

CHAPTER VIIICHANGES IN THE SOCIAL SYSTEM OF GUJARAT IN 19TH CENTURYIntroduction

In the study of changes in the social system during the 19th century, we will confine ourselves to the changes that took place in the caste system and status of woman in the Gujarati society and the emergence of a new type of social grouping viz. voluntary association. The scope of our study will be as follows:-

- I. (a) The new forces generated by the British Rule which affected the caste system during the 19th century.
(b) The way in which caste system was affected by the new forces.
(c) Further the peculiar turn which caste system took to adjust to the new forces.
(d) The unique juxtaposition which occurred between the newly imposed status system which was based on the principle of wealth, achievement and knowledge and the old status system which was based on the principle of birth, ascription and tradition.
- II. (a) The change in the position of woman as reflected in the growth of her education, fight against infanticide, child marriage, enforced widowhood and change in the attitude among a section of society with regard to woman's personality.
- III. (a) The emergence of various types of associations subserving certain interests which grew as a result of the developing and diversifying needs of the Gujarat urban society.
(b) Evaluation of the role of these associations.
- IV. The overall assessment of the change that took place in the Gujarati society indicated in the abovementioned social aspects.

I

CHANGES IN THE CASTE SYSTEM

Before we assess the changes that took place in the caste system of Gujarat in the 19th century, it may be mentioned that the change which we will be observing would be qualitative and not quantitative. Social institutions take longer time to change, and hence whatever changes we will be observing would be in the nature of attitude towards this age-old institution and the impact of various forces on this institution. Further as there is a great dearth of original data on this institution by which we can make precise and quantitative assessment of the change, we have to satisfy ourselves by culling data from indirect sources.

(a) New forces affecting the caste system

We have observed in Chapter I that the pre-British Gujarati society was pre-eminently a caste-ridden society. The individual was born in a particular caste, and his status, and occupation were predominantly determined by the caste in which he was born. Caste was an endogamous group, and caste derived its sanction from Hindu religion. In fact caste was a sort of community in which the major life of individual was lived.^{1*}

*It may be mentioned here that following was the proportionate percentage of some of the castes in 1891.

Brahmins	...	5.75
Writers (Brahma Khatris, Kayasthas and Prabhus)		0.091
Traders (Shravak and Mishri Baniyas, Bhansalis, Bhatias, Lohanas)		6.06
Rajputs	...	5.03
Husbandmen	...	15.62
(Cultivators)		
Craftsmen	...	9.04
Bards and acton	...	1.14
Personal servants	...	2.14
Kolis	...	23.02
Depressed classes	...	8.7

(Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. IX, Pt. I, VIII).

In the 19th century, under the British rule, this steel frame of the society came under various influences.

In our previous chapters we have noticed how the British rulers introduced novel patterns of power-structure, new methods of production and exchange relationships, and new principles of educational organizations which were all founded on the 'legal-rational' principle. The political, economic, and educational sub-systems were separated from the overall religious and traditional matrix, and in turn were secularized and all these sub-systems were being built upon entirely new principles. All these forces which were super-imposed upon the traditional social system of Gujarat, affected the caste system in varieties of ways. We will briefly narrate them.

1) The caste and Hindu religion were intimately connected in the traditional society, through the doctrine of karma.² The status system in the caste structure was sanctioned on religious basis. During the 19th century, when law was separated from religion, and supremacy of law over other systems was established, the caste system was confronted with a new alternate framework of status system. The new status system was based on achievement, qualification, skill and such other attributes. The upper castes of the traditional society had now to justify their superior position not merely on the basis of birth but on the fact that they were more cultured, more competent and possessed better skills, equipment, knowledge and wealth. Even the Brahmins - the apex of society - had to justify their capacity of performing rituals ceremonies etc. The High Court of Bombay decreed that people could engage any priest they liked, and were not at all bound to call for the services of the hereditary priest with the proviso that the hereditary priest was paid some compensation. Dr. Ghurye

remarks upon this decision of the high court: "This opens the way to the dissolution of the only bond holding together the diverse castes, viz. the employment of common priesthood."^{3*}

Similarly as the Rajput castes could not avail themselves of educational opportunities, they could not get the higher administrative posts and consequently were slowly receding in the background, and the Brahmins and Baniyas were stabilizing their higher positions on new grounds.^{**} Post Narmad remarks that formerly there was very little education amongst Brahmins, but in 1868-69 Baniyas were outstripping the Brahmins.⁴

2) Another factor which affected the traditional basis of caste system was the introduction of the principle of rule of law. Mr. Smith's statement in this connection is of interest: "The legal system of British India produced drastic changes in the traditional working of the caste system. The establishment of British courts restricted the judicial powers of caste panchayats, for offences such as assaults, adultery, and rape which were now dealt with by courts administering a uniform criminal law. The

*During the 19th century it was reported that fees, for example of hereditary priest, Joshi, Kulgor (family priest) were recognized by the Civil Court if the office existed. But if some group as in the case of Gujarat (Baniya) decided not to invite Brahmins in the dinner, the Court while giving the judgment did not challenge the right of the caste to eliminate Brahmins from their caste functions but remarked they should follow a proper procedure. (Kikani, L.T., Caste in Court, p.116).

**The growing power of the Baniyas was manifested in an interesting situation. When Mahipatram and Gopalrao Deshmukh approached the first industrialist of Gujarat viz. Ranchodlal Chotalal, for giving some contributions for the performance of a widow remarriage, Ranchodlal, a member of Sathodara Nagar Brahmin caste, replied that in spite of the fact that he had full sympathy for the cause he was unable to help in this matter because due to his mill-industry, he was vitally connected with Baniyas who were opposed to widow remarriage; and he a Brahmin cannot displease the Baniya trading group! (Life of Ranchodlal Chhotalal by Badhsa, p.272).

British government by refusing to recognise the caste as an agency empowered to administer justice deprived it of one of its most significant functions as a community. Closely related was another change, one of revolutionary significance, namely the introduction of the principle of equality before law. The British refused to accept the proposition that seriousness of a crime was affected by the respective castes of the offender and the one against whom it is committed."⁵

Though the British Government recognised the customary rights of the different communities with regard to marriage, property and inheritance, they did enact certain laws (may be under pressure of the reformers) which affected the rights of caste councils to determine marriage, customs and duties of widows. Thus for example the Sutte Regulation of 1829 prevented the custom of self-immolation by the widows. The Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 legalised the marriage of a Hindu widow and thus the customary power of caste council to prohibit widows from remarrying was affected.* Similarly by the Act of 1870, Infanticide was banned and the Jadeja Rajputs and Patidars of Gujarat were not only threatened with punishment if found guilty but were compelled to register births and deaths of their children.** The Age of Consent Act of 1892 checked the customary practice of sending a married girl to her husband's place before she had attained 10 years' of age. The Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850 dealt another blow at the integrity of caste. By this act, a person did not forfeit his ordinary rights of property by loss of caste or change of religion. The

widow

*It was on the strength of this Act that a Brahmin/intending to remarry took the shelter of police officer who threatened the father of the widow with police action if they harassed her. (Dalpat Kavya, Pt.II, Dalpatram,p.239)

**A detailed discussion on this aspect is done in the next section on the status of woman.

most important aspect of the caste viz. prohibition of marriage outside the caste or sub-caste was facilitated by the passing of the Special Marriage Act of 1872.

Another aspect of the rule of law which affected the caste system was the principle of equality before law. Before law all were considered equal and the special prerogatives of the Brahmin castes granted to them by the religious texts and special treatment shown to the Rajput castes were adversely affected by the new concept. It is in this spirit, that Karsands, a Kapole Baniya was able to challenge the Vaishnava high priest in a court during the famous Maharaj Libel Case⁶, such dignitaries as Sir Mangaldas Nathooobhai were brought to the Court of Law in connection with some caste property⁷ and some Talookdars were brought before the court or taken to prison for non-payment of debt.⁸ Here we are reproducing an interesting case which had occurred amongst the Bhats. "In A.D. 1808 in Kaira, a Hindu messenger was sent to bring a Bhat into the court. The Bhat without objecting to go committede traga by murdering his own daughter. The Bhat admitted the act, but pleaded that according to the custom of his caste such acts were not crimes. The Governor in Council directed that the opinion of Bhats of Dholka gave the following the caste people should be taken on the subject. Three leading/opinion: 'Any Bhat or Bahrot depriving his mother or child of life or committing an act of violence on his own body, is not subject to any punishment by the caste nor would he be turned out; this has been the immemorial custom of the caste. If a Bhat commits such an act in order to retain possession of land or money grants which are undoubtedly his property then his conduct is commendable; if the cause in which he is embarked be an unjust one, the act is not commendable! The Bhat was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and a notice was published warning the Bhats that in future the full punish-

ment for murder would be awarded."⁹ In short all the privileges were being short off before the court of law.

3) The new economic forces introduced during the British Rule in Gujarati society also affected the caste system in varieties of ways. The introduction of the principle of land as a commodity which could be sold or bought in the market, affected the traditional status of Rajput castes by forcing them to sell their lands to Baniyas in lieu of debt payment.¹⁰ Money-lending groups like Baniyas, certain castes of Brahmins, a section of Parsis, and Bohras acquired a foot-hold in the village community. Further/^{the}hereditary character of occupations was also affected by the penetration of money into village community. The traditional relationship between different castes was disturbed by the introduction of ryotwari system. Many of the artisans like weavers, blacksmiths, tanners, and others had to supplement their income by taking to agriculture or other occupations.

Further the new chain of governmental offices, educational offices, as well as vocations connected with numerous modern economic practices, were non-hereditary, appointative and based on principles of retirement. All these services and professions therefore were the products of the new forces over which caste had no control. As indicated in our chapters on Political, Economic and Educational Changes during the 19th century, we have mentioned that new offices like those of Talatis, Mamlatdars, Deputy Collectors, Magistrates, Karkuns, Police Officers of various categories, primary and secondary teachers of various categories, as well as educational inspectors and further professions like those of lawyers, journalists, medical practitioners and those who were associated with some of the specialized organizations of economic activities were all created on the universalistic principle and not determined by the hereditary caste principle.

However as noted before, new opportunities were very limited; hence a unique juxtaposition between the non-hereditary occupational ladder and the hereditarily determined castes was generated.

4) The new system of education also affected the caste system on the one hand by opening the portals of education to all irrespective of caste distinctions* and on the other intelligentsia generated and nurtured in the atmosphere of liberal philosophy began to challenge some of the aspects of the caste system, and suggested reforms in the caste structure.

Formerly only the Brahmins were taking higher education, due to the new forces, Baniyas and Kayasthas were also taking university education.

One Brahmin Kshatriya was the first double graduate while one Kayasth was the first medical practitioner¹¹ in Gujarat during the 19th century. In

fact poet Narmad remarks, "In these twenty years (1848-1868) those who have completed their education or are likely to complete education, indicate that the river of knowledge (Saraswati) is not merely for the Brahmins but for people of all castes."¹² It was in this atmosphere that the Government issued a circular in that in Government managed schools the children of untouchable castes have as much right of entry as those of Brahmins and Baniyas; if the teachers refuse to admit them, then they will be punished heavily.¹³

*In 1858 the Government of Bombay declared that "although the Governor-in-Council does not contemplate the introduction of low caste pupils into schools, the expenses of which are shared with Government by local contributors and patrons who object to such a measure he reserves to himself the full right of refusing the support of Government to any partially aided school in which the benefits of education are withheld from any class of persons on account of caste or race and further resolves that all schools maintained at the sole cost of Government shall be open to all classes of its subject without distinction." (Quoted in Caste, Class and Occupation, 1961, by G.S. Ghurye, p.183)

The opening of medical schools and colleges raised one important issue viz. whether Gujarati Hindus can become surgeons or not? Even as late as 1875 there was prejudice against this profession, because upper castes had put a taboo against the ~~tea~~ touching of dead body.¹⁴ Gradually this prejudice was also broken and persons from Nagar Brahmin, Kayastha and Baniya castes began to enter the medical profession.¹⁵ Similarly though the castes prohibited education of girls, during the 19th century this ban was also being slowly defied.*

In short on paper education was open to all, though in reality, as we have observed only few upper castes availed themselves of this new opportunity.

5) Another aspect of the new system of education which affected the caste system was the new liberal ideology, with its tenets of rationalism and equality.¹⁶ The social reformers from the beginning criticised the traditional caste system and by their own preachings and practices attacked the fortress of caste from within.

We will briefly review the activities of social reformers with regard to the caste system. In the initial stages in the first half of the 19th century, the association like Paramhansa Mandali, declared that castes should be abolished and in order to establish equality the members would eat bread prepared in an Iranian shop.¹⁷ Social reformers like Narmadashankar and Dalpatram portraying the future of Gujarat also mentioned that a day will come when "caste distinctions would vanish."¹⁸ By the end of the century though the caste system was preserved, many of the reformers advocated the merging of sub-castes into primary castes. Poet Narmad remarked in his

*A detailed discussion on woman's education follows in the next section in this chapter.

'Dharma Vichara', "We do not wish the castes to be abolished (they will never be) but we do wish that the number of sub-castes should be reduced."¹⁹ Similarly Narmad informs us in his autobiography that the distinction prevailing in the Vadnagara Nagar caste (to which the author belonged) between lay Brahmin and the priestly section does not befit in an advanced caste such as that of Nagars. They ought to join hands together in exchanging girls for marriage.²⁰

The author of a prize essay on "which castes are getting smaller in size due to scarcity of girls - the causes and remedies," categorically remarked that one of the major ^{remedies} ~~remedy~~ to combat reduction in size ^{of} ~~different~~ castes was to abolish the sub-castes, and even distinctions of locality and distinctions based on superior and inferior families (kul motap).²¹ Mr. Hargovinddas Kantawalla also advocates elimination of sub-castes in order to combat the difficulty of finding partners in marriage.²²

Of course here we may point out that very little was concretely achieved in this direction excepting the creation of a climate in favour of such a move.*

Similarly some of the social reformers tried to challenge the caste authority by undertaking certain activities which were not permitted by the caste. One of the important activities of the social reformers in the 19th century was 'pledge-taking'. A member of the 'Anti-child Marriage Association' was constrained to marry his daughter not before she attained 12 years' of age. Naturally those who were members had to abide by the decision of the association in spite of the fact that according to caste

*We may mention here that even in 1964, herculean efforts are made to bring 6 sub-divisions of Nagar caste together but prejudices are so deep-rooted that effort does not lead to any lasting success.

rules marriage of the daughter ought to be done before she attains 10 years' of age.²³ Similarly though upper caste councils were against the practice of widow remarriage, Karsandas ~~as~~^{and} Narmad as they believed in the right of widow to remarry, had not only to attend remarriage, but were parties to arrange remarriages, thus coming in clash with the caste councils.²⁴ Mahipatram had displeased the caste by going on a foreign travel which was a strict taboo in those days. He was excommunicated from the castes for a considerable period.²⁵

Efforts were also made to abolish certain unhealthy and harmful customs. One of the major evils of Gujarati society in the 19th century was the public demonstration of mourning by men and women. Many of the enlightened intellectuals like Navalram and Govardhanram eliminated such customs from their families thus paving the way for reform.²⁶ All the reformers were very critical about the immense expenditure incurred at the time of marriage or death ceremonies.²⁷

Thus social reformers also under the influence of a new democratic ideology, found the restrictions of castes too heavy, and though they did not wish for the castes to be eliminated from society, they did not approve of the caste^{system} as it was existing at that time. This was a very significant change in the 19th century. As we had observed in the 1st chapter, though exposures of certain castes and caste practices were common in the pre-19th century, nobody visualized a casteless society nor strove for reforming the caste practices. In the 19th century, on the contrary, efforts were being made by social reformers to improve the caste system from within.

