

CHAPTER - II

The Gujarat and Baroda Scene**II.1 Social Reforms and Women Education in Gujarat****II.1.1 Social Reform in Gujarat**

Among social reformers of Gujarat who tried to improve position of women, mention may be made of Dalpatram, Mahipatrm, Ranchodlal, Durgaram, Narmad, Gordhan Tripathi, Indulal Yagnik, Dr. Sumant Mehta, Ramanbhai Nilkant, Anand shankar Dhruv, karsandas etc. They all realized the need of improving women's status by giving them education and also by removing their various restrictions.¹ The important issues pointed out by these 19th century social reformers were child marriage, denial of education to women, ban on widow remarriage female infanticide etc. which are described below separately.

Child marriage:

Though the custom of child marriage was rampant in 19th century Gujarat, a new awakening concerning its evils and a new desire to fight it took firm root during the last half of the 19th century which gained momentum during the beginning of twentieth century

¹ For details see Neera Desai, *Social Change in Gujarat*; Raval R. L. *Socio Religious Reform Movements in Gujarat during the nineteenth century*, New Delhi, 1987.

and continued to gain importance through out the century. All the important thinkers both of the reformist and the revivalist schools launched a crusade against this custom. They pointed out various bad effects of this custom such as interruption in education, lack of healthy progeny, ill-assorted marriage and harmful effects on the health of girls.²

The reformers sought to expose this evil through poems, plays and essays. The social reform associations organised essay competitions and debates on this problem. Further, to counteract the traditional opposition, Journals such as *Buddhiprakash* invoked *shastric* authorities and pointed out that even *shastras* said that girls could not be married without their consent. A girl was not ready for marriage till she was ten and a boy till he was fifteen, they declared. A concrete effort to fight this evil was the establishment of the Anti child marriage Association (*Balagna Nishedhak Mandali*) in 1871. Its members undertook to marry their children only after they reached the age of sixteen and that they would see to it that there would be a difference of five years between the age of the bride and the groom. It was claimed that three hundred persons became members of the Association. It conducted a periodical called *Bal Lagna Nishedhak*

² Desai Neera, *Social Change*, Ibid, p. 339.

Patrika. It is significant that its members struggled heroically to abide by the rules a herculean task during those days.³

Female Infanticide:-

This evil practice was not common among the Brahmins and Banias and was limited to certain Gujarati castes like the Jadejas, Rajputs and the Kanbis of Gujarat. The Jadejas related that a powerful Raja of their caste, who had a daughter of singular beauty and accomplishments, desired his Rajgor (domestic Brahman) to affiance her to a prince of desert and rank equal to her own. The Rajgor travelled over many countries without discovering a chief who possessed the requisite qualities, for where wealth and power were combined personal accomplishments and virtue were defective. In like manner, where advantages of the mind and the body were united, those of fortune and rank were wanting. The Rajgor returned and reported to the Prince that his mission had not proved successful. This intelligence gave the Raja much affliction and concern, as the Hindus reckon it to be the first duty of parents to provide suitable husbands for their daughters, and it was represented that they should pass the age of puberty without having been affianced and be under the necessity of living in a state of celibacy. The Raja, however, rejected, and strongly

³ Ibid, p. 340

reprobated every match for his daughter which he conceived inferior to her high rank and perfections. In this dilemma the Raja consulted his Rajgor, and the Brahman advised him to avoid the censure and disgrace which would attend the princess remaining unmarried, by having recourse to the desperate expedient of putting his daughter to death. The Raja was long adverse to this expedient, and remonstrated against the murder of a woman, which enormous as it is represented in the *shastras*, would be aggravated when committed on his own offspring. The Rajgor at length removed the Raja's scruples by consenting to load himself with the guilt, and to become in his own person responsible for all the consequences of the sin. Accordingly the princess was put to death and female infanticide was from that time practiced by the Jadejas.⁴

It is also said that some of the early Mussulman invaders of the Jadeja country, united policy to their arms, and sought to consolidate their interests in the country by demanding the daughters of the Rajas in marriage. The high spirited Jadejas would not brook the disgrace and pretended they did not preserve their daughter but fearful of the consequences and that force would be resorted to in order to obtain what was refused to entreaty, they listened to the advice of their

⁴ *Selection from the Records of the Bombay Government*, op. cit., p. 2.

Rajgors in this extremity, and deluded by the fictitious responsibility which they accepted, the practice of infanticide originated, and has since been confirmed.⁵

Mr. Duncan who was made Governor of Bombay in 1795 had early suspected the Rajputs of Kutch and Kathiawar of the crime of female infanticide and in 1804 Captain Seton, then on a political mission in Kutch, confirmed his suspicions.⁶

The tribe against whom the earliest efforts were made, and among whom the crime seemed to be most prevalent, were the Jadejas of Kutch and Kathiawar. Among them indeed it prevailed to so frightful an extent that Colonel Walker could, in 1808, only hear of five families who had preserved a daughter, although the tribe was populous.⁷

The ways in which these tribes put to death their female infants appear to have been various, but two were probably more generally adopted, viz.: 1) the Smearing of opium on the breast before giving it to the child, and 2) the drawing of the umbilical cord over the child's mouth to prevent respiration. Death was always caused in these or

⁵ Ibid, pp. 1-2.

⁶ Ibid, p. 5.

⁷ Ibid, p. 5.

other ways immediately after birth.⁸ The Patidars used to kill their girl babies either by starvation or by placing the child face downwards in a pan of milk.

In 1807, in accordance with an alliance with the Gaekwad, an expedition to settle the province of Kathiawar was undertaken by Major Walker, the Resident at Baroda; and this opportunity was taken advantage of to urge the Jadeja chiefs of the province to enter into an engagement to preserve their female offspring and that of their clan under penalty of expulsion from their caste and such punishment as the English and Gaekwad Governments should determine to inflict.⁹

During the years immediately following there was reason for supposing that this engagement was at least partially adhered to; but in 1812 the Jam of Nawanagar himself, the head of the Jadeja chiefs, was adjudged guilty of a breach, and Captain Carnac, calling him to account for this and other matters, obtained from him a fine of Rs.5,000. He was also required to enter into a fresh engagement.

