodoxy, conservatism and religious mindedness was noticeable in the younger generation; tenthly, with the removal of caste-barriers and as a result of wider opportunities for social life and for travel, there was a distinct increase in inter-caste marriages; and lastly, with a definite trend away from the joint-family and towards the nucleus family, women had more opportunity for further education, participation in women's clubs and associations and in varied social and cultural activities.

After the attainment of independence, a new and invigorating social and economic climate has emerged in Gujarat, as in several other States of the country. In several Castes, the woman has attained equality of sex. In certain sections of Brahmins such as the Nagar Brahmins, and in the Kayastha community of Surat, the Brahm-kshatriya caste of Broach, the Desai Bania community of Ankleswar, the woman has come up to occupy a stronger and more dominant place in home. Social condition of women in castes like Patidars and Anavil Brahmins, where it was traditionally low, has much improved. However, the evil practice of dowry continues in these and other caste-groups. But this practice leaves many parents in ^a hopeless condition. As dowry depends upon the extent of education received by both boys and girls, parents are forced to give increased education, beyond ^{the} middle school and even high school stage. For a matriculate or a graduate girl, the parents are required to

pay less dowry provided the bride-groom too is not highly educated and he does not belong to a family much higher than that of the girl.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Such is the broad picture of socio-economic conditions of women in Gujarat during the century and a half of the British rule and in twenty-five years that followed the attainment of independence. Since the formation of the separate State of Gujarat in 1960, social, economic and cultural determinants of women's education at all stages and of all types have become more liberal and helpful. Women's education has begun to receive greater weightage than before in terms of financial allocation. During the Third Plan two polytechnics, one at Ahmedabad and the other at Surat were started; more concentrated efforts are made for the welfare of the weaker sections of the society; the backward classes in Gujarat which constitute about 1/5 of the population of the State are also being assisted to improve their cultural, social and economic lot; a social measure of far reaching importance which would considerably accelerate the pace of expansion of secondary education has been in operation since 1968 which would make by phases, the entire secondary stage free for girls by 1971-72; a scheme 'Right to Work' has been launched with effect from October 2, 1969 to provide work to those men and women unskilled workers

who seek it; though the introduction of the Panchayat Raj, a major step has been taken to secure the cooperation of men and women in the development efforts at the local level - the village, the taluka and the district; villages have been electrified in large numbers which have enriched the life of rural men and women in many respects; the infant mortality rate has gone down 18.1 (1969) and the expectation of life has risen to 51 owing to increased and improved health and medical services in the State; the mileage of roads has increased from 4734 miles in 1948 to 20,007 miles in 1969 - this has facilitated mobility and increased social, cultural, economic and educational activities; Gujarat had 343 urban public libraries and 4027 village libraries in action in 1970. These and such other developments that have taken place in the Gujarat State during the last decade have gone a long way in improving women's access to education in a significant measure. In 1968-69 in the Gujarat State 65 per cent of the girls in the age-group 6-11, 28 per cent of girls in the age-group 11-14, 17 per cent of girls in the age-group 14-17 and 25 per cent (70) in the age-group 17-21 were receiving education. This is no small progress. In the lower primary education in the age-group 6-11, Gujarat led all the States other than Kerala, Maharashtra, Mysore, Nagaland, Tamil Nadu and all Union Territories other than Delhi, L.M. & A. Islands, Manipur, and Pondicherry. In the higher primary education sector in the age-group 11-14, Gujarat was behind only Kerala, Maharashtra,

the
Mysore, Punjab and Tamil Nadu States and behind only Delhi, Chandigarh, Goa-Daman and Diu, Pondicherry and Tripura. At the secondary stage only the States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu and only Union territories of Delhi, Chandigarh, Goa, Daman and Diu and Pondicherry were ahead of it. At the university stage the latest inter-State figures available are for 1965. Kerala, Madras, Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal had more enrolment of girls than that of Gujarat. But most of these States have higher population than that of Gujarat. (71)

The part I of our study comes to an end at this point, and we would take up the historical study of the development of secondary education for girls in Part II. The critical study of the multi-dimensional general factors determining women's access to education in India spread over a long period of her history presented in Chapter II and the critical examination of the socio-economic determinants of women's access to education in a more specific and related way as they operated in Gujarat from the beginning of the British period to the present-day presented in the present Chapter would, it is hoped, provide a suitable and meaningful background to study development of girls' secondary education in Gujarat and its problems.

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