6) The caste system was being affected by one more factor viz. the new means of transport. The railways had a very vital effect on the pollution aspect of the caste system. As Mr. Kantawalla remarks, due to railways, people belonging to various castes come into contact with each other and thus taboos with regard to pollution, and food were affected to an extent.²⁸ Further the transferability of services and necessity of staying in some town for educational purposes must have affected to an extent the minor restrictions with regard to food or residence. Of course the extent of changes brought about by these factors is very difficult to measure. We can only infer that certain flexibility in some of these restrictions must have taken place. Poet Dalpatram refers to nearly 300 boys studying in Ahmedabad coming from mofussil areas.²⁹ Though they might be staying separately or with their relations, some adjustment in food habits would have been made. Further, it was not always easy to take the family along, when one was transferred and at that time some compromises with regard to apartments or food taboos became inevitable. Further there were strong references to newly emerging lodging houses where persons without family might be taking food occasionally.³¹

In short new forces generated during the British period affected the old status system based on birth in the above-mentioned manner. However as we have stated, the old status system was not destroyed but was superimposed by a new status system.

(b) Consequences of these forces on caste system

As indicated above, though the caste system came under the impact of the new socio-economic forces, it was not only, not destroyed but in some respects was strengthened in its hold. We will now ^{observe} how this new

contradiction had appeared.

New political economic and educational forces which emerged in Gujarat in the 19th century were in the matrix of colonial background. Therefore their scale of operation was limited. For instance, the new economy had hardly generated industrial development leading to the growth of new and variegated occupations. As we have noted there were hardly 20 factories in Gujarat in the 19th century. Under such circumstances, the need to go out of the home precincts for earning livelihood, which affects mobility, food and residential taboo, alterations in the functions of joint family etc. were very limited. Thus changes associated with industrialization could not take place in the peculiar background of India's political dependence.

Majority of occupations were carried on in the traditional manner. As different monographs on weaving, dyeing, silver and gold work, iron work, ^{paper} industries etc. point out, these handicrafts were performed by different castes.³² Similarly due to want of alternate occupation, and absence of much specialization in agriculture the overwhelming section of the agriculturists also continued to ply their occupation within the ^{same} matrix. A farmer or an artisan who was indebted and who had very little scope of alternative employment had to rely on the support given by the members of the joint family or the caste men.

Like economic forces, the political forces also operated in a limited manner in the life of the vast majority of Gujarati population. The political participation in organized activities, or in public demonstrations which became the practical methods for eliminating caste or communal differences and for increasing social and cultural mobility was very limited during the 19th century, and whatever limited participation there existed

was only among the urban people, and did not touch the rural people.

Even in the matter of rule of law and its application to social life, it was introduced in a half-hearted manner.* The British rulers permitted the customary ~~and~~ rules in personal law and therefore a very significant portion of the life of the people remained untouched or very indirectly touched by the rule of law. The definition of caste itself for legal purposes was very tricky. The definition ran as follows: "The term caste in a judicial sense denotes any well defined native community governed for certain internal purposes, by its own rules and regulations... The caste being a self-governing body for discharging certain mixed

*Whenever the Government introduced legislative reforms there were the results of continuous pressure from the people, e.g., in the case of Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, it was through the effort of Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Bengal reformers that the Act came into being. Similarly, Mr. Justice Ranade, Behramji, Malbari and M other social reformers clamoured for raising the age of consent and the Act of 1891 was passed.

Further whenever a legislative measure was introduced, a sort of hesitance on the part of the rulers was revealed. In the case of the Suttee Regulation of 1829, even when the provisions of this act were applied to Bengal and Madras, in Bombay the Governor Mr. John Malcolm issued a circular declaring that a copy of the Bengal Suttee Act No. XVII of 1829 "should be circulated for the information of Magistrates who may be informed it is not the contemplation of Government to introduce it at present in the territories under this ~~present~~ presidency but they will scrupulously act upon the instructions already sent which it is hoped may have the desirable operation of rendering the most respectable natives, instruments in effecting the abolition of Suttees." (Judicial Department Vol.20/213, 1830, p.116). The instruction sent to the Magistrates reads as follows: "If the Panchayat decides that there should not be a Suttee, it should not be permitted and under all circumstances natives in public employ and those who desire to see can maintain an intercourse by visits with European officers should be prohibited from attending Suttees" (Judicial Department, Vol.20/213, 1830, p.99). Of course later on the Act was made applicable to Bombay Presidency also.

functions which are partly civil and partly religious or sumptuary no member of it can maintain a suit in which a caste question is the principal question for enquiry though there may be also other subsidiary questions requiring adjudication by civil courts and although those subsidiary questions are of purely civil nature. The test applied in such cases is whether the court by taking cognizance of the matter in dispute would or would not interfere with the autonomy of the castes."³³ Thus by definition, the courts refused to interfere in the internal matters, if the procedure followed was correct. Thus when a Modh Bania woman was excommunicated by the leader of the caste for misconduct, the plaintiff's plea for admission was not upheld, because the caste had followed the proper procedure.³⁴ The caste had full rights to excommunicate ~~a~~ ^a member, the only restriction being that it should not lead to a wide announcement, otherwise such act would be considered as defamation.³⁵ Thus the courts were not helpful to individual social reformers if they wished to take the matters to court on the ground of autonomy in ~~paternal~~ ^{internal} matters. Therefore as poet Narmad puts it: "Between 1860-72, in Gujarat, Kathiawad and everywhere in Brahmin and Bania castes, there were groups and restrictions, penance and fines, quarrels and ill-feelings, jealousy and obstinacy, authority and wealth... were prevalent. When social reformers took refuge in the common law on occasions of caste excommunication the caste people brought the concept of customary practice."³⁶ Therefore poet Dalpatram in exasperation remarks, "It is easy to break the law of the State one can disobey the command of the Almighty but it is very difficult to break caste ruling. A person who is excommunicated feels as if he has been condemned to severe punishment."³⁷

Not only the government did not protect the individuals from the caste tyranny, but many a times government took the help of caste councils in subserving their own purpose. When there was difficulty of getting labourers for public work, Mr. Grant, the private secretary to Governor, in 1800 informed the judge and magistrate of Surat that he should send for the heads of the caste of Chupperbanias and settle with them the rate of hire for the daily labour of their people by whomsoever employed.³⁸ Similarly while collecting matter on caste matters in South Gujarat, Mr. Borrodale had to take assistance of Caste Council to get information.³⁹

Further with a view to retain hold over certain traditional groups the Government made certain concessions to those groups. Talookdars for instance were treated in a discriminatory manner by the government in case of breach of law. In the same manner preference given to certain castes in appointments to such posts as Talatis, primary teachers, accountants and retaining of the hereditary appointment of village headman were measures of the government which strengthened the caste groups.

Similarly the currents generated by the educational forces also had extremely limited impact upon the traditional caste system. As we have observed, the new education had hardly touched even 5 per cent of the population. Further this penetration was restricted to certain urban areas as Ahmedabad, Surat, Broach, Jamboosar, Nadiad and Kaira. This limited advance was also ~~remat~~ restricted to upper castes of Gujarat only. Though technically doors of education were open for all, very few castes beyond Brahmins, Baniyas, Kayasthas, Brahmakhatris and to some extent Patidars took advantage of the new opportunity.⁴⁰ Further the Government policy was to give preference to Brahmin castes in educational

facilities,* thus the advantages accruing as a result of education were limited. As observed time and again, the new prestige and status attached to the castes based on birth thus providing new element to the caste consciousness. Even in civil matters the government did not observe equality in practice. In 1863 residents of one area of Ahmedabad sent the following petition to the Municipal authorities: "...in the tank in Mandvi area formerly only Jains and Baniyas were using the water but now people from all castes were using it. Therefore municipal authorities should see that only the higher castes were permitted to use the tank." Such a petition was granted by the Municipality.⁴¹

Further as Dr. G.S. Ghurye mentions, the unnecessary significance given to the caste and sub-castes in the tables prepared for Census from 1871 onwards, helped in generating the revival of the caste spirit.^{42**}

To conclude we may mention that the new economic, political and educational forces though generated numerous modern forces, yet did not develop to that extent as to break the caste and other traditional social system. Even in the 19th century the castes were powerful enough to break the will of the reformers. A reformer like Mahipatram who went to England in defiance of the tents of his caste (Vadanagara Nagar Brahmin)

*Refer to Ch. IV ~~On Educational Changes~~, pp 311, 353-354.

**It would be interesting to quote the remarks made in 1865 by James Kerr, the Principal of Hindu College at Calcutta. He said: "It may be doubted if the existence of caste is on the whole unfavourable to the permanence of our rule. It may even be considered favourable to it provided we act with prudence and forbearance. Its spirit is opposed to national union." (Quoted in Ghurye, G.S., Caste, Class and Occupation, p.193).

after returning from abroad, zealously fought against the different harassments from the caste people, but ultimately broke down, and underwent a purifying ceremony and rejoined the caste people.⁴³ At times the wider caste excommunicated the whole sub-caste.⁴⁴ But there was no systematic principle behind the approach of caste. If a person was wealthy or influential the caste would become powerless and if the person was of limited means the caste tried to overpower.⁴⁵ In fact due to the prevalence of caste authority, the social reformers began to have a dual life; they would be very bold in the propaganda but at the time of putting into practice the proposed reform they would be immensely afraid of the caste verdict and would betray the cause.* This phenomenon had given a very great set-back to the social reform activities during the last two decades of 19th century. Thus by the end of 19th century on the one hand certain forces were trying to shake the foundation of the caste system while there were other forces which were assisting the caste consciousness and were helping the caste organizations to stabilize themselves.

*The practice of abandoning of the social reform course in practice had started right from Durgaram Mehtaji, the first social reformer. He was a zealous propagandist of widow remarriage, but he remarried not only did he marry a young girl, but also gave a promise that he would not propagate in favour of widow remarriage! (Durgaram Charitra by Mahipatram, pp.9-10). Similarly when Narmad went to the place of the Vaishnava high priest for carrying on public discussion on the authenticity of widow remarriage according to the Hindu scriptures, none of the social reformers accompanied him excepting one wrestler of North India! (Mari Hakikat by Narmad, pp.72-73). Even poet Dalpatram declined to go on foreign travel, if the Buddhivardhak association (a social reform organization of which he was a member) did not permit him to do penance after returning.

/when

(c) Strengthening of the Caste System

Under the peculiar development mentioned above, the caste system got a new lease of life at the end of 19th century. In spite of the fact that certain of the functions of caste were taken away by other organizations, caste retained its cultural integrity; and in certain circumstances strengthened itself. We will briefly mention the indirect or direct evidences of caste consciousness.

1) Due to the exigencies of service or for the need of education or for trade person coming from villages to the towns generally put up with their own kinsmen, or took residence near the kinsmen; thus many a time, it so happened that even in towns, their social life was a replica of the villages. Sjt. Govardhanram mentions how the Nagar Brahmins (coming from native places were living together in one room in Bombay.⁴⁶ Similarly poet Dalpatram also refers to 300 students staying in Ahmedabad either with their relations or by renting houses. He therefore suggested the establishment of boarding schools for such students.⁴⁷ Thus a peculiar development analogous to the community settlement of ethnic groups in United States, developed in the new urban settlements but which here took the traditional caste matrix.* This phenomenon must have been more pre-dominant in the upper castes because of their food taboos.**

*The Bombay Gazetteer reports that initially all the Bhatias and Baniyas were staying in Kalbadevi area of Bombay (Gazetteer of Bombay City & Island, Vol.I, 1909, p. 167). We may mention here that till recently in urban centres many of the cooperative housing colonies were organized on caste lines, such as Brahmakshatri housing society, Nagar Housing Board, Jain Housing Society and such others.

**It is interesting to note that the Nagar Club came into existence to mitigate the hardships felt by the Nagar students in Bombay with regard to the preparation of food. (Govardhanram by Pandya Kantilal, p.243).

Thus the same pattern slowly reproduced itself in the new urban setting, even at times with a new caste council operating in the city.⁴⁸

2) Many a times to meet the difficulties of inhabitants of the urban settlements, like residence, fees for the education of children, textbooks and lodging problem, some of the leaders of the castes started caste charities, caste halls, caste scholarships and such other methods by which a suffering element was introduced in the alien impersonal atmosphere of cities.*

3) One of the most significant feature of the newly developed caste consciousness was the movement for reforming the caste from within. The former enthusiasm of abolishing the caste system had given place to reform of the caste system. The observations made by O'Malley on caste tendenciesⁱⁿ general are relevant for Gujarat also. He remarks, "On a survey of the whole situation it may be said that though there is a certain neglect of some of canons of conduct, the lines of cleavage between different castes have been neither obliterated nor obscured. There is a tendency, more especially among the educated sections of the upper classes to abandon or modify caste customs but there is no general revolt against the system. Forms may be changed but fundamentally caste remains the same."⁴⁹

In Gujarat also persons like Hargovindas Kantawalla, Ambalal Desai, and others, advocated reforms in internal functioning of the caste system. It is contended that "caste custom could only be improved by caste organization."⁵⁰ Mr. Kantawalla in a fervent appeal to the youths of Gujarat states: "Caste is a miniature republic. The caste leaders enjoy authority on the lines of the authority enjoyed by the members of the Parliament. They have got more powers than even the State... Why should the younger element not strive for gaining the leadership in the caste councils? You will serve

*Of course these programmes were developed to a very large extent in the 20th century.

the nation ten times more if you get the leadership of caste in your hands. Even you would be better able to serve the society than what you could do if you were elected in the local self governing institutions."⁵¹

As a result of this tendency numerous caste organizations working on new principles came into existence. We will give only few names, -Cutchi Dasha Oshwal Mandal, Anavil Desai Sabha, Sathodara Samaj, Vadnagara Nagar Mandal, Audichya Association, Shrimali Association, Bhatia Association and so on.*

Many of these associations tried to introduce reforms ~~in~~ in the caste practices. Shrimali Brahmins for instance decided not to take bride price.⁵² Further they also decided to eliminate one caste dinner, and dovetail that much amount of money in the caste fund.⁵² The Vadnagara Koonbis also introduced new reforms such as caste dinner after the death of a person should be permitted only for those persons who have died after the age of 40. Similarly, second marriage, when the first wife is alive could take place only under certain circumstances. Further some of the Koonbi castes also decided that girls of very tender age, ought not to be married.⁵³ Some castes started educational funds. Some persons introduced a new custom of distributing books instead of vessels to the caste people on auspicious occasions.