From this time for several years the endeavours of Government were confined to the exertion of influence by the local officers to

⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

⁹ Ibid, p. 5.

induce the Jadejas to observe their written engagements, breaches of which were punishable with fine and loss of credit, while fulfilment of the same was to be encouraged with marked tokens of favour. The zeal of the local officers was meantime to be kept up by a system of annual reports.

In 1821 Government authorized the throwing of all fines levied on chiefs for other offences as well as for infanticide into a fund to be distributed in portions to female children preserved. This, however, seems to have escaped attention until 1825, when Government again drew captain Barnwall's attention to the matter.

Later on in the same year, the Gaekwad, when applied to, readily agreed to give up his share of the fines to the same purpose, and thus originated what has since been known under the name of the Infanticide Fund. It has been used to encourage and protect informers, to reward the preservation of female offspring, and to assist the indigent to marry their girls.

Thus matters remained until 1834, the success attained being very partial and delusive. In this year, however, Mr. Willoughby awakened fresh interest in the undertaking. He began by obtaining

returns of the Jadeja population from the chiefs, and suggested 1) the taking of a more accurate census in the following year; 2) that the chiefs be required to send half-yearly registers to births, betrothals, marriages and deaths each of his own clan; 3) that the annual report be made with greater regularity; 4) that a fresh proclamation be issued to all the chiefs to remind them of their engagements and warn them of the alertness of government; and 5) that a circular be sent to all the other Rajput tribes of Kathiawar, asking them to refuse to give their daughters in marriage to Jadejas except under a stipulation that the female issue of the marriage be preserved.

These measures were approved by Government and forthwith adopted. In the same year Thakore Surajee of Rajkot, was fined Rs.12,000 for a breach of his engagement, and security was taken from him for future compliance; other convictions followed and produced a wholesome effect. The first census was submitted to government on the 30th June 1837 and showed 2,743 males and 424 females living under 20 years of age. In 1841 Major Le Grand Jacob, in his annual report, urged on Government (1) the desirability of offering prizes for the best essay on female infanticide, and (2) the spread of education as a prevention of the crime. Both suggestions met with the approval of Government, though at first it was unwilling to sanction the use of the

fund for educational purposes. In 1843, to ensure greater accuracy in the census returns the censor was required to furnish the assistance of his wife in his inquiries.

The only remaining measure to chronicle was the establishment of the Educational Fund in 1847, formed by the voluntary contributions of the native chiefs, assisted by the grant of a lakh of rupees by Government from the Infanticide Fund. By these means a high class Vernacular school was opened at Rajkot, with branches at some of the capitals of the principal Native Chiefs. As a result of the measures now described, Colonel Lang was able in 1850 to report that the practice of infanticide had become almost entirely extinct in the province. The census for the year showed 7,353 males to 3,237 females and 288 boys to 278 girls born during the last twelve months. Since 1850 efforts have been mainly directed to the improvement of the annual census and statistical returns of births and deaths, though but little availing, endeavours had been made to limit the extravagant expenses attached to marriage. Such was the outline of the efforts Government had made to eradicate female infanticide in Kathiawar.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 5-7.

In Kutch the first effort was made by Colonel Walker in 1807, when he sought to induce the Rao, through his Minister, Futteh Mahomed, to enter into an engagement similar to that subscribed to by the Kathiawar chiefs; but he failed. Indeed, unavailing efforts were continued from time to time until 1819, when the conduct of Rao Bharmaljee, leading to his deposition by the British Government, afforded a favourable opportunity for interference.

The Jadeja Chiefs elected the infant son of Bhirmaljee to the throne, and appointed regency with the British Resident at its head. A treaty of alliance was then concluded with the Rao and his heirs, containing the following article: "His Highness the Rao, his heirs and successors, at the particular instance of the Honourable Company, engage to abolish in their own family the practice of infanticide; they also agree to join heartily with the Honourable company in abolishing the custom generally throughout the Bhaiyad of Kutch."¹¹

Another article of the same treaty required the Bhaiyad to enter into a written engagement to the above effect previous to the execution of the deed of guarantee in their favour, and specified that any breach

¹¹ Ibid, p. 8.

thereof shall be punished as determined upon jointly by the British Government and the Kutch Durbar.

In 1823, Mr. Gardiner, the Resident, was able to report that some success had attended these measures, but nothing further was done in the matter till 1834, when the Rao Desal, on coming of age, took the rule into his own hands. Government had bestowed much care on his education, and the result was gratifying. Years of slackness had weakened the binding force of the engagements taken in 1820; hence his first act was to take a fresh paper from the Bhaiyad, re-iterating their stipulation to abolish the crime, and agreeing to abide the full consequences if they did not.

In 1839 Captain Melville, the then Resident, was required to obtain a census of the Jadeja population of the province similar to that yearly taken in Kathiawar. This year also a case of conviction for the crime was held, and the defaulter fined.

A census was at first objected to by the chiefs, but in 1840, at the Rao's request they executed a deed, binding themselves, 1) to render annually a correct census; 2) to report all premature and still births; 3) to give early information of all cases of crime, and in default to submit

to a penalty; and 4) to allow all fines inflicted to constitute a fund in aid of the marriage of indigent Jadejas.

The first census was forwarded to Government in December 1840, and showed 4,912 males to 335 females of Jadeja origin.¹² In 1841 a proclamation was issued by the Rao to all tribes kindred to the Jadejas, requiring them likewise to abstain from the crime under penalty of severe punishment. Later on in the same year a case of crime was reported, and a conviction held, among the Hothi tribe, and they also were required to sign similar engagements.