Many castes started caste journals such as Jaina Dharma Prakash, Audichya Hitechhu, Shrimali Shubhe Chhak and such others. Even caste census were being taken.⁵⁴

*We will be discussing their activities in the section on Voluntary Associations in this chapter.

Here we may also mention that not only caste organizations were being revitalized, but a sort of competitive spirit between different castes was generated for getting higher status. The reforms in each caste were being in response to the developments in other castes. In this light Dalpatram declares that while suggesting reforms for the Shrimali Brahmin caste, that if they persisted on improving their caste customs, they would be superior even to Vadanagara Nagar community.⁵⁵ Similarly Mr. Kantawalla compares the improvement in the status of the oil-pressers with that of Baniyas.⁵⁶ The competitive spirit went to such an extent that some castes wished ill-fate for other castes.⁵⁷ Even the members of depressed castes began to imitate the customs of upper castes in this atmosphere of caste rivalry. Poet Narmad mentions at one place that, "When lower castes have started abstaining from drinking intoxicant drinks, the upper castes are taking to it."⁵⁸ Similarly certain lower castes were abandoning the practice of widow remarriage in order to come in line with upper castes.⁵⁹

In short, caste competition, caste consciousness and boosting up of caste ego were some of the new phenomena which occurred in the 19th century. The same trend gets accentuated in the 20th century Gujarat and India.

(d) Concluding remarks

The foregoing analysis clearly indicates that the introduction of modern status system based on wealth, achievement and knowledge imposed by the new political rule, upon the traditional status system based on hereditary hierarchy generated a peculiar clash and confluence of rival status systems. In fact in the 19th century the caste system was not destroyed but castes were turned into associations striving to retain the

identity of the caste and bring about necessary reforms to more competently adjust themselves to the new surroundings. In fact in the 19th century castes were being transformed from all pervasive communities as a part of a rigid complex supernaturally sanctioned wider Hindu framework into associations looking after certain specific needs of the individuals belonging to those castes.

The new political rule destroyed the village community which has the support of caste system. The new political rule introduced efficient means of transportation which increased the mobility of the people. The principle of rule of law tried to establish equality of all before law and thus attacked the unequal basis of caste structure. But in the absence of full-fledged development of economy on industrial footings and due to the half-hearted policy of the British rulers - particularly in the latter half of the 19th century, that caste was not eliminated but was given a new life. Further it may also be mentioned that in the pre-British Gujarat, the caste system, the caste hierarchy and superior status for certain castes were taken for granted. Nobody dared to raise its status, or imitate the upper castes. But in the 19th century competition taken the form of caste rivalry, and each caste aspires to reach higher levels boosting up its caste ego.

II

CHANGES IN THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN THE 19TH CENTURY GUJARAT

Introduction

In this section we will study the changes that occurred in the position of woman in Gujarat, during the 19th century. The changes in her status will be indicative of the changes in the social system of Gujarat. Here we may mention that if we look for improvement in statistical figures or if we try to

find out the actual status in society we may not find very startling results. The change which we will be noticing was with regard to attitude of a section of Gujarati community towards woman's position in society and her problems.

Another specification which is necessary is that due to the prevalence of caste system, and differences in status of various castes in society, the position of woman was not uniform in all castes. The problem such as that of infanticide, which may be experienced by a Jadeja Rajput or by a Kanbi girl may not bother a girl of Jain Baniya; further the economic hardships experienced by a weaver's wife or a potter's wife as a result of a breakdown of artisan industry may not be felt by a high caste, wealthy Brahmin woman or a Baniya woman. The social ostracism which was experienced by a high caste lady for going out of the home may not be suffered by an aboriginal woman. Thus in short, the women of different caste groups and communities of Gujarat were experiencing different types of problems. Of course it should be noted that, on the whole the position of woman of all groups of Gujarati society was subordinate to man. Further, as the patriarchal joint family^{*} continued to be the basic unit of society, the position of woman was subordinate in the family. In this section we will restrict ourselves with the analysis of the general measures which were taken in the 19th century towards the raising of the status of woman in Gujarati society.^{**}

One feature which draws our attention is that all over the world, particularly in Western Europe and United States of America,⁶⁰ it was in the

*We have not discussed changes in the joint family system separately because during the 19th century family organization continued to be on the joint family pattern.

**Data regarding the status of lower class women or occupational patterns of women in 19th century is hardly available.

19th century that efforts were made to elevate the status of women. New attitudes, different value systems, and a novel concept with regard to her functions in society were emerging which lay at the basis of the movement for emancipation of women in Western Countries.* In Gujarat, With Raja Ram Mohan Roy fighting for the abolition of the practice of Satee in 1829⁶¹ and Durgaram Mehtaji - the Luther of Gujarat - launching his campaign against compulsory widowhood from 1838, started the movement for the emancipation of women.^{62**} Thus social currents in Gujarat were running parallelly with the international current. Due to special economic backwardness of the country and peculiar caste and joint family matrix of the Gujarati society the problem and movements for the improvement of woman's status take different shapes in India and Gujarat. It is in this background that we will try to observe the efforts made for changing the status of woman in Gujarati society during 19th century.

In the 19th century Gujarat we find three currents which suggest that the status of woman in society was experiencing a change. The first current is manifested by concrete steps taken in the field of education, and marriage which helped to bring about changes in the status of woman. The second current was expressed through the laws which were enacted during this period

*Narmad in his period of disillusionment of social reform activities argues that in Europe also the people have first tried to free themselves from political enslavement and then have taken the issue of emancipation of women. Why should we start with the latter? (Narmad Dharmavichar, p.132).

**It was during this period while presenting the case for woman's right to vote that the Liberal protagonist J.S.Mill declared: "What is now called the nature of woman is an eminently artificial thing - the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others...Men with that inability to recognize their own work which distinguishes the unanalytic mind, indolently believe that the tree grows itself in the way they have made it grow, and that it would die if one half of it were not kept in vapour, bath and the other half in snow." (Subjection of Women by J.S.Mill, p.239).

and which also affected the status of woman. The third current was revealed in the changed attitude towards woman's place in society. We will now describe the changes that were brought about in education.

Education of woman

As mentioned in the Chapter on Education, when a survey of condition of indigenous education in Bombay Province was undertaken in 1823, it was revealed that not a single female student was studying in the indigenous schools.^{63*}

The Wood's Despatch of 1854 realized the importance of female education⁶⁴ and the Hunter Commission of 1882 made varieties of suggestions such as special aids to female schools, special curriculum for female students, and greater concession of fees for the female students as various devices for giving encouragement to female education.⁶⁵

Meanwhile pioneering efforts were being made by the Missionaries and non-Missionaries also in spreading education by establishing girl's schools.^{66**} In Bombay, "the Students' Literary and Scientific Society" which owed its existence mainly to the efforts of Prof. Pattan of Elphinstone Institute, whom Narmadashankar describes as "The father of female education" had started girls' schools in 1849.⁶⁷ These schools were conducted in the morning from 7 to 9 in convenient localities in the private premises of some friends. The members of staff were students or masters of Elphinstone

*It is interesting to note that Lord Elphinstone in his Minute of Education (1823) which runs over 83 paragraphs and which discussed several questions in details, did not make any reference to woman's education.

**The American Mission Society opened the 1st Girls' school for Indian women in the Province of Bombay in 1824. (History of Education in India by Naik and Nurullah, 1951, p.167).

Institute, who had volunteered to teach the girl students without remuneration.⁶⁸ In 1854 it conducted 9 girls' schools with paid staff.

In Gujarat the first effort at establishing a female school was made at Ahmedabad in 1849 by the Gujarat Vernacular Society with the financial help of the family of Sheth Hathisingh Kesarisingh.* It had only one girl in the beginning. But by the end of the first year the number of girl students rose to 5. Two schools were started in 1850 with the financial help of Maganbhai Karamchand.^{69**} Durgaram Mehtaji, ardent social reformer also made efforts to run a girls' school in Surat during this period. About this school, the report of the Board of Education of 1851-52 remarks: "It is pleasing reflection that the strong prejudices entertained by the people against female education are beginning to give way in the small towns and villages as well as in the large cities. Very little, however, in this direction has yet been achieved in Surat. Durgaram has for sometime been exerting himself in behalf of the cause and has lately succeeded in collecting together about twenty girls, chiefly, I hear the children of his own intimate associates."⁷⁰

*It appears that this was the school which was financed by the Gujarat Vernacular Society in 1849. One school teacher Karunashankar Dayashankar was conducting a private co-education school where along with 47 boys, one girl was studying. (Gujarat Vernacular Society no Itihasa, Part I by Parekh Hiralal, pp.27-28).

**A reference to this school was made in the Wood's Education Despatch which mentions, "Our Governor-General in Council has declared, in a communication to the Government of Bengal, that the Government ought to give to the native female education in India its frank and cordial support; and in this we heartily concur and we especially approve of the bestowal of marks of honour upon such native gentlemen as Rao Bahadur Magahunbhai Karamchand who donated Rs. 20,000 to the foundation of two native females schools in Ahmedabad as by such means our desire for the extension of female education becomes generally known." (Quoted in History of Education in India by Nurullah & Naik, p.213).

The beginnings made in female education in the early fifties of the 19th century slowly started taking roots. By the end of 19th century, the number of literate females grew. The following table reveals the growth.

Number of Literates in 1000 Females

	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>
Ahmedabad	3	6	17
Broach	3	8	18
Kaira	1	3	9
Panch Mahals	1	2	8
Surat	7	12	24

Source: Census of India, 1901, Vol.IX, Part I,
Bombay, p.148.

The figures for female collegiate students point out that in 1896-97 in the whole Presidency there were only 18 ladies while in 1901-02 there were 30 ladies.⁷¹ As the initiative in higher education was taken by Parsis, Christians and Maharashtrians, we can visualize that ^{the} a number of Gujarati women ~~have~~ ^{having} collegiate education would be very insignificant. The first lady graduates of Gujarat viz. Smt. ^{Vidyagauri} ~~Vidya~~ Nilkanth and Smt. Sharda Mehta graduated only in 1901.

Training College

Along with giving instructions to woman in schools, an effort was made in the latter half of 19th century, to train female teachers for primary schools. A college was established for this purpose in 1871 at Ahmedabad.⁷² ⁷³ This institution which was financed by Mr. Bechardas Laskari, started functioning with six lady students. In 1901-02 the number of students rose to 110.⁷³ As mentioned by Miss Collett, the Principal of this college, at the time of giving evidence in the presence of Education

Commission 1882, the majority of women attending this college were wives of school masters, or of men who were being trained for the employment in the educational department. 'Respectable widows' were also admitted.⁷⁴ In 1882 out of 32 lady students, 18 were Brahmins, 3 Kunbis, 5 Parsis and 6 Indian Christians. Miss Collet observed: "The fact of high caste Hindus and native Christians living together under the same roof on terms of friendship and mutual respect makes our institution a unique one in India."⁷⁵

Along with the abovementioned training classes, midwifery classes were opened in the Grant Medical College in 1875-76. In 1901-02, the number of girls studying in the various medical courses was 45 in the Presidency; out of these, 22 were Parsis, 18 Anglo-Indians and Europeans, 4 were Indian Christians and only one belonged to Hindu community.⁷⁶

In summing up the efforts made at starting female educational institutions, it may be mentioned that the Government was relatively less enthusiastic in the initial stages. This apathy was commented upon by journal Buddhiprakash in 1865 in the following terms: "Just as Hindus become happy at the news of the birth of a boy and become sad at the news of the birth of a girl, it appears that the Government also becomes pleased with reference to the male population and sad about referring to females. The Government is not enthusiastic to give education to girls. It, further, appears a truism that government is establishing schools for boys who can be useful for its own needs."⁷⁷ *

*The same indifference was exhibited by the University of Bombay when the first girl student Miss Cornelia Kharsitji wanted to appear in the Matriculation Examination. When her father sought the permission of the Bombay University in 1875 for his daughter to appear at the same examination, the Syndicate after pondering over the matter decided, that as 'in rules of candidates' the words 'he, him, his' are used, naturally woman cannot be admitted as a candidate. Thus the Syndicate displayed its mastery over grammatical construction to a perfection. Further when this matter was referred to the Calcutta University, the Syndicate opined, 'The question of the admission of females to the university is an abstract question, no female has applied or is expected to apply.' Mr. Mukerjee who narrated this incident pithily remarks, "Thus if one university *erred*, the other was too dogmatic. Both of them neither showed boldness nor common sense." (The Journal of University of Bombay, Sept. 1945, p.55)

Curriculum:

In the initial stages the boys and girls were taught the same subjects in the educational institutions. However later on particularly after 1882, a discussion was initiated to work out an appropriate and different curriculum necessary for females. Of course during the 19th century the courses of studies in girls' schools were modelled on the lines of curriculum prevailing in the boys' schools, with some variation in the middle/school courses and to a lesser extent in the matriculation courses of the universities.⁷⁸ Special emphasis on needlework and domestic economy was initiated for girls. However after 1880, the Gujarat Educationists started seriously discussing about the proper courses in woman education. The thinkers like Narmad, Manilal Nabhoobhai, Govardhanram and others were feeling that the education which was imparted was not training her for the jobs which she had to perform in life.⁷⁹

Other efforts

Along with starting schools and giving thought to the proper kind of education for women, special efforts were made during this period to create interest in education and other intellectual activities. In this connection the role of the Gujarat Vernacular Society was very noteworthy. It organized debates, undertook extra-mural lectures for those adult ladies who had left their studies and published special books for advancement of scientific knowledge among women.* In one of the reports of the Gujarat

*Gujarat Vernacular Society received nearly 8 different kinds of funds for publishing books useful to women and nearly 40 funds for giving different kinds of scholarships to female students. (Gujarat Vernacular Society no Itihasa, Part II, pp.147-48). Other efforts to encourage women to take to education took various forms such as keeping a very nominal fees. In some of the private schools girls were actually given stipends for regular attendance in the class. Further prizes were also awarded to female students to encourage women to take to education. 'The Buddhivardhak Sabha' in Bombay started one girls' school and organized lectures on advantages of female education. Governor Bartle Frere and his wife gave sarees to 50 girls on one occasion. (Arvachin Kelavani na Sava so varsha by Ramlal Navanital, p.38). Sir Mangaldas Nathubhai, a well-known businessman of Bombay, also encouraged female education by organizing special functions for giving prizes. (Mumbai no Bahar by Vacha Ratanji, p.63).

Vernacular Society, it was mentioned that Hindu Beniya, Brahmin, Jain and Parsi women were taking part in these activities.⁸⁰

Attitude to women's education

It is true that the statistics of women's education do not give a rosy picture of extension of women education. However, what is more important, almost of decisive importance, is the change in the attitude to the education of women. This change in attitude created a climate which broke the intellectual barrier against women's education. The social reformers like Narmad⁸¹, Dalpat⁸², Navalram⁸³, Karsandas⁸⁴, and most of the others make a powerful plea for women's education. For them, education of women was one of the important items of their programme of social reform. Even the revivalist section represented by Manilal Nabhubhai and Govardhanram also eulogize the role of education in elevating the status of women, though differing in the curriculum of courses.⁸⁵

The social reformers were creating an atmosphere wherein it was emphasised that education will bring many advantages to women themselves, to their family and future generation. It was also emphasised that education given to women will also bring benefits to the nation at large. According to Dalpatram there were a number of advantages in educating the daughter. However among them there were some special advantages such as preventing the women from petty quarrels and petty obstinacies.⁸⁶ At another place he says that if a father gives dowry to his daughter, there are all chances that the husband would usurp it, but, if education is given, no power on earth can deprive her of that wealth.⁸⁷ Navalram creates women characters who forcibly plead for breaking the ban on their education.⁸⁸ Narmad in his typical crusading style incessantly urges "girls, to study study and study" (Behanio bhano bhano ne bhano),⁸⁹ and fervently argues that as a daughter, as a wife and as a mother, the woman will shine out more if she takes to education.⁹⁰

Of course the majority of these thinkers did not visualize that education was required for job for women also.⁹¹ Only a microscopic minority was envisaging the need for education as a provider of job for the widows as indicated by the Education Commission.*

We will conclude this section by mentioning one more feature of women's education viz., that the leading elements and the government recognised the social obstacles in advancement of women's education. The practice of child marriage was considered to be of greatest obstacle to education.⁹² Poet Dalpatram vividly portrays the psychological state of a married girl attending the school. He says, "Her one mind is in learning, the other is in domestic problems...In this atmosphere she is unable to study."⁹³ Mr. Behramji Malabari, the noted social reformer, in connection with his notes on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood emphasises the role of education in mitigating these evils.⁹⁴

In short, the first round in the battle in favour of giving education to the women, at least for the upper caste women in urban centres, was won by the end of 19th century.***

*The prevalence of prejudice to woman's employment was reflected in the following incident. When Miss Cornelia Sorabji (incidentally the first woman graduate of Bombay Presidency) was appointed as a Fellow of Gujarat College at Ahmedabad, voices of surprise were raised and one of the news-papers remarked, that this type of appointment was first of its kind in India. "The appointment of a lady to teach male students in a College is a strange reform of the 19th century. Has female education made so great a stride or is there such an excess of female teachers in the girls' schools in the Bombay Presidency that a lady who has received high education has been appointed to a college for males? Really! such an appointment is surprising. It would have been praiseworthy of Miss C. Sorabji had been nominated to the department of female education." (Satya Vakta, 2nd March 1888, p.16).

**As mentioned by biographer of Karsandas, excepting Nagar, Kshatriya and such other high caste women, there was persistence of a superstition that if a girl is educated she will suffer ill-fate. (Uttam Kapole Karsandas by Mahipatram, pp.15-16).

Child Marriage

The custom of child marriage which almost continued from Pauranic phase, was also rampant in the 19th century Gujarat.^{95*} Though this custom was deep-rooted and highly pervasive, the important fact about the 19th century was that a new awakening about the evil effects of this custom and a new striving to fight this evil was started in the Gujarati society. All the important thinkers and reformers, both of reformist and revivalist schools launched a crusade against this custom. They pointed out various evil effects of this custom on the life of women such as ^{interruptions} interests in education, lack of healthy progeny, ill-assorted marriages, harmful effects on the health of girls, and financial encumbrances.⁹⁶

The practice of child marriage was so pervasive that ironically all the important personalities of the time were married at a very early age and with girls of tender age. Narmad was first married at the age of 12.⁹⁷ Navalram was married at the tender age of 11 and a second time after the demise of his first wife at the age of 14 with a girl of 9 years of age.^{98**} As one writer remarks, "When Navalram was studying for the 3rd standard he was married twice."⁹⁹ Iccharan Desai was married at the tender age 13 with a girl of 10 years of age.¹⁰⁰ Thus child marriages were almost universal in the Gujarati society.^{***}

*In spite of legislative enactments of 1929 (Sarda Act) and 1955 Act of Hindu Marriage, in the villages and in the lower castes, girls are married below the age of 12 even now.

**In those days it was not at all surprising to find Narmad leaving the Elphinstone College because he has received a letter from his father-in-law that his wife has now matured and is fit to live with him. (Mavi Hakikat by Narmad, p.33).

***In 1886, the Vadnagara Koonbi caste, decided that a girl should be engaged not before she reached the age of 5. If a person did perform engagement ceremony before that age he would be considered guilty of committing breach of custom. This was considered a measure of reform. (Vadnagara Kanbini Utpati, 1906, pp.129-130). Further, an announcement had come in
contd.

In order to expose this evil, the reformers wrote poems, plays and essays.¹⁰¹ Social reform associations tried to organize competition, inviting essays and arranging debates on this problem. Further in order to counteract the traditional oppositions, journals such as Buddhiprakash tried to invoke Shastrik references and pointed out that even shastras expressed that girls could not be married without her consent. A girl was unfit to marry till she had reached the age of 10 and for the boy the minimum age was 15.¹⁰²

Another concrete effort to fight this evil was made by establishing the Anti-Child Marriage Association (Bal Lagna Nishedhak Mandal) in 1871.* It was obligatory for the members to marry their children only after they reached the age of 16 and the difference of 5 years was to be kept between husband and wife.** It was claimed that three hundred persons became members of this Association.¹⁰³ The Association conducted a periodical called "Bal Lagna Nishedhak Patrika". It is significant that most of the members of this association struggled heroically to abide by the rules - a herculean task during those days. It was very difficult to keep the daughters unmarried till eleven or twelve years of age. This fact ^{could be} ~~is~~ seen from the plight of Navalram. As an active member, Navalram could not marry his daughter before she was 10 years of age and in real life he found it so

Buddhiprakash of 1869 entitled "Surprising Marriage" wherein it was mentioned that in certain Brahmin caste girls of 11 months or 13 months were being married to boys of 18 and 25 years. It may be interesting to add that when marriage of Govardhanram was decided, he nor his future wife were born!

*Later on this association was transformed into "Gujarat Hindu Sansar Sudhara Samaj".

**It has been noted that when one of the members of this Association, Iccharam Vyas broke the rules of the Association by marrying his son with a girl three years older to him, The members dismissed him from the Association and decided to boycott his demonstration of magical practices. (Shukra Tarak, by V.Vaidya, pp.100-105).

difficult to find a proper bridegroom for his daughter that he made a proposal at one stage that "looking to the conditions of our country, we may marry the girl late, but we must fix up the engagement when she is 5 years of age."¹⁰⁴*

Infanticide

One of the consequences of the custom that marriage was essential for women led to a large scale practice of infanticide in certain castes like Jadeja Rajputs and Koonbis. The government discovered the prevalence of this practice by observing a glaring discrepancy between numerical strength of male and the females in particular castes or community.¹⁰⁵ The Government found that the evil was not confined to Ahmedabad but it was widely prevalent in the towns of Charoter also.¹⁰⁶ The practice was also found in Broach and Saurashtra among certain ^{Rajput} castes.

As mentioned in the Vol.72 of 1854 of the Political Department of the Government of Bombay, the Jhareja chiefs of Santalpur and Charchut entered into agreement with Major J.R. Keily, the Political Superintendent of Palanpur, to suppress the crime of female infanticide within their districts. It was agreed that the birth of a daughter in this district had

*As a member of this Association, Mr. Bholanath Sarabhai tried to put into practice the clauses of the Association. (Bholanath Sarabhai na Jivan Charitra by Krisnarao Divatia, p.77). Even Iccharam Suryaram Desai, the famous revivalist, refused to arrange the marriage of his daughters early. He broke the custom and saw that his daughters married only after they reached the age of 15. (Iccharam Suryaram Desai na Sakshar Jivan ni Ruprekha by Natwarlal Desai, p.7). Dalpatram Pranjivan records a case of his friend, who gave education to his two daughters, saw that this daughters were given full facilities to develop their personality, but he found very difficult to get proper bridegrooms for his daughters, because they had crossed the traditional marriageable age! (F.N.Gujarati Hinduoni Sthiti by Dalpatram, p.43).

to be registered in the office of the Karkoon of the Government. Further, in the case of a Jadeja daughter dying, information had to be given to the clerk who was to make a proper enquiry into the cause of the death and record the cause of the death in the official register. Should any female infant of tender age die, her body had to be shown to four of the most respectable persons of the village of different castes and the cause of the death had to be ascertained as far as possible, and stated in the proceedings of the inquest which had to be sent to the government clerk. Only after this procedure had been gone through that the body was permitted to be cremated. Further if any Jadeja's infant daughter fell ill, information had to be given to the governmental authorities about the nature and cause of the illness, which was kept in the record by the Government. Lastly in the event of any female infant dying and being cremated without acquainting the government clerk and without assembling a panchayat to ascertain the cause of its death, the party guilty of the infringement of this agreement would have to submit to such punishment as government might decide.¹⁰⁷

In the case of Leva Koonbis, the Collector of Broach informed the Government of Bombay on 16th April, 1856 of "the existence of infanticide (which) I consider to be proved by the universal admission of all the Leva Koonbis whom I have conversed with on the subject, that the birth of a daughter is the source of unmitigated grief to them. Where such a feeling exists the inference may be readily allowed that the preservation of the girl is an object of no solicitude and that her death is looked upon by the parents as a relief."¹⁰⁸ Here it should be noted that the presence of a girl was felt as a great burden due to two reasons. A sort of hypergamy prevailed in Leva Koonbis. The chase for bridegrooms belonging to twelve

towns north of Mahi river^{*} was a status aspiration for all Kunbis. This craze for boys from the families of these twelve towns led to a status competition. This led to scarcity of status boys and enormous expenditure involved in securing these scarce boys. Two currents were generated to tide over this crisis: one was leading to female infanticide and another was to bring about reforms in the castes in such a manner that the need to get the bridegroom from these aristocratic families was eliminated. It is also interesting to note that one hundred and five villages of Broach and Wagra talukas entered into mutual compact to restrict the marriages among themselves alone and not to give their daughters outside their groups. After that compact was made, they did not send any girls to the Mahee districts, and whatever may have been the case before they now (1856) rear up their female offsprings in a manner befitting human creatures.¹⁰⁹

Another factor leading to the practice of female infanticide was the need to incur exorbitant expenditure by parents of the daughters during their marriages in these castes. When a crusade against female infanticide was launched, Leva Kunbis of Tarapur in Cambay district (in 1849) agreed to reduce the marriage expenditure.¹¹⁰ Similarly, the Leva Patidars of Nadiad, Borsad, Napad and Muhoomda in the Kheda zilla also made an agreement not to exceed the expenditure at the time of the marriage of a girl beyond Rs.1563.^{111**}

*The twelve towns were Nariad, Ore, Sunon, Kurum^usad, Sogeetra, Wassoo, Sowlee, Badran, Nar, Peeg, Tarrapoor and Dhurmaj. (P.D.Vol.61 of 1855, pp.327-328).

**The dowry or paithan as it is called in these castes must have been enhanced by a larger use of money in day-to-day activities in the 19th century. This custom is not eliminated even today; on the contrary it has got a new lease of life, wherein prospective bridegrooms dictate their terms in the form of giving facilities for going to foreign countries, establishing their household in the most luxuriant manner and so on. A minor effort to check this evil is made by the Dowry Act of 1961 but no significant check could be noticed.

In spite of some of these efforts, the practice of infanticide continued to persist amongst Jadeja Rajputs and Kadwa and Leva Kunbis. Mr. Borrodale, the acting collector and judge of Ahmedabad requested for the extension of some of the provisions of Act VIII of 1870 to the members of the Kadwa Kunbis for the prevention of murder of female infants because even after the agreements were made marriage expenses did not decrease. Mr. Borrodale wrote: "I do not say that actual and direct murder is done, but infanticide can result from wilful neglect as surely as from violence and that infanticide does result there can be no doubt."¹¹² It was observed in the Gazetteers of Gujarat, that in 1871 the Act was applicable to both Kadwa and Leva Kunbis but by 1887 the Kadwas had been completely exempted from the execution of the law, while in the case of Leva Kunbis it was decided that they should register the births and deaths of their offsprings.¹¹³

From 1844, efforts to cultivate public opinion against female infanticide were also launched. The British Rulers invited essays on the practice of female infanticide among Rajputs in Kutch and Kathiawar and announced prize for the best essay. This prize was awarded to the famous social reformer Dr. Bhau Daji. As the practice of female infanticide was not commonly found among the Brahmins and Baniyas, we find that this issue was not in the forefront of discussion among many social reformers of Gujarat.

Case of Phoolmani Dasi

During this period a very significant event occurred having far reaching effects on the trend of the social reform movement.

In 1890, in Bengal, a girl named Phoolmani Dasi, a girl of tender age of 11 was forced to consummate marriage by her husband. The forced consummation resulted in the death of the girl. It created a stir amongst all the social thinkers. Though the matter was brought before the court, no

action could be taken against the husband, because the Penal Code had specified 10 years' of age, as age of consent for consummation of marriage.

The social reformers, as a consequence, began to clamour for the raising of age of consent for the girl.¹¹⁴ Mr. Behramji Malabari, a Parsi social reformer, played a significant role in cultivating public opinion to press the Government to make alterations in the said Act. He prepared his famous 'note on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood' which was presented to the Parliament of Britain. Poet Narsinhrao Divatia wrote a poem entitled "The Curse of Phoolmani Dasi" at this time. It may be mentioned here that Balgangadhar Tilak as an all India leader and Manilal Nabhoobhai, Iccharam Suryaram Desai and other revivalists of Gujarat were propagating against the interference of Government in social matters. They were opposed to social reform by Government legislation. A meeting of nearly 5000 persons in Bombay passed a resolution that the Indians were not in need of government assistance in social matters.¹¹⁵ Further Manilal Nabhoobhai wrote numerous articles at this time and emphasised the point that marriage was a religious ceremony, and the government which had declared its religious neutrality, ought not to interfere in internal matters of the Hindus.¹¹⁶ A new Act known as Age of Consent Act of 1891 was passed by which the age of consent was raised from 10 to 12 years.