In 1848, the Government suggested that the penalties breach of engagements should be made heavier. They had hitherto been so light as to be virtually nominal and evidently insufficiently deterrent from crime. Government also drew attention to the engagement entered into by the chiefs to report cases of crime coming to their knowledge, and called for strict enforcement of the penalties provided for its neglect. No fresh measures had since been introduced; various suggestions to reduce the marriage expenses of the caste and to increase the circle within which Jadeja girls can marry had been made, but hitherto efforts in these directions had been mostly futile. The census had proved a

¹² Ibid, pp. 8-9.

considerable success, and had been prepared with regularity. To conclude the measures adopted in this province had been generally successful, though to a less degree than in Kalthiawar. As before mentioned, in 1840 there were only 335¹³ females and 4,912 males of pure Jadeja blood, in 1873 the numbers were 4,272 and 8,371 respectively.

The most unsatisfactory points noticed in the Government Resolution on the report for 1872 were: 1) the high and increasing rate of mortality among female infants and 2) the increase in the number of un-betrothed girls; and with reference to the latter point Government called the attention of the Resident to the importance of enlarging the circle of the families with whom the daughters of Jadeja may contract matrimonial alliances. With reference to these points, the report for the past year was an unsatisfactory as its predecessor. The number of un-betrothed girls was 2,211 and 2,195 respectively in 1872 and in 1873 (exclusive of those of Taluka Adhoi) and the Resident wrote that he feared there was little hope of success in enlarging the circle of families owing to Jadeja conservatism. The rate of mortality among female infants under 1 year old was also shown to have again

¹³ The wives of Jadejas being women from other Rajput tribes are not included in these figures.

increased, 138 out of 373 having died, while among males only 72 out of 384.

With reference to this the Resident said: "I have only to record that more stringent measures will be urged on His Highness to put a stop to the inhumane practice of infanticide which evidently still lingered, and appeared to be on the increase in Kutch." He also expressed his opinion that death now only resulted from neglect after birth, and in the end of his report suggested that a fresh proclamation be issued drawing the serious attention of the tribe to the unfavourable results showed in the present returns, and that increased vigilance be displayed and an example made of one or two suspected villages.

A further report, dated 6th August 1873, especially called the attention of Government to the systematic death of every female infant for many years past in the *jaghir* town of Nallia. It would thence appeared that out of 39 female births in 11 years, only 5 had survived, while out of 49 boys born during the same period 39 were living. The Resident was of opinion that Government had good ground for discontinuing their guarantee in this case, but for the present recommended only that the *jaghir* be placed under the control of a qualified Mehta, with sufficient establishment to perform civil and

criminal jurisdiction therein, and this at the cost of the shareholders of the jaghir.

It was ardently to be hoped that a speedy and severe example may check the increase of the crime, and accompanied by increased vigilance, effect in time its complete abolition.

In Palanpur State the first mention of infanticide occurred in 1825, when Lieut. Colonel Miles, Political Agent, reported that he had, of his own motion, obtained signed agreements to abolish the crime, from the Jadejas who had spread from Kutch to the island of Chorwal and the taluka of Charchat, subject to his agency. He added that they appeared to have commenced to abstain from the practice since the treaty with Kutch in 1819, and recommended that henceforth all births and deaths be regularly registered.

No further attention, however, appeared to have been paid to the subject as regards this particular state until 1849, when census returns were sent in by Captain Leekie, which were considered untrustworthy. Next year's returns disclosed a great disproportion between the sexes, and although, those of the following year were more favourable, Major Keily thought right to recommend that fresh engagements be taken for

the abolition of the crime, that all births and deaths be reported, and that inquests be held on the deaths of female children. Government did not approve of these suggestions, but requested Major Keily to assimilate his precautions to those already in operation in Kathiawar. This he accordingly did, and the measures thus introduced had remained in force until the last half of the nineteenth century with general success.

The proportion between the sexes was now fairly re-established, being for last year 697 males and 634 females. The death rate among infants was not suspiciously high, though 3 out of 28 died in 1876 less than 10 days old, and the number of un-betrothed girls was not increasing, though higher than it should be. The impression produced on perusal of the latest papers was that the crime lingers in the shape of neglect after birth, but that it was ended as a positive custom. According to the Report of 1875 on female infanticide in the Bombay Presidency by H.R. Cooke on Infanticide fund had ever been established in Palanpur state for relief measures.

In Mahi Kanta Colonel Lang was the discoverer of infanticide among the Marwadi Rajputs of the Mahi Kanta in 1839, and shortly

afterwards he persuaded them to enter into engagements to abstain from the crime.

In 1843 he was required to inform them of the fervent interest Government took in the matter : to obtain an annual census and transmit regular reports to Government : to issue a proclamation to the chiefs, exhorting them to suppress the crime : to devise measures for the reward and protection of informers : to refer all charges of guilt to a Panchayet of the Chiefs, whose award should be subject to his confirmation, and generally to assimilate his measures to those already in force in Kathiawar. He was told that the formation of an Infanticide fund was thought a highly expedient course by government who would make advances which might be subsequently repaid. The Raja of the Idur State at this time showed himself much interested in suppressing the crime.

The first census was taken in 1848, but seemed unreliable. In the following year Captain Wallace reported several convictions held for this crime in the province which it was hoped would have a good deterrent result. The proportion of boys to girls was at this time 432 to 276.

Among the Lewa and Kadwa Kanbis of Gujarat (especially in Bharuch, Kheda and Ahmedabad) female Infanticide existed to a considerable extent. The reason behind killing of girls was due to the custom of excessive dowries among the Kanbis especially among the Lewas. When the Bill for prevention of female infanticide became law as Act VIII of 1870, Beehchardas Laskari an influential Kadwa Kanbi sent a petition to the District Magistrate of Ahmedabad to extend the provision of the Act among the Lewa and Kadwa Patidars of Gujarat¹⁴ which was ultimately done in 1871 by Mr. Borradeile the commissioner of Northern Province.¹⁵

It may be well in a few closing words to remark upon the fact that the patient labour Government bestowed upon the work of eradicating female infanticide from among the Rajputs of Kathiawad, Kutch, Mahi-Kanta, and Palanpur seemed to have attained a less sure success than the advice and helping hand extended to the Kanbis of Gujarat.¹⁶

The cause of this result was evidently not that the labour was at fault, but that the crime was of a deeper dye, and had taken a deeper root,

¹⁴ Detail discussion available in Chapter II and IV.