The problems of female infanticide, child marriage, and age of consummation of marriage were closely interconnected. We have noted the measures adopted to fight and mitigate these evils. It should however be observed that as the agitation for raising the age of marriage for woman above the age of 15 was not made during this period, the proportion of girls married below 15 continued to be very high throughout the 19th century.

In 1901 the proportion of the sexes by civil conditions for different district is indicated in the Table I. The crusade for introducing legislation as we know became more significant only in the twenties of the twentieth century culminating into what was known as movement for Sharda Act of 1930.

The Problems of Widows

The problems connected with widows consisted of two types in the 19th century Gujarat. One referred to the practice of self immolation of Suttee and the other pertaining to the wretched and humiliating conditions of widow in the society including prohibition of widow remarriage. The Government regulation of 1829 pertaining to Suttee which was passed as a result of agitation by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others in Bengal was made applicable to Gujarat. The practice of self-burning being rare in Gujarat* compared to its prevalence in Bengal and other provinces in Eastern India, the Act had hardly any significance here.** After the passing of the Act only stray instances of Suttee were recorded.¹¹⁷

*In a letter to the Acting Secretary of the Government of Bombay, the Criminal Judge of Surat informed the government in 1825 that no instance of Suttee had occurred in Surat for last 10 years. (Judicial Records 1825, Vol. 17/101). Further, it was mentioned in the Judicial records of 1828 that "with the exception of the ^{Kankrej} ~~South Kan~~ the number of Suttees within the year in any one district is inconsiderable and far below the average shown in any District of Bengal. (J.D. 1828, Vol.20/167), p.226.

**The narrator of History of Broach refers to two or three instances of practice of Suttee, 2 in Brahmans and one in Brahma Kshatri castes. Novelist Govardhanram Tripathi has written one short novel on one of the Suttees of Broach. The Collector of Broach was very upset when he came to know about this practice in 1828. (Bharuch no Itihasa by G. Desai, p.96)

Table No. I

Proportion of the sexes by Civil Conditions for Districts

District	Number of Females per 10000 Males											
	0 - 10		10 - 15		15 - 40		40 and over		Widow- ed	Un- married		
	Married	Un- married	Married	Un- married	Married	Un- married	Married	Un- married				
Bombay City	1900	953	4716	2856	449	6277	631	133	1924	289	242	2870
Ahmedabad	1864	899	1092	1759	563	1062	1089	170	1803	517	145	3321
Broach	2116	967	1927	1974	590	1639	1105	164	1594	516	97	2853
Kaira	2525	771	1028	1718	389	1344	1073	93	1678	544	57	3215
Panch Mahals	1899	986	1937	2266	719	1635	1131	306	1592	587	213	3411
Surat	1891	981	1718	1570	612	1441	1191	371	1472	683	453	2316

Source: Census of India, 1901, Vol. IX, Bombay, Part I, p. 113.

The prohibition of marriage to widows was a feature essentially among the upper castes.* However, as most of the social reformers came from upper castes, they felt this problem acutely and started a great debate on this topic in the 19th century. Many of the social thinkers, felt the hardships of widows and more particularly child widows. Durgaram Mehtaji who himself became a widower and felt the anguish of a widower's life, also became sensitive to the still worse plight of widows and crusaded very actively in support of the right of widows to remarry.¹¹⁸ The social reaction against widow-remarriage was so deeprooted among the upper castes, that even the talk of remarriage was considered as polluting the place from where it was preached. The reactionaries used to clean the defiled areas from where Durgaram used to preach for widow remarriage. Karsandas Moolji, the noted figure in social reforms while trying to write an essay to participate, in the competition organized by Gnan Prasarak Manilali of Bombay on 'Widow Remarriage' was driven out of the home, by the elders of the family.¹¹⁹

As a result of efforts of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and other reformers of Bengal, an act was passed in 1856 removing obstacles to widow remarriage. However it should be noted that the widow-remarriage, in spite of legal freedom, met with tremendous social censure. In Gujarat the widow's plight was very hard. She was considered a symbol of ill-omen.

*The practice of remarriage (Natra) was common among lower castes. Even the Koonbis permitted widow remarriage, and therefore in one of the poems of Dalpatram, when his hero tries to prohibit widows from remarrying, there was a hue and cry from Koonbi women, and at one stage in a furious mind they declared "let the Brahmin women go to heaven by not practising widow remarriage - but we would like to retain the custom." In the same poem all the artisan castes threaten to boycott the Brahmins for prohibiting widow remarriage in the country, this pointing out that in most of the artisan castes widow remarriage was a common custom. (Dalpat Kavya, Part II, Dalpatram, p.260).

She was forced to live in a particular manner, remove her hair, put on certain types of dress and was to undergo varieties of humiliations. She was forced to do hard work for the entire family. In these circumstances, many child widows, either lived a life of perpetual humiliation or sought various irregular paths. They were also subjected to irregular advances by relations and male members of the family-in-law. The social thinkers of this age tried to expose the evils arising out of the prohibition of remarriage to widows.¹²⁰ The revivalists like Manilal Nabhoobhai and Govardhanram were not in favour of remarriage of widows, though they advocated better treatment to them.^{121*}

As in the case of education of women and also with the problem of child marriage, the reformers adopted three methods to counteract the evils. The exposure campaign, the efforts to secure legal enactments and also break the custom by putting the prohibited actions into practice.

Campaign to expose the evil effects of the custom

We will now survey the extent of efforts on all these fronts in Gujarat in 19th century. The literateurs of Gujarat from Dalpatram onwards tried to present this problem through various literary forms such as poems essays and drama and novel.¹²² Organizations like Gujarat Vernacular Society, Gnan Prasarak Mandal, Buddhivardhak Sabha organised essay competitions, lectures and debates on this problem. Further, publication of books on the subject was also started. The book on "Widow Remarriage" published in Bengali by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was translated in Gujarati.

*Here it is interesting to note that the epoch making novel 'Saraswatichandra' which ran into four parts, created a great resentment in the minds of a section of reading public, because the author who had full opportunity of getting his heroine remarried to the hero, did not do so. (D.B. Zaveri Lekh Sangraha ed. by Majmudar Manjulal, correspondence between Govardhanram and Dayaram Gidumal, pp.274-299).

A satire on the opposition group of widow remarriage practice was published by Gujarat Vernacular Society. We shall indicate here, how social reformers resorted to spectacular open challenges to the conservative priestly class to debate publicly the problems like widow remarriage and others. Open discussions on such delicate subjects were fought with grave dangers. The clever dialecticians like Shastris and Priests well versed in the art of Shastraths had a knack to divert the debate and distort it in such a way that reformers appeared to be defeated. On 15th August 1860, poet Narmad* organized a public debate with the Vaishnava high priest on the subject of widow remarriage. Only one gymnast of United Provinces who was ^{friend} ~~afraid~~ of Narmad dared to accompany him to the place of debate. The debate was cleverly diverted to other channels by Jadunathji Maharaj, but it created a tremendous ferment in the public.¹²³ Similarly in 1870, a great debate was organized in Bombay between the orthodox Brahmins specially invited from Banaras and Calcutta and the social reformer Vishnu Pandurang Shastri and backed by Justice M.G. Ranade over the question of widow remarriage.¹²⁴

All such occasions, indicated how a new mode of cultivating public opinion in favour of widow remarriage was being generated in 19th century Gujarat, a phenomena developing in the history of Gujarati society, after a very long period of apathy towards widows.

*In the case of poet Narmad, a very interesting episode had occurred. Poet Narmad belonged to Vadanagara Nagar Brahmin caste. In that caste there was a convention, that if one wife is living, husband cannot marry a second time. In the year 1870, a widow named Narmadagauri fell in love with him. He as a staunch believer of widow remarriage thought that he must marry this widow, but the caste convention did not permit him to take a second wife. On this point Narmad had an interesting discussion with his wife about what course Narmad should take in such a situation. His wife like a true Hindu wife told him to do whatever he liked but she was not going to leave him. Subsequently Narmad married the widow. (Uttar Narmad Charitra, Poet Narmadashankar, pp.65-71)

In brief, a vigorous effort to propagate for widow-remarriage, as well as to create a climate in favour of rational, humanistic reforms in the condition of women were launched and gained wider currency with the passage of time in 19th century.

Struggle for legal enactments

It should be mentioned that along with the Sati Act, another Act was passed in 1856 permitting widows to remarry and recognizing their children as legal. This was a significant piece of legislation which ushered in a new phase in the life of widows. It is true that due to rigidities of caste and religious taboos, the practice permitted by this Act was not adopted on a big scale. However, its significance lay in the fact that the most powerful regulative code viz. law now came out openly in opposition to the prevailing customary and religious norms.

Organized efforts to defy the ban on widow remarriage

We will now survey the efforts to defy the ban on widow remarriage in the 19th century Gujarat. These efforts took three distinct forms.

- 1) To organize associations to both popularize widow remarriages and encourage such marriages.
- 2) To encourage widow marriages.
- 3) To protect the persons who have taken such bold measures from the harassments from the reactionary sections.

1) Along with various organizations like Parmhans Sabha and Buddhi-
vardhak Sabha, which carried on various social reform activities including propaganda for widow-remarriage, the most outstanding association for this purpose was "The Widow Remarriage Association" established in 1868, in Ahmedabad. This association survived even in the 20th century and encouraged a number of widow remarriages. As indicated in its report upto 1930 under its auspices 179 remarriages were performed in Ahmedabad.¹²⁵

2) Widow Remarriages in 19th century: The earliest recorded successful effort, noticed in my study for widow remarriage, was made in Bombay (1860)* when a Brahmin male was persuaded and helped to marry a widow by Karsandas and Narmadashankar. Members of Parmhans Sabha and Buddhivardhak Sabha actively participated in this venture.¹²⁶

However the earliest spectacular instance of widow remarriage which generated a social storm in Gujarat and which created an atmosphere for subsequent widow remarriages took place on the 2nd May 1871 in Bombay, assisted by Karsandas Moolji.^{127**}

One Mr. Madhavdas Rugnathdas, a prominent Kapor Baniya businessman of Bombay, who was contributing articles on social reform in "Satya Prakash" of Karsandas Moolji, at the age of forty-one, lost his third wife. He wrote a letter to Karsandas Moolji that he will either remain a widower throughout his life or will plunge in social reform movement by marrying a respectable widow. Karsandas encouraged him and suggested that Madhavdas will definitely find a respectable widow in the caste if he made efforts to find one. Madhavdas, subsequently advertized in the journal "Rasta Goftar" announcing that a respectable Kapor Baniya gentleman wanted to marry a widow of the age between 15 to 30. Anybody finding out such widow and helping him in successfully remarrying her, will get a prize of Rs.500.

*There appears to be some misunderstanding about the year of the first widow remarriage. Narmad in his autobiography refers to the year as 1860 while the author of "Samaj Sudhara nu Rekha Darshan" mentions 1866. It appears that Narmad's date is more correct because report of that remarriage and had appeared in one paper called Satya Prakash of 17th December 1960.

**Incidentally this was the last active social reform which was performed by Karsandas because he died on 28th August 1871.

Such audacious advertisement created a stir in the entire Kapor Baniya community. Leaders of the community, Sir Mangaldas Nathubhai and others very strongly urged Madhavdas, not to indulge in such an act. However Madhavdas remained firm. He decided to marry one widow Dhankorbai, who came forward and expressed her willingness to marry him. Under police protection and in the presence of two hundred invitees on the 2nd May, 1871 wherein outstanding reformers of the time like Sheth Laxmidas Khimji, Sheth Karsandas Moolji, Pandit Vishnu Parshuram, Dr. Atmaram Pandurang, Dr. Dhirajram Dalpatram, Sri Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, ^{Sri} Bhaishanker Nanabhai, Sri Narayan Mahadev Parmanand were present, this open, defiant act of widow remarriage was performed. Karsandas Moolji acted as father of the widow while performing the ceremony of Kanyadan (the gift of the girl). Times of India, Bombay Gazetteer, Bombay Samachar and a number of other papers gave wide publicity on this occasion, which resulted in generating a great controversy in various parts of Gujarat. This news were being read and discussed publicly in streets, and thus created a stormy climate in the Gujarati vocal public. The social reformers were enthused. Some of the widows developed courage and ventured to remarry. Orthodox sections were frightened and angry and decided to keep more vigilance over the widows of their families and community.

Both Madhavdas and Dhankorebai had to experience severe ostracism and various types of tortures from the community for such sacrilegious act. Madhavdas was excommunicated from the caste. An effort to destroy his business was also made by withdrawing money deposited with him. An effort to murder Karsandas Moolji, who took an active part in the marriage was also made.

However Madhavdas stood all these social opposition and crusaded with greater determination for the cause of widow remarriage. He actively assisted all those who had practised widow remarriage, he named his bungalow "Widow Remarriage Hall" and publicly announced that this place will be specially used for performance of widow remarriage. "This hall became a mute witness to a number of widow remarriages."¹²⁸

One another widow remarriage was recorded in Buddhiprakash, a journal of Gujarat Vernacular Society, in the issue of October 1872. The lady in this case was a school teacher and of Baniya caste and the bridegroom was also a school teacher and of the same caste, teaching in another school. As soon as the relatives of the widow knew about her intention to remarry, they kept her under lock and key. The police assistance was sought and the lady was released and was taken under police custody. Later on, the Widow Remarriage Association of Ahmedabad actively helped in the performance of this remarriage, where nearly 150 guests were present.¹²⁹

Another sensational case of widow remarriage which created a stir in the Gujarati society and aroused a lot of opposition took place in 1874 in Ahmedabad wherein a young Shravak widow named Jadav(જાડવ) announced her decision to marry a young man of her caste named Laloo Khushal and further announced the date of marriage. The Jains of Ahmedabad becoming furious at the news surrounded the house of Jadav on the day of marriage. However, with the help of police, she was taken out of the house and in the presence of some social reformers and Europeans, her remarriage was performed. The couple was prevented from entering their home which led to the famous case of trespassing in Ahmedabad. Mahipatram took a very active interest in the entire episode. According to Sri Navalram Trivedi, the couple was excommunicated from the caste. A resolution was also passed by the castemen

to the effect that a complete boycott of the newly wed couple in the form of refusing to let house to them must be enforced. The couple had to vacate the rented house in which they were living and Laloo Khushal had to close down his trade in cotton because of the opposition. According to Sjt. Navalram, the effect of this marriage was such that nearly 40 per cent of the girls going to school were stopped from attending the schools. Resolutions to the effect that people should boycott Prathna Samaj also were passed.¹³⁰

We have elaborated upon these cases of remarriages for a number of reasons. These cases indicate how widow remarriages required tremendous heroism on the part of parties. They also indicate the nature of forms of opposition which such marriage evoked. They also reveal the tremendous hold of old, traditional values and institutions over groups and individuals who were otherwise adapting themselves to modern political, economic and educational milieu generated during 19th century.