¹⁵ *Selection from the Records of the Bombay Government*, op. cit., pp. 15-19.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 26.

among the former, whose very customs had become inconsistent with the preservation of female life in that they preclude the possibility of girls obtaining husbands.¹⁷

Problems of Widows:-

Problems of widows, such as prohibition of their remarriage, lower status in family and society etc. were especially noticed among the upper sections of society. As most of the social reformers came from the upper castes, they felt this problem acutely and started a great debate on this topic in the 19th century. Many social thinkers were deeply moved by the hardships of widows and more particularly of child widows. Durgaram Mehtaji who himself became a widower and felt the anguish of a widower's life, became particularly sensitive to the far worse plight of widows and campaigned very actively in support of the right of widows to remarry.¹⁸

The reformers adopted three methods to counteract the evil : an exposure campaign, efforts to secure legal enactments and deliberate defiance of evil customs-refusing to marry girls early, marrying widows etc.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 27.

¹⁸ Neera Desai, *Social Change*, p. 346. Durgaram Mahipatram, *Charitra*, pp. 5-7, pp. 11-15.

The writers of Gujarat from Dalpatram onwards tried to present this problem through various literacy forms such as poetry, essay, drama and novel.¹⁹ Organizations like the Gujarat Vernacular society, the Gnan Prasarak Mandali and the Buddhivardhak Sabha organized essay competitions, lectures and debates on these problems. Publication of books on the subject was also launched. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's book on widow remarriage was translated into Gujarati. A satire on the group opposing widow remarriage was published by the Gujarat Vernacular society.²⁰

The social reformers threw open challenges to the conservatives to publicly debate on problem of widow remarriage. Open discussions on such subjects were fraught with grave dangers. This may be because of social opposition as widow marriage was not allowed in society especially among the higher caste and the 'sanskritization' process popularised the social taboos and there was a trend that the higher the social taboos the higher the status of the caste.

An act was passed in 1856 along with 'Sati Act' permitting widows to remarry and recognizing their children as legal.²¹ It is true

¹⁹ For history of Gujarati literature see K. M. Munshi and M. K. Zaveri.

²⁰ Desai Neera, *Social Change*, op. cit., p. 347.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 348.

that due to rigidities of caste and religious taboos, the practice permitted by this Act was not adopted on a big scale. But this was a significant piece of legislation which offered widows a new lease of life.

Organised efforts were also made to defy the ban on widow-remarriage which took three forms: (1) advocating the social and legal acceptance of widow remarriage and (2) encouraging widow remarriage and (3) protecting the parties to such marriages against harassment by orthodox and reactionary elements.²²

Along with various organization like the Paramhans Sabha and the 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 into the 20th century and encouraged a number of widow remarriages. As indicated in its report up to 1930, under its auspices, 179 widow remarriages were performed in Ahmedabad.²³

²² Ibid, p. 349.

²³ Ibid, p. 340.

Some other evils in connection with women, the eradication of which engaged social reformers were tonsure for widow, taboos and beliefs in evil women in connection with widows, polygamy, sale of daughters (especially among Patidars and Anavala Desais) and seclusion of aristocratic Hindu Women.²⁴

I.1.2 Women education in Gujarat :-

In Gujarat the first effort at establishing a school for women was made at Ahmedabad in 1849 by the Gujarat Vernacular Society, and it established the first girls' school in 1850 with the generous donation of Shethani Harkunvar, a rich widow of Hatesingh. Only one girl initially joined the school. However, after two years the number of girls rose to eighteen. Two girls' school were started in 1850 with the financial help of Maganbhai Karamchand.²⁵

For defusing knowledge and new ideas, the G.V.S. started publishing a monthly Journal *Buddhiprakash* from April 1854. The *Buddhiprakash* featured articles on history, biographies, general knowledge, science, health and hygiene, geography, literature, religion and philosophy, news and views etc. Soon this journal became the

²⁴ Shah Kunjlata, "The Gujarat vernacular society: shaping a middle class Identity in colonial Gujarat" - paper presented in the seminar on *Region, Realm and culture, The Identity of Gujarat*, Department of History, Faculty of Arts, The M.S. University of Baroda, 9-11 Jan., 2003, P.4.

²⁵ Neera, Desai op. cit., P.333. Maganbhai Karamchand donated Rs. 20,000 to the foundation of these native schools in Ahmedabad.

most influences journal of Gujarat spreading advanced technological knowledge and liberal ideas to the people. It provided information about the latest industrial and technology and published articles on steam machine, electricity, telegraph, sewing machine etc. It provided a sort of information revolution in Gujarat.²⁶

After Dalpatram took over the editorship of *Buddhiprakash*, the number of subscribers increased substantially and its circulation became widespread. The copies were circulated all over Gujarat and Sindh, and even were available in London through A. K. Forbes.²⁷

The axiom of the *Buddhiprakash* was “no social reform is possible without women’s education.” The play ‘Jaykunvarno Jay’ written by Ranchhodram Uderam explaining the importance of education was serialized in the *Buddhiiprakash* in the 1860’s. Dalpatram the editor urged parents frequently to send their daughters to school and explained to them the benefits of education. The society published literature on the ‘Women’s Question’ such as child marriage, widow marriage and maltreatment of widows, dowry etc. The G.V.S. administered Trust Funds to award scholarships to

²⁶ Makrand Mehta, *The Ahmedabad Cotton Textile Industry: Genesis and Growth*, Ahmedabad, 1982, p. 25.

²⁷ *Ibid*, July 1855, p. 98.

encourage girls to study. The society conducted elocution competition for women every year from 1894 onwards to develop their mental faculties. This competition provided women with a platform where they could express their views on their problems. It undertook many schemes for continuing education for women who had left their studies early owing to social reasons.²⁸

In Surat, which is known as the diamond city of Gujarat, the Christian and the Parsis made some efforts for girls' education by starting vernacular and English schools.²⁹ Durgaram Mehtaji, the ardent social reformer, also made efforts to run a girls' school in Surat in 1850. 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 been achieved in Surat. Durgaram has for sometime been exerting himself on behalf of the cause and has lately succeeded in collecting together about twenty girls' chiefly, I hear the children of his own intimate associates."

²⁸ Kunjlata Shah, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

²⁹ Neera Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

In 1874 a Mission Girls' High School and a Girls' Hostel were started there by the Irish Presbyterian Church. Due to the efforts of Surat Municipality a class for English education among girls was started in Raichand Dipchand Girls School in the centrally located Gopipura area in 1890. In all at that time there were about 13 girls' schools run by the Hindus (2); the Parsis (3); and the Christians (8). About 700 to 800 girls received education in these schools.

The beginnings made in female education in the early fifties of the 19th century slowly started taking root. The number of literate women in Gujarat during the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century are represented in table-2. The table shows that in the British Gujarat female literacy had increased from 6.3 in 1891 to 16.3 in 1901 whereas in princely state of Baroda female literacy rate had increased from 3.9 in 1891 to 7.6 in 1901.

Table - 2
Percentage of female literacy in British Gujarat and Princely State of Baroda in 1891 and 1901

Division of States	Proportion per 10000			
	Males		Female	
	1891	1901	1891	1901
1. British Gujarat				
Ahmedabad	135.7	205.6	5.8	17.7
Kaira	110.2	179.2	2.9	9.9
Panch Mahals	66.8	105.3	2.0	7.2
Broach	223.2	284.0	8.1	17.9
Surat	190.0	255.2	12.20	24.3
TOTAL	141.10	206.4	6.3	16.3
2. Baroda State				
Amreli	125.1	152.3	3.6	6.3
Kadi	790.3	113.0	1.9	2.3
Navsari	125.6	168.0	9.4	20.0
Baroda minus city	123.5	197.0	2.1	6.2
Baroda plus city	150.4	224.6	4.9	9.1
Baroda city	310.0	366.0	18.4	24.0
TOTAL	113.2	162.6	3.9	7.6

Source: *Census of India*, 1901, P.353.

Training College: An effort was made in the later half of the 19th century to train women teachers for primary schools. A college was established for this purpose in 1871 at Ahmedabad. This institution was financed by Mr. Bechardas Laskari and started functioning with six lady students. By 1901-02 the numbers of students rose to 110. As mentioned by Miss. Collett, the principal of this college, while giving evidence to the Education Commission, 1882, the

majority of women attending this college were wives of schoolmasters, or of men who were being trained for employment in the educational department. "Respectable widows" were also admitted.³⁰ In 1882, of the 32 lady students, 18 were Brahmins, 3 Kanbis, 5 Parsis and 6 Indian Christian. Miss. Collett observed: "The fact of high caste Hindus and native Christians living together under the same roof on terms of friendship and mental respect make our institution a unique one in India."³¹

Midwifery classes were opened in Grant Medical College, Bombay, in 1875-76. In 1901-02, the number of girls studying the various medical courses was 45 in the presidency; of these 24 were Parsis, 18 Anglo Indians and Europeans, 4 were Indian Christians and only one belonged to the Hindu Community.³²

The Government was in the initial stages, not very enthusiastic about women's education. This apathy was commented upon by the 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

³⁰ Neera Desai, p. 335.

³¹ Ibid, p. 335.

³² Ibid, p. 335.

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 need.³³

Curriculum:

In the initial stages the boys and girls were taught the same subjects. However, later on, particularly after 1882, discussion was initiated on working out an appropriate and difficult curriculum for women. During the 19th century the courses of study in the girls' schools were modelled on the lines of the 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. A special emphasis was laid on needle work and domestic economy in the girls' schools. However, after 1880, Gujarati educationists started seriously discussing the proper courses for women. Thinkers like Narmad, Manilal Nabhoobhai and Govardhanram were feeling that the education which was being imparted to women was not training them for the tasks (household works, looking after other members, child care, home management, needlework etc.) which they had to perform in life.³⁴

Other efforts: Along with starting schools and giving thought to the proper kind of education for women, special efforts were made during

³³ Ibid, p. 335.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 336

this period to create an interest in general educational and other intellectual activities. In this connection, the role of the Gujarat Vernacular Society was particularly noteworthy. It organized debates, lectures for adult women and published special books for the advancement of scientific knowledge among women. In one of the reports of the Gujarat Vernacular Society it was mentioned that Baniya Brahmin, Jain and Parsi women were taking part in these activities.

Thus women education in Gujarat up till 1950 though did not bring major changes, but due to efforts of social reformers and British Governments schools were established for them and they started coming out from homes to take education. Parents started realizing the importance of their daughters' education side by side with that of their sons. But ratios of girls in schools were less than that of the boys not only in Gujarat but also in other parts of the country. (See Table- 11).³⁵

³⁵ Percentage of female literacy rate to total literacy rate

Place	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
India	8.86	15.34	21.97	29.75	39.42
Gujarat		30	24.75	38.46	48.62
	*	**			

Source: (i) University News Sept. 1991.

(ii) Selected educational Statistical 1991-92. MHRD

* The larger state of Bombay was divided into two separate states of Maharashtra and Gujarat in the year 1960. Hence data of enrolment is missing for the year 1951.

** The given figure may be of combined state of Gujarat and Maharashtra, because it was just one year after the formation of Gujarat as an Independent State. That may explain the discrepancy in the percentages for the years 1961 and 1971.

II.2 Scenario in the Baroda State under Sir Sayajirao III

Maharaja Sayajirao III was the ruler of the Baroda State from 1875 till 1939. Besides being a benevolent ruler he was also a great social reformer of India who took great care to improve the position of women by progressive legislations and also by the spread of education among them. Maharani Chimnabai II, the bold and dynamic wife of Sayajirao III, gave a whole hearted support to him in this field. She was moulded by Sayajirao III and was greatly influenced by his progressive ideas. Gradually she emerged as a prominent woman leader of Baroda. She herself wrote a book on women along with S.M. Mitra, named "The Position of Women in Indian Life." She inspired, encouraged and established various organizations for the upliftment of the women of his state.