After nearly seventeen years, a party was organised in the widow remarriage hall at Bombay in 1888 to honour Miss Manning, a famous social and educational reformer of England. In this meeting a number of couples formed as a result of widow remarriages were called and introduced to Miss Manning. The speech delivered by Mr. Kabraji, introducing these couples and the background of struggles these couples had to make for performing their marriages provides valuable information about the growth of widow remarriage in the Bombay Presidency, particularly in Bombay and Gujarat upto that period. As mentioned in that speech, after the marriage of Madhavdas there was a record of 21 widow remarriages among Gujarati Hindus and five or six marriages remained unrecorded. Similarly there were 21 widow remarriages among Maharashtrian Hindus. It was noted that the lead in widow

remarriages was taken by Baniyas in Gujarat, while the lead in the Maharashtra it was taken by Brahmins.¹³¹

3) The third aspect of the problem lay in the fact that social reformers had to take various bold measures to protect the couples and their friends from the harassments from the conservative forces. Police protection, litigation, special acts of rescuing the parties from being harassed^{or} beaten, and also efforts to minimise the damages done to them due to economic and other types of boycotts organized by opposition elements, all these and other measures had to be adopted to protect the persons who wanted to marry in this way as well as the sympathisers who tried to cooperate in such ventures. In fact every widow remarriage was a gatha of such heroic resistance against conservative forces.

This in brief was the development of the movement of widow remarriages in Gujarat during the 19th century. Though a phenomenon which touched only the upper castes in Gujarat, its significance lay in the fact that it was being organised on a rational humanitarian principle based on the new feeling of sympathy for widows.

Having delineated the changes in the position of women as revealed in Education, Child Marriage and Infanticide and Waiwe Widow Remarriage, we will now observe in brief the changes that took place in the position of women in other spheres of life.

Social reformers, in the first place, tried to combat some of the social evils like public demonstration in form of breast-beating after the death of a person, eliminating of the custom of tonsure, and other defiling customs in connection with widows, and the crusade against the right of first night by the Vaishnava priests.¹³²

Economic changes

Regarding the change in economic status in the life of women, we can observe the following changes that emerged during 19th century.

1. A section of the working women now take to wage-work in the ginning and other factory works.^{133*}
2. A very small section of the upper caste ladies either wives of the teachers, widows or other trained individuals now slowly come out for outdoor jobs based on fixed salaries.
3. Wives of the handicraftsmen continued to help their husbands in various activities such as pot-making, rice pounding, oil-pressing and such others.¹³⁴ In cases of ruined artisans, sometimes the female members continued the hereditary craft while the male members went for other jobs, e.g., production of Bandhani (knot dyeing) sarees which was a specialized craft of certain craftsmen in Pethapur (a town in Ahmedabad district) was continued to be plied by the women members of that community, after the males had left for alternative occupations due to decrease of demand of their cloth.¹³⁵
4. As mentioned earlier, handspinning was always done in the families as a part of daily family occupation. Generally threads were given to weavers, who prepared cloth out of these spun-threads provided by the families on the basis of customary regularities. As mentioned by a writer of the History of Broach, excepting the women of Brahmins, Khatris and Baniyas, women of all other castes, who could secure cotton from their farms or according to customary dues, carried on spinning activities at home.

*In the 1889, in the 8 cotton textile factories of Gujarat, out of 5981 total workers nearly 758 were women. (Information of Cotton Statistics of Moffussils for the year ending 1889, Government of Bombay, pp.20-21).

The writer of the monograph on cotton informs that in Kaira even women of Patidar, Baniya and Brahmin castes were spinning cotton.¹³⁶ During the 19th century with the ruination of weavers and the growing need for cotton by traders, a new phenomena occurred. The trading classes slowly purchased or secured in lieu of their loans the spun cotton from the women members of the various castes. Women of the families of various castes who were earning their livelihood by spinning were slowly being brought in the orbit of direct market. However, it should be remembered that this phenomena did not expand into a full-fledged new opportunity or employment, because with the introduction of spinning machines both in England and subsequently in Bombay and Ahmedabad the demand for spun threads declined, thus affecting the occupation of women at home. Here we note this phenomena to indicate how some of the home-made goods were slowly being brought into the orbit of market, thus linking the women, working in home, without going out, with wider exchange relations.

Barring these four changes in occupational fields, the economic position remained the same during the 19th century. The women of the cultivating and artisan classes carried on their economic and domestic work at family level by helping their husbands in the same way as of old and the women of the higher castes, who could not keep servants performed their domestic duties as ^{of} old. By the end of 19th century, such activities like grinding and cleaning the corn-grinding, soap making, oil making, washing clothes and a number of others, which were subsequently to be taken over, particularly in wealthy and middle class families in urban areas by outdoor specialized factories or associations and supplied in the market on payment of money were still carried on in the house, mainly by women.

In short, in the field of economic activities, the distinct change which we find with regard to women is only at two levels, the women coming

out as wage-workers in ginning and other factories or other constructional activities and secondly a very small section of the upper caste women taking to service in the form of teachers, nurses and others. These two new modes of occupational activities gain growing prominence in the twentieth century and create numerous problems like hours of work, equal payment of work, proper conditions for work for the women special amenities and considerations of women employees etc.

The growing freedom of participating in wider life

Another aspect of the change in the position of women, though basically affecting upper and middle class urban women, was revealed in the fact that women started going out of their homes singly or in company of their males to participate in some wider activities. As is well known, women particularly of higher castes, were permitted to go out only for religious functions like ^{listening to} Katha Akhyanas or to attend to temples or religious festivals, in pre-British Gujarat. In 19th century, the mobility of women increases. Physical movements as a result of growth of means of transport, as well as the needs of travelling arising out of the needs of education, services and professions of the husbands increased in 19th century. Further the emergence of numerous outdoor political, social and cultural activities also stimulated women to come out of home.

Narnad makes note of this new trend in the following manner. "Some women have started going with their husbands to listen to lectures and attend public meetings, sometimes they shake hands with others and some women, alone or in company of their husbands go for walk near Band stand, in Bombay".¹³⁷ Similarly Dalpatram also refers to comparative freedom enjoyed by women of Bombay.¹³⁸

A section of women in urban areas, thus started coming out either to attend meetings, listen to lectures, to enjoy dramatic and other performances,

to provide hero's welcome to some political leaders. Girls began going to schools and colleges under direct or indirect opposition of the orthodox sections. These and others revealed the emergence of a new type of freedom of movement and wider participation by women in 19th century Gujarat.

Another aspect of the ~~following~~ growing change in the status of women is revealed by the rise of association of women themselves like a Club for women in Ahmedabad started in 1887, or an institution for women established by Bholanath Sarabhai under the auspices of Gujarat Branch of Native Indian Association, and special journals for women like "Streeboth" run by K. Kabraji, and 'Priyamvada' run by Manilal Nabhoobhai were also coming up.

Of course, we should remember that all these changes were essentially affecting a small section of the upper caste ladies, belonging to the groups who were taking to modern political, educational and economic set up. However the fact that such new trends emerged is noteworthy and is indicative as straws revealing the direction in which the new wind was blowing.

Concluding observations

We will now conclude our observation on the change that occurred in the status of women.

As revealed in our survey, the some change with regard to education, child and widow remarriage as well as mobility had taken place in Gujarati society in the position of women. However it can be stated with confidence that the most fundamental change that took place was the change in the attitude towards women, which emerged among the leading intellectuals of the 19th century. This attitude can be summed up as rational, secular

and humanistic attitude towards women. The misfortunes of women were not considered as a product of a Kali Yug or divinely dispensed, but this worldly and a product of social circumstances.¹³⁹ Secondly woman was now viewed as a human being with her own personality requiring adequate training, facilities and opportunities to develop herself. Thus humanistic approach was at the root of all efforts to elevate her position in society. Thirdly, her position, problems and disabilities were now viewed rationally in the context of social improvement.

Many of the reformers described women as equal to men. Dalpatram remarked that "boy and girl, both are human beings", and therefore should be given equal opportunities for development. At one stage a sober Dalpatram also loses temper and remarks: "I am writing in brief. The position of women in Gujarat is worse than that of American slaves," hence he says, "unless women are elevated society is not likely to improve."¹⁴⁰ Poet Narmad also was a very staunch supporter of the woman's right to equal status. He says that "Woman is a slave of man is a wrong conception. It is also a wrong theory to claim that woman has no intelligence. He rebuts the argument that if women are educated they will be mis-directed. He then asks why education should be given to men? Women by birth are not inferior."¹⁴¹ In fact Narmad recommends nearly twenty measures to improve the status of woman.¹⁴² Similarly Govardhanram remarks about women, as follows: "Women are the very source of human happiness, one of the principal means of improvement of society, the centre of our domestic bliss and delight of the human heart."^{143*} Karsandas also voices the

*Govardhanram records one incident which revealed the growing independence of women. When the disease of cholera was rampant in Bombay, many of the friends of Govardhanram decided to send their wives. Govardhanram remarks, "till today the wives were obeying the commands of their husbands, but in this instance they point-blank refused and declared that they would stay in Bombay." (Gujarati Lekh Sangrah by G. Tripathi, p.117).

same equalitarian spirit when he says that woman has also got same natural impulse to see and visit new places. They must be given freedom to move about freely.¹⁴⁴ Similarly the notions that an educated lady will make a good housewife, or will provide a good background for child rearing were themselves indicative^{ive} of the new approach. Further, the new attitude towards widow, wherein she ought not to be treated as an ill-omen, as inauspicious, as a curse, but a human being suffering due to social circumstance, itself reveals how a new, qualitatively different approach towards the personality, status and role of woman in society was developing in the 19th century.

The emergence of this new approach towards the status of woman, which was the decisive element of change in 19th century Gujarat, and which further was responsible for a number of educational, legislative religious, social-reform and other movements to improve the status of woman which were achieved during the 19th century were very limited and were restricted to a small section of the urban women should not be denied. However, both the new attitudes and the small concrete beginnings in the improvement in the actual conditions of women, became the germs which blossomed into a constitution which juridically puts woman on par with man and which gave universal franchise to woman and further created conditions for carrying on struggles for eliminating other disabilities in the second half of the twentieth century. In this lies the crucial, qualitative significance of change that was ushered in in the status of ^{Women in} 19th century.

III

RISE OF VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS IN 19TH CENTURY GUJARAT

The emergence and growth of voluntary associations* is another indication of social change that was taking place in Gujarat in the 19th century.

*Association is described by Ogburn and Nimkoff as group organization concerned with specialized functions. It is an invention for organizing
contd.

Due to the emergence of a new polity, economy and education, we noticed that numerous interest groups had emerged. Further as a result of the new type of urban development, division of labour and specialization of functions also grew. For instance, we have already noticed that the industrial and commercial interests were being separated. Similarly imparting of education was also becoming a more specialized activity. In political field also, with the growing consciousness of demanding of political participation specialized associations began to grow. Thus in short, during the 19th century, as a result of the growth of complex activities necessitating specialized functioning, a climate for voluntary associations was being created.

During the pre-British period as we have pointed out the scope for such diversified activities was limited. Further caste system was a significant social institution which served as a community also. Most of the needs of the individuals were satisfied by the village community, the caste and the joint family. Further, caste taboos and limited means of

social activity. (A Handbook of Sociology by William Ogburn and Myer Nimkoff, 1947, pp. 365, 371). Moris Ginsberg defines association as "a group of individuals united for a specific purpose or purposes and held together by recognized or sanctioned modes of procedure and behaviour." (Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, Vols. 1-2, 1948, p.284). Poet Narmad who wrote one essay on "Advantages of forming associations" (incidentally this was the 1st real prose writing of the 19th century Gujarati literature) conceives of 'Association' (Mandali) as a group of four or more persons gather-to-gather and discuss with seriousness some fundamental problem on knowledge or history or ancient religious texts, and act according to the views given! In short for him any gathering for gossip was not association. It meant coming together, seriously thinking together, uniting together and acting together. (Junu Narma Gadya Narmadashankar, p.2). Similarly poet Dalpatram also visualizes association (he describes them as meetings - sabha) where lectures on any social reform topics are given and where in people join hands together to put in practice what they have preached. (Gujarati Hindu ani Sthiti, Dalpatram, pp.78, 77.)

communications gave very little opportunity ~~for~~ to the individual for uniting with other individuals on a voluntary basis for the satisfaction of special needs.

Here it may be mentioned that one important grouping in pre-British Gujarat which could approximate to voluntary association was Mahajan, a grouping of persons round a trade or craft. It tried to cut across castes, because it was a multi-caste organization.¹⁴⁵ But Mahajans may be distinguished from the modern voluntary associations by the following features.

1. The headship of a Mahajan was invariably hereditary.
2. They were governed by rigid customs.
3. They were not to be found in all the urban centres but only in some very important urban centres like Ahmedabad, Surat, or Cambay.¹⁴⁶

Another category of organizations which could appear similar modern voluntary associations were certain religious sects and groups where caste or community barrier was absent and persons subscribing to that particular religious grouping came together. The Swaminarayan sect, the Kabirpanthis, Shaktas, Ramanandis are illustrations of such groupings.¹⁴⁷ However these organizations also differ from modern voluntary associations. Individuals belonging to the religious sect may be of different castes or living at different places, the members had very little opportunity of coming together, physically or intellectually. Further social control was exercised through rigid customary means. Under such circumstances, we may conclude that just as multiplication of voluntary association is linked up with the modern social life in other countries,¹⁴⁸ So was the case in Gujarat also.

Many of the thinkers of the 19th century and even of 20th century believed that in the 19th century, along with English education, and the British political rule, associations inspired by the British and later on started by the natives were the chief forces of reform in Gujarati society. Actually there was a mushroom growth of associations in the 19th century.¹⁴⁹ The main characteristics of the associations during 19th century, which were indicative of the new society, were^{the} following:

- i) Voluntary membership around specialized interest.
- ii) Fixed rules in matters of internal working of the association.

Before we describe the growth of different associations we may mention that it is very difficult to get data regarding all the associations that emerged during the last century. The original records of a large number of associations are hardly available. Existence of number of associations can be inferred from the references made in biographies of important persons or histories of certain towns. Many a times we come across names of the associations but details are not available. Because of these inherent difficulties we will confine ourselves to the general description of the nature and types of associations, taking certain important associations as illustrations.

Bombay Native Education Society

It is a well-known fact that the first effort at building up voluntary associations was made by the Christian missionaries.¹⁵⁰ In 1815 when a "Society for promoting the education of the poor within the Government of Bombay was established it was the first association in the whole of India, which was supported by voluntary contributions.¹⁵¹ The association was later on rechristened as Bombay Native Education Society and it was the pioneer organization which introduced modern education and

also which helped in creating new literature in the form of textbooks for the new literates.*

Another association which deserves to be noted is the 'Param Hansa Mandali' which was established in 1840 at Bombay.^{152**} The imminent impact of western culture, the newly educated group of youths, the iconoclastic attitude of the angry youngmen were all very well reflected in the regulations of this association. It was a secret organization, the main aim of which was to oppose idolatry, accept fatherhood of god and brotherhood of man, and on the foundation of universal love to oppose all distinctions in the Hindu society. Feeling that the movement to abolish caste distinctions would provoke great opposition from the conservative forces, the activities of the association were kept secret. Even Muslims were included as members. A regular feature of its meetings were to partake jointly a piece of bread prepared by a non-Hindu and thus break the rules of the castes regarding the food taboo. This association was supporting widow remarriage also. This association must have been functioning till 1860, because Narmad refers to the assistance given by this association in the performance of the 1st widow remarriage.¹⁵³

Manav Dharma Sabha

One of the most notable voluntary associations of Gujarat and the first of its kind, was the Manav Dharma Sabha established at Surat by the

*A detailed discussion of this association has been done in ~~the~~ Chapter VI.

**About the exact date of origin of this association, there is a very great difference of opinion. Mr. Piyolkar, the biographer of Dadoba Pandurang, believes that it must have been established in 1850. (Forbes Gujarati Sabha quarterly, 1945, April-September, pp. 27, 28, 29; also refer to Gujarat Darshan, May¹⁹⁴⁵ Special issue, pp. 101-103).

zealous effort of Durgaram Mehtaji in 1844. In Surat at that time, there were five prominent persons,* Durgaram Mehtaji, Dadoba Pandurang, Dalpatram Master, Dinmanishankar Shastri and Damodardas¹⁵⁴. Before this group started the Manav Dharma Sabha they had started an association for spreading of books known as 'Pustak Prasarak Mandal', and had brought the first native press in Gujarat. The abovementioned association was called Manav Dharma Sabha because it was their belief that there is only one religion after for all men, or in other words, this was the association which would indicate the real duty of man. Therefore the aims of the association were to propagate real duty of man, as a human being, to abolish the caste distinctions, to encourage widow-remarriage, to terminate idol worship and to expose the superstitions of the times.¹⁵⁵ The basic procedure of the association was to assemble together, and some persons would put questions to the organizers and more particularly, Durgaram and in answer to the query exposition of his views was made. The Sabha came into ~~exis~~ prominence when it organized an exposure campaign of the Black Magic and superstition as they were prevailing at that time. The Sabha issued a handbill on November 23, 1844, where a challenge was given to any practitioner of magic or medicine man to prove the veracity of magic in a public meeting, and claim a prize of Rs.20. The Sabha assembled for this purpose on the 1st of December when nearly 2000 people had come, but none came forward to prove the correctness of such practices. Some few more meetings were held, but as the magicians were unable to prove their case they began to attack Durgaram. Of course he was saved.¹⁵⁶

*As the names of all these five persons started with the word 'D' they were nick-named as the group of 5 Ds (Dadas).

The significant point about this association was that it was composed of all communities, Gujarati, Maharashtrian and Parsis. Further though it was primarily an organization for propagating a true religion of mankind, it discussed not only social matters but political issues like salt tax, role of the British rule and such other subjects.

The Gujarat Vernacular Society*

This was the organization which was started in 1848 principally with the efforts of Alexander Forbes who was appointed as an Assistant Judge in Ahmedabad. The main aims of the association were to collect all the available vernacular books and to prepare original and translation works, for newly emerging schools. This association was a pioneer in many respects. It started the first periodical called 'Vartaman'. It also sponsored a library** and it established the first girls' school in Ahmedabad. The association was well known for the spread of liberal thought through various educational and propaganda activities. It had published books on varieties of subjects. The periodical 'Buddhiprakash' was started in 1854, but it was clearly declared that no discussion on political or religious problems will be encouraged.¹⁵⁷ One important feature of this association was that as it had established its mark for spreading of education, it received different kinds of funds from various donors. Further in the initial stages when, caste associations had not sprung up, certain enlightened persons of particular castes invested authority to this insti-

*The association is still functioning though under a different name—Gujarat Vidya Sabha.

**When the Donor Sheth Hemabhai Vakhatchand gave money for this library, the poet Dalpatram had remarked, "This act of Hemabhai is more humanitarian than even building a resting house, because this library would be utilized by thousands of people." (Quoted in Gujarat Vernacular Society no Itihasa, Pt. I by H. Parekh, p.26)

tution for the management of charities to be given in a particular caste. The same Mr. Forbes, when posted at Surat, established 'The Surat Literary Society' in 1850, and this association was responsible for starting the Andrews' Library at Surat. The object of this organization was also to spread liberal thought in Surat.

Buddhivardhak Sabha

Along with these organizations which emerged in the 1st half of the 19th century, it would be relevant to refer to Buddhivardhak Sabha (An association to enhance intellect). The history of this association is very interesting. In 1847, the Students' Literary and Scientific Society was established in which Dadabhai Naoroji, Prof. Patton and others were actively associated. In order to encourage participation of the natives, two separate associations were started known as Gujarati Gnan Prasarak Mandali and Marathi Gnan Prasarak Mandali. The first president of the former association was Ranchoddas Zaveri, the pioneer of modern education in Gujarat. This association published one magazine and started some schools for girls. By and by it was found that the advantage of the Gujarati gnan prasarak mandali was taken more by Parsis. So in 1851, 'Buddhivardhak Hindu Sabha' was started. It is interesting to note that during the same year, poet Narmad along with some few friends launched an association with an identical name called 'Buddhivardhak Sabha' for the cultivation of intellect amongst the youth (Juvan Purushoni Anyonaya Buddhivardhak Sabha). In a very short time, both these associations were merged together.¹⁵⁸ This association established schools for girls, and also organized lectures, and debates on various social reform topics, like immoral practices, patriotism, duties of rich towards poor, foreign travel, widow remarriage and such others. Further, this association also ran one periodical called, "Buddhivardhak Granth". One of the important

clauses of this association was "not to criticise the extant political rule and not to organize any lectures on religion."¹⁵⁹ Many of the social reformers of Bombay were associated with this organization.

Having described the history of some of the important pioneer organizations we will now describe the chief categories of associations which grew round various interests.

Educational Association

As we observed earlier in this chapter, some of the pioneering associations were educational associations. We also indicated in the chapter VI ^{on} ~~as~~ the growth of education in the 19th century, a number of associations, dedicated to the object of spreading education developed in Gujarat. We need not repeat them ~~here~~. We may mention here that educational associations took on three major forms:

- i) Associations to sponsor educational activities like schools and associations publishing books and granting scholarships and prizes to attract students to education.
- ii) Educational institutions like schools and technical institutes.
- iii) Associations interested in publishing books, pamphlets and other printed materials as well as associations like libraries and reading rooms.

Further even some of the social reform, religious reform and caste reform associations also carried on educational activities.

We may here refer to a new type of association which emerged in the 19th century called Teacher's Society* where teachers collected to discuss

*Here we may mention that beginnings of similar associations of the professionals like pleaders along with teachers also were made. To illustrate a Pleaders' Association was found during this period.

their own problems. Unfortunately we do not get adequate material about associations which might have developed under the same impulse at number of places.

Apart from the numerous schools which were started in different parts of Gujarat we get references of some of the following educational and research associations like Vidyabhyasak Mandal (an Association to gain knowledge) in 1851 in Ahmedabad to encourage students to develop their faculties in thinking, writing and debating. The previously mentioned Gujarati Gnan Prasarak^{Mandali}, Buddhivardhak Sabha, Gnanechhu Hindu Sabha, Friendly Society and Forbes' Gujarati Sabha in Bombay*, were devoting themselves to encourage educational activities. We may also mention that in Ahmedabad in 1898, a "Social and Literary Association" was started which was later on became the Gujarat Sahitya Sabha (Gujarat~~y~~ Literary Conference).

Social Reform Associations

In Gujarat, the initial associations were round problems affecting the social customs and traditions of the society. Though Manav Dharmasabha, Buddhivardhak Sabha and Gujarat Vernacular Society were paying attention to the evils of social customs, it was felt necessary to organise special

*Here we may mention that Forbes Gujarati Sabha was formerly named as 'Gujarat Sabha' in 1865, March and Mr. A. Forbes was the first President. The very next year, due to the sudden demise of Mr. Forbes, the same association was christened as Forbes Gujarati Sabha. The aims of the association were as follows:

- i) to collect the old manuscripts with regard to Gujarat or written in Gujarati language, and if useful, to publish them and preserve them;
- and ii) it also aimed at translating relevant literature from English and other languages and encourage publication of original writings in Gujarat. It should be noted that even today it is one of the rare treasure houses for Gujarati books. It will be celebrating its centenary in 1965. (Diamond Jubilee issue of Forbes~~y~~ Gujarati Sabha, pp.3-4).

associations for eradicating social evils. The Widow Remarriage Association, to encourage and arrange for widow remarriage, was established in 1868. In 1871, the Anti-Child Marriage Association was started.

In 1887, with the zealous efforts of Mr. M.G. Ranade, a National Social Reform Association was established in Bombay and its main emphasis was encouraging social reform activities on an all India scale, creating a cadre of social workers to put in practice the reforms and to provide a centralized organization to coordinate the local activities of social reform organizations. Under the auspices of this association, various provincial associations were also started. In Gujarat also the "Gujarat Sansar Sudhara Samaj" was established, which tried to coordinate social reform activities of the Northern Division. Some of the important social problems taken up by the National Social Conference were as follows:

(i) To make efforts for encouragement of woman's education; (ii) To deliberate over the problem of bigamy; (iii) To deliberate over the problem of ban on foreign travel; (iv) Widow Remarriage; (v) Prohibition, (vi) Merging of sub-castes; (vii) Reduction of customary expenditure; (viii) Raising of the age of marriage; (ix) Problem of reconversion of the Hindus; and (x) Untouchability.¹⁶⁰

There was one anti-drink association in Surat known as Parhejgar Mandali in which Mahipatram took active part. In Ahmedabad there was an anti-drink association of which Ranchhodlal Chhotalal was the President and this association tried to organize meetings to propagate the evils of drinking liquor. Here it is necessary to mention that some of the educational and religious reform associations were also conducting social reform activities. Even newly formed caste associations also were essentially carrying on social reform though restricted to their own castes.

Caste associations

One of the significant group of association which emerged in the latter half of the 19th century and which grew in number and significance in the 20th century centered round caste programmes.

With the growth of the new ideology of reforming society through castes, these associations got a great spur. As we observed in the section on changes in the caste system, these associations were basically different from the old caste panchayats. These new caste associations, tried to reform the caste from within.* A mushroom growth of associations by castes and sub-castes such as Brahmakhatri, Audichya Brahmin, Nagar Brahmin, Jains, Anavil Brahmin, Patidars and a host of others emerged.¹⁶¹ This was the glaring feature of the last twenty years of the 19th century. These caste associations, tried to reform the internal organisation by decreasing expenditure at marriage and death occasions, limiting the customary monetary and other exchanges at the time of marriage, and assisting in the programme of education of caste people by providing books, scholarships and boarding

*We may also mention that along with reforming the caste, associations to preserve its traditional matrix were also attempted. Manial Nabhoobhai for instance started 'A Swa Sudharak Mandali' (an Association to reform oneself) which was later on transformed into Sathodra Gnati Shubhecchak Sabha of Nadiad. The fundamental objects of this association were: To perform daily religious ceremony, to pray to god, to prevent inter-dining and to keep separate services for males and females in the caste dinners. Later on this association also decided to prevent people from taking exorbitant bride-prices and further to dissuade them from organising dinners after the death of a person. (Jayanti Vyakhyano, ed. by Trivedi Navalram, 1940, p.186)

It is interesting to note that some caste associations in the urban centres like Bombay were started because certain difficulties were cropping up in the urban centres. Govardhanram for instance observed that there was one Nagar student who had come to Bombay for giving examination, and in order to be free from the botheration of cooking at the time of examination he was just carrying on by eating boiled potatoes. Govardhanram felt that some arrangement by which difficulties about dinner faced by these students should be made, and 'Nagar Club' came into existence. (Sjt. Govardhanram by Pandya Kantilal, p.243).

houses for student community. These associations further run their own caste journals and organised conventions and conferences of caste or sub-castes. Some caste organizations undertook census collection of their castes. Further some of the caste associations also suggested dovetailing of marriage and such other expenditure to the educational activities of the caste.¹⁶²

Religious reform association

In Gujarat there were various religious sects like Vallabhacharya, Kabir, Dadu, Swaminarayan, Shaiva and many others. The Brahmins were predominantly Shaivites,¹⁶³ the Baniyas, Lohanas and Bhatia had predilection for the Vaishnava religion.¹⁶⁴ Swaminarayan religious sect which originated in the 18th century but flowered in the 19th century was more in the nature of a reformist religious sect which wanted to do away with the corruption associated with the Vaishnava religion. It was felt by the leaders to this sect that much of the corruption and evil practices arose out of the freedom of contact between male and the female devotees. In order to eliminate this, they declared that none of Swaminarayan Sadhus should talk with women, send messages to women, should even look at women and special arrangements were made for male and female devotees to reach the temple. The five important principles which they were constrained to follow were not to drink, intoxicants, not to eat meat, not to practise robbery, not to practise adultery and not to forcibly convert persons. The Swaminarayan Sadhus had tremendous influence amongst Muslims, Koonbis, Kolis, Cobblers, Tailors and such castes which were considered inferior in society. This sect tried to reform the society by prohibiting animal sacrifices, infanticide, suttee, eliminate superstition and by accepting the non-Hindus and Shudra caste persons in its fold.¹⁶⁵

Among the modern religious reform associations which emerged in the 19th century along with Param Hansa Sabha and the Manav Dharma Sabha, and which was more particularly religious in content and which had arisen as a reaction to the British influence was Prathna Samaj. In 1858, in order to make a search for true religion, to draw the attention of the youths towards religion, and encourage proper moral conduct, a "Dharma Sabha" was established in Ahmedabad. Not much work was done by this association excepting publication of some devotional (prāṭhna) songs. Bholanath Sarabhai was the active mind behind this organisation; he was actively assisted by Ranchhodlal Chottalal.¹⁶⁶

There are controversial opinions with regard to origin of Prāṭhna Samaj in Ahmedabad. In one of the reports, it is mentioned that Dharma Sabha was transformed into Prāṭhna Samaj in 1871 at Ahmedabad. The Gazetteer's reports, "When people assembled on 17th December 1871, to pray for the quick recovery of Prince of Wales, and at that time some of them decided to meet on every Sunday and to pray to the Father of all human beings."¹⁶⁷ The Prāṭhna Samaj was open to all including Muslims, Christians, Parsis, but not to untouchables. The real emphasis was praying to the omnipotent god, without any need of idol, or medium. It was felt that Prathna Samaj had arisen as a result of association with Satyendra-nath Tagore, who was sometime, a District Judge in Ahmedabad, and who himself was a Brahmo Samajist. The main difference between the two Samajs is that the latter (Brahmosamaj) actively supported social reform activities. While Prathna Samaj was purely a religious body, its leaders like Bholanath Sarabhai, Mahipatram, Lalshanker and Ramanbhai were all leaders of the social reform movement. In Bombay Narmadashankar was the force behind establishing 'Tatva Shodhak Sabha' in 1860. The main aim of this organi-

sation was to eliminate superstition, and to make a zealous effort for the search after real truth. This association worked for 4 years but later on it was defunct.¹⁶⁸

In 1875, the Arya Samaj was established in Bombay by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, with the declared aim to revive the true Hindu religion, and to protect Hindu religion from other fissiparous tendencies. Swami was very aggressive in opposing the rituals, and he was a zealous propagandist of enforcement of Vedic texts. Of course, Arya Samaj had very little influence in Gujarat at that time.