II.2.1 Social reforms through legislations

Maharaja Sayajirao III had deep respect and sympathy in his mind for women. 'God rejoice when women are respected'³⁶ - quoted the Maharaja from the words of Manu in his speech on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Girl's School of the Students Literary and Scientific Society, Bombay, on 26th February, 1934.

³⁶ Sanders K. G., *Speeches and Address of Maharaja Sayajirao III*, Vol. IV, 1934-38, edited, London, 1938, p. 808.

His ideal regarding women was the ideal of ancient Indian society where their position was very high.³⁷ They occupied an honoured place in the household; they could take part in the religious ceremonies along with husbands; could attain liberal education and some even composed Vedic hymns. Remarriage of widows was not altogether unknown. On the whole in ancient times women were held in higher estimation and had greater freedom.

But gradually they lost their previous prestige and honour in society about which the Maharaja said, "A change came when the disturbed times of ignorance and foreign invasions were disintegrating society. The ideal of wifely devotion and purity was exaggerated beyond all reason and all customs were modified in this spirit. 'Sati', the entire prohibition of widow re-marriage, early marriage, and the rest were established in our society, and in some parts of India the strictest Muslim type of 'Purdah' was adopted. Ignorance increasing among men became absolute among women."³⁸

³⁷ See Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1998; Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question" in Kumkum Sangari and Vaid Sudesh, *Recasting Women: Essays in colonial History*, Delhi, Kali for women; Uma Chakraborty and Preeti Gill (ed.) *Shadow Lives: Writings on Widowhood*, New Delhi.

³⁸ A.G. Widgery, *Speeches and Addresses of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III*, Vol. I & II. 1877-1927, edited, London, 1928, p. 165

The Maharaja legitimately opposed these prevailing customs and was in favour of restoring to them that status and freedom which was the heritage of ancient India. He observed that in Hindu Society the evils concerning women were many, such as early marriage, infant motherhood, the degrading position of widow, their confinement to household work, their recognition as the producer of progeny particularly sons, the 'Purdah' system and denial of education.³⁹ He regarded defective social institutions, male attitude and ignorance to be responsible for the working treatment of women in the society. He believed that women should be given freedom and they should be treated on equality basis with men. So the measures of social reforms were directed towards the emancipation of women, and stimulating desirable changes in their status by giving them proper education and by progressive legislation.

He had immense faith in women's inner strength and in her contribution in social progress. So he was aware of the need to develop and utilize women's full potential as resources for national development- in its economic, political and socio-cultural aspects. He

³⁹ See his speeches at various places in various occasions compiled by- A.G. Widgery, *Speeches and Addresses of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III*, Vol I & II, 1877-1927, edited, London, 1928; K.G. Sunders, *Speeches and Addresses of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III*, Vol.III, 1927-1934, edited, London, 1934; C.E. Newham, *Speeches and Addresses of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad*, Vol. IV, 1934-38, edited, London, 1938.

tried to change the present attitude and values in society regarding their rights and roles, to one of their equal participation in all social, economic and political processes and national developments. As early as 1892-93, he ordered that the public park (present Kamathi Baug) be closed on every Friday to the male public, so that it could be freely available to women as place of recreation.⁴⁰

Marriage System:

Sayajirao held that no real uplift of women is possible without radical reforms in the marriage system. The disabilities from which women suffered most were to be found in the evils which had entered into the institution of marriage itself. If women suffered as widows, it was due to infant marriage and the denial of right to them to remarry. If they were illiterate, it was because they were married early. The birth of a daughter was a cause of sorrow because marriage of daughter meant the humiliation of her father at the hands of her would be husband's guardians and the heavy expense at the time of her marriage. The Hindu marriage custom had many abuses, such as polygamy, infant marriage, prohibition of widow re-marriage, unequal marriage, heavy dowry and others. Sayajirao kept all these evils in view, while putting his ideas in the public.

⁴⁰ R. G. Parikh, *The Social, economic and political ideas of Sayajirao III of Baroda*, Unpublished thesis, MSU 1973

He regarded infant marriage as a national disease from which all classes irrespective of caste, colour, creed or religion more or less suffered. He said, "Early marriage cause precocity in both sexes, early maternity shortens the natural span of life of woman. They both lead to untimely waste and decay."⁴¹ This reflects not only his academic thinking but also his ability to foresee the resultant effects of the customs.

It should be noted that, though Maharaja Sayajirao was totally against child-marriage but due to the willingness of his orthodox family members his own marriage was accomplished in 1880 at a very early age of seventeen with princess Laxmibai (Chimnabai I), who was one and a half year younger than the Maharaja. It should also be noted here that, in 1885 after Chimnabai I's death he got married to a fourteen years old girl named Gajrabai (Chimnabai II), a princess belonging to the Ghatge family.⁴²

The Maharaja himself acted contrary to his professed ideas on child-marriage and yielded to the orthodox social pressures of the time.

⁴¹ A. G. Widgery, *Speeches and Addresses*, op. cit., p. 167.

⁴² Kunjlata Shah, "Chimnabai II: The Enlightened Maharani of Baroda (1871-1958)," Paper presented at the Seminar on *Sayajirao III: The Man and his Times (1875-1939)*, Department of History, The M. S. University of Baroda, 1994, p. 3.

Though the child marriage was prohibited in the state, Sayajirao, in 1918, contracted a marriage of his own granddaughter Indumati Raje, daughter of the Late crown prince Fateh Sing Rao. The bride was by then hardly of twelve years and the bridegroom who was the second son of the Maharaja of Kolhapur was twenty years old.⁴³

This incident had been noted by both Dr. Sumant Mehta (the Royal Physician) and Miss E.L. Tottenham, who were very intimately connected with the Maharaja and the Maharani. Both of them had scolded the royal couple mildly for acting contrary to their professed views. Dr. Mehta⁴⁴ sarcastically observed that the Maharaja pushed this innocent girl in an uncivilized family, where she had to observe 'Purdah.'⁴⁵

Prohibition of Widow Marriage and Polygamy:

The Maharaja also protested against prohibition of widow remarriage and polygamy. While the former put too many restrictions on women, the latter gave too much independence to men-folk. Among males, marrying more than one wife was permissible especially among

⁴³ Stanley S Rice, *Life of Sayajirao III, Maharaja of Baroda*, Vol. II, Oxford University Press, London, 1931, p. 221.

⁴⁴ See his autobiography on Sayajirao III.

⁴⁵ Though this girl later on became the Maharani she did not live a happy life. Therefore, the Maharaja was guilty of breaking the law of child-marriage and retaining the *purdah* system for the members of royal family.

higher classes. Married women of these classes had often to suffer the presence of rival wives.

While comparing the practice of polygamy and widow remarriage the Maharaja remarked, “the one keeps up an unduly low standard of morality among men, the other demands an impossibly high standard from women. To enforce this standard, we suppress our feelings of humanity and affection, and inflict severities upon widows in order to keep their vitality low and make them less attractive.”⁴⁶

Coming down to the conclusion he expressed that despite such harsh measures, “we failed to preserve even an ordinary standard of morality in this much ill-treated class.”⁴⁷ He protested against this evil and determined to alter it.

It should be noted that though he was against polygamy and discouraged such attempts, the Maharaja and the Maharani both acted contrary to their professed ideas on polygamy by contracting the marriage affair of their only daughter Indira Raje in 1913.

⁴⁶ Widgey A. G., *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

Sayajirao and Maharani Chimnabai II wanted Indira Raje to marry Maharaja Scindhia of Gwalior who had already one wife and had no heir to succeed him. He was desirous of having an heir out of this marriage. Indira Raje had her own views and she revolted against her parents and finding her own way managed to marry Jitendra Narayan, an heir apparent of the Cooch Bihar State, in London. She was in love with the prince and hated to marry Sindhia. The stubborn attitude of the Maharaja and Maharani in this affair reveals the other side of their professed ideas.

Divorce:

Sayajirao was equally concerned with the concept of divorce in the Hindu System. Hindu marriage was regarded sacred and therefore indissoluble. In 1918, he ordered the state Minister of Jurisprudence to prepare a draft of the Divorce Act keeping in view the requirements of the day. About this time the educated women of Baroda had started a campaign for adopting a Divorce Act in the interest of those unfortunate women who were extremely unhappy and were unable to break the bonds of marriage. Some of the legal advisers of the Maharaja were against such legislation because they apprehended that it would be tantamount to introduce disintegrating forces in the Hindu family life. They advised the Maharaja to keep caution and to advance

slowly by stages; otherwise it should provoke bitter opposition and agitation from the orthodox section.

After due care and consideration, Sayajirao passed the Hindu Divorce Act in 1931 in response to an educated public opinion. The Act contained provisions for dissolution or nullity of marriage, judicial separation, separate residence, maintenance of offspring etc.

The Purdah System:

Sayajirao viewed the *purdah* System with disfavour and considered it foolish. In spite of such belief, “he had to tolerate Maharani Chimnabai observing the ‘purdah’ till 1914, and then discarded it and sat on the same sofa with the Maharaja at a public function in Naya Mandir. While in foreign countries the Maharani moved without ‘purdah’ even before 1914 with the Maharaja and acted freely like any other western woman, going to the theatres, entertaining, eating in restaurants and living in hotels as if ‘purdah’ had never existed for her.”⁴⁸

Sayajirao in his article “My ways and Days” written in Feb. 1901 represented the views of Maharani on the ‘purdah’ system. He

⁴⁸ E. L. Tottenham, *Highness of Hindustan : An account of the eight years (1911-1920) spent at the court of Baroda*, London, 1934, p. 144.

expressed his inability to do away with the system. He wrote, "In the opinion of Her Highness the custom of seclusion is bad. She realized that no one in India, not even myself, her husband, can at the present time lift up the veil."⁴⁹

This clearly reflects his helplessness to remove 'purdah' though he considered it outdated. At the eighteenth National Social conference in 1904, he pointed out that, "A too strict Purdah mutilated social life and makes its current dull and sluggish by excluding the brightening influence of woman."⁵⁰

Thus the Maharaja was very much aware of various restrictions of women in Hindu society which come in their way of progress and made attempt to remove them through social legislations. Therefore he passed the following important Acts to improve the social condition of women:

(i) The widow Remarriage Act (1901):

The deplorable conditions of Hindu widows pained the Maharaja. Prohibition of widow remarriage was to him a bad organization of society. He regarded this as inhuman and immoral.

⁴⁹ Stanley Rice, op. cit., p. 70.

⁵⁰ A. G Widgery, op. cit., p. 164.

Therefore to improve their condition he passed the Widow Remarriage Act in 1901. But very little advantage had been taken of it. The remarriage of young widow was forbidden among the Brahmans and the vanias, the penalty being ex-communication.

(ii) Child Marriage Prevention Act (1904):

The Child Marriage Prevention Act was passed in 1904. A boy under sixteen years of age or a girl under 12 years of age was declared to be a child for the purpose of the Act and persons responsible for the marriage of such a child were made punishable with a fine of Rs.100.

In 1926 after the Act had been in operation for twenty two years, a committee was appointed to report on the results achieved by the Act and to suggest improvements. The committee reported that the Act had good education effect and created a force which if properly directed would be much to improve social conditions.

The Act was amended in 1928 which i) declared marriages, in which either of the parties was below 8 years, to void, ii) punished parties, including the officiating priest, responsible for such marriages, with fine up to Rs.500 or imprisonment up to one month or both; and

iii) raised the maximum limit of fine from Rs.50 to Rs.200 for child marriages over the age of eight.