Narmadashankar sums up the religious reform movement very succinctly and says that in the last 30 years (1850-1880) the religious reform movement in Gujarat had propagated monotheism, subordination of rituals, and disregard towards various sectarian differences.¹⁶⁹

Economic associations

In chapter I, we have referred in detail to one economic association which was widely prevalent in pre-British Gujarat, viz., the Mahajans. As seen before, the Mahajans were confined to higher and advanced category of trade or craft. In the latter half of the 19th century we find that economic associations around a single economic activity also spring up.

The institution of "Panjrapole" which tried to help the maintenance of the cattle wealth of the country was attached to most of the trading groups in the pre-British Gujarat and the same was continued in the British era also.¹⁷⁰

The ruination of industry at the hands of the British manufacturers, called for immediate attention after 1870, when on the one hand the artificially created bubble of prosperity in the share mania phase was shattered

and further the increase in imported manufactured goods hit hard the indigenous products. In the initial stages in economic field also, the leaders were not against the introduction of machine-made goods nor were they against the British manufacturers, because they felt that the solution to the economic misery lay only in going to foreign countries, learning the art of machine working and bringing them to India. But as soon as efforts were being made in this direction the British Imperial interests began to impose restrictions on the free economic development and therefore associations to encourage indigenous crafts were established. Associations like Swadesh Udyam Vardhak Subha (Association to enhance the indigenous craft) were established in Rajkot, Ahmedabad, Surat, Broach, Kandala and others. The main aim of these associations was to propagate for indigenous industries, to prevent people from purchasing foreign goods, to initiate explanatory campaign for ruination of indigenous crafts were ruined and to make efforts to take assistance of traders, moneylenders in seeing that such crafts are encouraged and given assistance.¹⁷¹

Further associations connected with trade and finance also developed.* The Bombay Piecegoods Merchants Mahajan, Ahmedabad Millowners' Association, Panchkoova Cloth Merchant Association, Ahmedabad, and Hindustani Merchants' Commission Agents' Association, and the Chamber of Commerce in Bombay were some of the important economic associations formed in this period. Thus all efforts were made to channelise groups of people round certain specific economic interests, and as this specialization grew, number of associations also increased.

*Though the European merchants and agents were establishing associations to further their own trade even before 1850, the Gujaratis started parallel organisations only in the second half of the 19th century.

We may add here that the limited companies such as joint-stock companies, banks, insurance companies, all may come under the category of voluntary associations, because they are deliberate, voluntary efforts to pursue a particular interest.

Political associations

The first effort to start a political organization was made in 1852 by forming a Bombay Association in Bombay.¹⁷² In the initial stages people and intelligentsia particularly were awe-stricken with the advantages of the British rule, that they did not envisage starting of political associations to press for their political rights like representation, freedom of speech, meeting, etc. Dadabhai Naoroji, a moving spirit behind this association, and others draw up petitions on behalf of Indians for enlightened system of government, for admission of Indians into the civil service and even the legislative councils. The Association functioned for some time but not regularly. Stray instances of resistance of the autocratic rule of the British rule did occur such as movement against salt-tax in 1847 in Surat or against the introduction of new weights and measures; but democratic organization in politics was not yet coming. After the revolt of 1857, and later on when discriminatory policies of the British were felt by the Indians, when the bureaucratic authoritarian rule of the administrative heads was exasperating the Indians, and when anti-social acts such as Press Act and Arms Act were passed that people began to organise themselves on the political issues.

As mentioned above, in the initial phases, the educational and such other organisations themselves were against discussing any political item in the association. It has been mentioned that that there was a clause prohibiting controversial discussions on religious and political issues,

in the rules of Buddhivardhak Sabha and Narmad had tried to put a fight for removing this prohibition, but he did not succeed. Even the declared aim of the Buddhiprakash, the mouth-piece of Gujarat Vernacular Society, was to discuss only the educational and scientific subjects and not to debble in political or religious controversies. But this isolationist policy could not last in the phase of racial, economic and political discrimination, resulting in the hardships of the people.

In October 1871, some of the principal inhabitants of Surat formed themselves into an association called the 'Surat Praja Samaj', the object of this association was to watch the interests and if necessary to represent to Government the views of the people of the district.¹⁷³ In the same year in Broach also some leaders got together and started an organisation called the 'Association to terminate Misery' (Dukh Nivaran Mandali). The object of this association was to bring "to the notice of government such ~~sub~~ subjects as stood in need of representations."¹⁷⁴ In 1875 there were 57 members on the roll. The subjects on which the members had sent petitions to the Government were, municipal house tax, the non-agricultural cess, the re-establishment of Assistant District Judges' Court in Broach and the establishment of Municipal Act of 1873. It has been mentioned that active part in this association was taken by the pleaders of Broach. In Ahmedabad also the Ahmedabad Association to discuss political matters was formed. In 1877 a 'Sharda Pujak Mandali' was started in Surat by Iccharam Suryaram for political awakening of the people Desai, which was running the famous periodical 'Swatantrata'.¹⁷⁵ With the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885, political consciousness began to increase.* Further we might also remember here that an indirect

*In England in 1866, East India Association was established with the idea of "acquainting the British public and the British Government with matters pertaining to the East Indies." (Dadabhai Naoroji by Masani, R.P., 1960, p.43)

impetus was given to the growth of associations by the Council Act of 1892 when indirect principle of representation through organisations was accepted by the Government for the legislatures.

After the Act of 1852, in most of the towns, municipal government was introduced. This organization was also voluntary, and oriented to the definite object of improving the local conditions by local efforts. The municipal authorities undertook the activities which were beneficial to the entire population of the city and did not organise activities for a limited small group.

Cultural Association

Another group of associations which emerged in Gujarat during the 19th century had as its objective the satisfaction of recreational and cultural needs of the people. In this respect we must remember that most of the recreational needs in the pre-British Society were provided by caste and religious groups. For instance the caste used to organise dinners, meetings, and picnics. The entertainment was provided in the form of 'Katha' and 'Akhyans'. The performance of dramatics was done by a community called 'Targalas' who used to perform Bhavais.

In the 19th century, a special organizations for performing dramas were started. The first such organization was started in Bombay in 1853 known as the Parsi Dramatic Society in which Dadabhai Naoroji and Dr. Bhau Darji were associated.¹⁷⁶ The role of Parsis in developing the dramatic associations was very significant in Bombay. From 1868 dramas written by Gujarati authors had also begun to be staged; and dramas written by Dalpatram, Narmad and Ranchodbhai Udairam were performed. In 1875 there was one association called 'Natak Uthejak Mandali' wherein Hindus were predominant. From 1880 many dramatic associations like Gujarati Natak Mandali, Morbi Arya Subodhak

Natak Mandali, Dwarka Nautam Natak Mandali, Vankaner Arya Hit Vardhak Natak Company, Surat Gujarati Natak Mandali and so many others were started.

The drama as a form of entertainment was becoming popular. As mentioned before Narmad records that women were also visiting the theatres with their husbands.¹⁷⁷ Navalram while associating the prevalence of dramatic performances with modern advanced society, no doubt refers to the mushroom growth of such dramatic companies, performing dramas of good and bad qualities and diverting the attention of the youth from studies to such entertainments.¹⁷⁸

Along with such dramatic companies (which were many a times based on the principle of limited liability) a few associations like Manoranjak Sabha (Association for entertainment) at Jamnagar, a gymnastic association at Ahmedabad, a Honey Club started by Govardhanram were instances of cultural association.

Evaluation of the role of Voluntary Associations

Having described the various types of voluntary associations which emerged in the 19th century, we shall point out their features.

1) As mentioned before, the growth of associations is a feature of the modern society. More diverse the life, greater is the necessity for such voluntary groupings. Thus we find that most of the associations were concentrated in urban centres such as Bombay, Ahmedabad, Surat, Broach and Nadiad.

2) The existence of different types of associations point out that with the growing specialized interests, the former omnibus associations satisfying the various needs of producing and marketing of goods, supplying money and material could not be possible in a complex society. Separate associations, for each different function were necessary. Therefore we may come across insurance companies

banks, joint-stock companies, millowners' association, grain dealers' association, chamber of commerce and many others. In a similar manner, problems connected with child marriage and of widow remarriage were entirely different, and therefore in spite of the fact that these were facets of social reform activities, they required special associations for each purpose.

3) As the membership of these associations is voluntary it increases the range of relationships an individual enters in. The characteristic of this membership was that it was outside the immediate relations such as family, caste and village. In pre-British Gujarat the life of a person was confined within a small caste or village. Due to the growth of these associations in the 19th century, persons of different castes and communities began to come together. It is due to this fact that we may find in 19th century persons of different castes and communities began to come together. It is due to this fact that we may find Gujaratis, Maharashtrians, Parsis and Europeans, standing together to see that the widow remarriage is successfully performed or people of different castes join together to press for political demands.

4) Another significant feature which could be located is that the office-bearers of all these associations were non-hereditary. It might be a pure case of accident that Ramanbhai Nilkanth (son of Mahipatram) might be Secretary of the Prarthana Samaja where his father was also occupying the same post. Similarly Krishnalal Zaveri, a grandson of Ranchhodlal, is accidentally president of Buddhivardhak Sabha. Even in the reformed caste associations, the office-bearers were not hereditarily placed.

5) The associational life prescribes a certain pattern of life for the member which may be akin to the traditional concepts or may not be.

This feature could be significantly located in the associations which were motivated with the idea to reform the society. The anti-child marriage association required a specific pledge from members to perform the marriage ceremony of his children at a particular age or Parmhansa Mandali may require as a preliminary condition to retain membership, the need to eat a piece of bread, irrespective of caste or religious taboos. Therefore in the initial stages of these associations, a very great emphasis was put on the actual practices of particularly the reformers. In fact the fortunes of association were dependent upon the identity between preachings and practices of the member.

Evaluation

Having mentioned the main feature of the associations which emerged in the 19th century we will now evaluate their role in social life.

1. In spite of the fact that the associations emerged and multiplied it should be noted that their number was extremely limited in the 19th century. Further, though we do not have access to the information which may point out the extent of membership of most of these associations, it may be safely affirmed that the membership of these associations was extremely limited. Here we may mention that the associations gained significance and influence not because of the size of the membership but due to the fact that prominent, influential persons were associated with them.

2. The second point to be remembered is that most of the associations were not located merely in urban centres but even there they touched only certain upper caste and newer status groups. Here we should remember that these associations were predominantly controlled by the members of certain upper castes of Gujarat such as Brahmins, Baniyas, Kayasthas, Brahmakhatris and others. This had another implications namely

that they generally crusaded for those problems which basically affected these upper castes. It is then no accident that even today the reforms remain confined to these upper castes in urban areas.

3. The fact that there were few associations indicates the relative underdevelopment of our economic, political, educational and cultural life. It is true that compared to pre-British period the life in Gujarat became more complex, but as we have pointed out in our other chapters the development of Gujarati society was relatively limited. The hold of traditional institutions was still powerful and that is borne out also by the fact of relative meagreness of these voluntary associations. Further we may also point out that the contradictions which were found in the profession and practices of the members of the associations also were indicative of the powerful hold of the traditional society. This dichotomy was further highlighted by the fact that a large number of leaders of the non-caste voluntary associations were also simultaneously the leaders of the caste reform associations.*

To conclude, we may point out that the emergence of voluntary associations in spite of the limitations and peculiar features indicated above, was a new phenomenon of the 19th century Gujarat and also prove in a limited manner that this society was experiencing transformation.

*It may be mentioned that D.B. Ambalal Sakarlal Desai, a vehement protagonist of swadeshi, and organizer of associations to encourage crafts (which were on non-caste basis) was actively connected with Brahmakshatriya Association. Similarly, R.B. Ranchodlal, an active member of his caste organization was also moving spirit behind the Millowners' Association. Dalpatram, Narmadashankar, Mahipatram and host of others who were active members of associations like 'Biddhivardhak Sabha' or 'Gujarat Vernacular Society' which were non-caste, non-communal, were also taking interest in their own caste organizations.

IV

RESUME

In this chapter we have analysed the nature of change in the social system of Gujarat in the 19th century. As we have summarised the nature of change in caste system, in position of woman and in the nature of associations in their respective sections, here we will briefly enumerate the changes that have occurred in the ^{total} social system of Gujarat.

1) The social system of Gujarati society was affected by the forces generated as a result of the new political rule. The change which occurred was predominantly qualitative rather than quantitative.

2) The traditional, sacred, approach towards the institutions such as caste, marriage and position of woman was being slowly replaced by modern and secular approach in which these institutions were considered not immutable.

3) Under the new extraneous forces as well as under the traditional background, social institutions in Gujarat were adjusting to the new situation in a peculiar manner. Caste, for instance, was slowly being transformed from community to association.

4) Efforts were made to elevate the status of woman in society. Though the results of the efforts were not very startling in the 19th century, still a change in the attitude towards woman's status in society could be noticed.

5) The emergence and growth of voluntary associations centering round various interests, was a novel feature of the social system of the 19th century Gujarat. It further indicated the widening range of relationships in Gujarati society.

In fine, it may be stated that a rival social system with institutions resting on modern liberal principles was emerging and was also trying to co-exist with the traditional social pattern.

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