In 1932 the law was brought into conformity with the British Indian Act of 1930, and the marriageable age raised to 18 for boys and 14 for girls. By 1937 public opinion had so far advanced that in that year on the recommendation of the Dhara Sabha, the punishment for all child marriages was raised to imprisonment upto one month or fine up to Rs.1,000 or both.

With the passage of time, as the public opinion against child-marriages began to increase it became possible to make the enforcement of the law stricter.

(iii) Special Marriage Act (1908):

The Special Marriage Act came into force in the State in 1908. In British India, the parties to an inter-marriage between persons of different communities under the Registration of Marriage Act had to declare that they did not belong to any of the recognized religions. Such a declaration was not necessary under the Baroda Act. The Act thus offered a wider scope in the choice of a life partner, to those who did not feel themselves bound by the forms of the religion in which

they happened to be born without compelling them to renounce that religion. The British Indian enactment came into line with this Baroda Act in 1923.

Though customs and traditions had restricted the exercise of this opportunity however, this Act provided wider scope to females to choose their life partner.

(iv) Hindu Divorce Act, 1931:

The Hindu law does not allow divorce, except in communities in which it is permitted by custom. To remove this disability the Hindu Divorce Act was passed in 1931. In 1937 it was incorporated with other enactments dealing with Hindu law in the Hindu code. Provision was made in the law for divorce, judicial separation, and separate residence, nullity of marriage and restitution of conjugal rights. The ground on which relief could be sought was cruelty, drunkenness, desertion, adultery, impotency and incompatibility of temperament. Relief on these grounds was available to all castes among the Hindus.

Of the suits filed under the law during the year 1943-44, in seven cases, the parties belong to castes in which custom does not allow a divorce. In three of them bania women sued their husbands for

separate residence on grounds of cruelty and desertion and on the basis that the husband took another wife, in two of them Brahmans sued their wives for divorce on the ground of desertion; and in the remaining two, suits were filed by bania males for divorce on the ground of desertion.⁵¹

During the year 1945-46 the number of cases was 28. It was a feature well worth mention that all these 28 cases were filed by either Brahmans or Vantias, educationally the two of the most advanced communities among the Hindu.⁵² In communities in which custom allows divorce, the law had provided a regular procedure and a record of the fact of divorce.

(v) The Hindu Women's Property Act:

In 1933, the code of Hindu law was amended so as to widen the rights of Hindu women in matters of inheritance and rights to property. Under the amended law, (a) the widow of a co-parcener took the place of her husband as a co-parcener in the joint family, that is, she became a joint owner of the family property with a right to ask for partition; (b) she became an absolute owner of property, which she acquired either by partition or inheritance, to the extent of property worth Rs.12,000,

⁵¹ *Baroda Administrative report* 1943-44, p. 106.

⁵² *Baroda Administrative report*, 1945-46, p. 100.

and retained her limited interest in the surplus, if any; (c) she could inherit her husband's exclusive property along with her sons, obtaining a share equal to that of a son; (d) where a widow acquired a limited interest in property, that interest was liberalized by allowing her to alienate the property for educational and charitable purposes, (e) an unmarried daughter could claim a share in the family property equal to a fourth of a son's share, with a right to claim it separate; (f) a married but widowed daughter could claim maintenance from her father's family property under certain circumstances; (g) a widowed daughter-in-law was given a place in the list of heirs, next to the mother of the deceased father-in-law; (h) sons of a predeceased daughter could claim inheritance with living daughters. This defensive measure had proved the status and material position of women in Hindu families to some extent. In 1941-42, four suits by widow co-parceners were instituted in Baroda State for partition of their shares in the joint property.

These reforms have considerably improved the status and material position of women in Hindu family. Among the higher castes, these rights were generally conceded as in this part of India owing to the absence of 'Purdah' and other causes, women's property rights had always been more extensive than elsewhere; but among the lower

classes, men were less willing to accept the change and the women were not yet sufficiently conscious of their rights.

During the year 1945-46, seven suits by widow co-parceners were instituted for partition of their shares in the joint property as against nine in the preceding year. The effectiveness of the law, however, can not be judged from these figures, for the very purpose of clearly defining rights in law was to make litigation unnecessary. By securing the financial position of the widow, the law has become a potent factor in bringing about a welcome social reform and removed a disability which was a source of great hardship to widows. Further, in suits by reversioners to challenge alienations by widows, the possession of absolute interest in the property alienated was put forward as a defence.⁵³

Thus he enacted various social legislations from time to time to improve the social condition of women of Baroda. But most of the acts met with very limited success. And this occurred due to the force of custom and tradition and not to any difficulties in the law. Realizing the fact that no religious reform measure can be carried out in India by compulsion, he never used force, according to him persuasion, not

⁵³ *Baroda Administrative report, 1945-46*, pp. 101-102.

force is the better way. Instead of force he thought it necessary to bring about changes among his subjects through modern secular education.

Therefore he introduced a novel educational system in his State. He made primary education free and compulsory in the state much before the British India could boast of. Caste, poverty and sex was no bar to the acquisition of an ability to read and write and what was in many parts of India a privilege enjoyed by a special class was thrown open to common people.

The spread of primary education created opportunity for the spread of secondary and higher education. The state maintained various secondary schools of all grades, a first grade college, a fully developed technical institute, Kalabhawan, a network of district and village libraries and two separate training Institute one for men and another for women. Above all, the education of women and depressed classes and backward classes had received special attention.

Particularly education of women was an issue which was at his heart. According to him education of women was necessary to bring about a social, cultural and economic transformation of society, and to raise their status in society which is needed for the balanced

development of the nation. Therefore he established a female training college in 1883 to provide trained teachers in all girls' schools; and announced his resolve in 1885 to give special attention to women education to fit the girls for their function in society. Moreover in 1906 he made primary education compulsory for girls side by side with the boys.

II.2.2 Sayajirao III and women education:-

Among the social reformers of the nineteenth century, who took great interest in women education, the name of Maharaja Sayajirao III of Baroda stands prominently. In fact, the education of women was a cause which he had particularly at heart. About the importance of women education he held that the education of women was urgently required for the proper development of a child; for running home life nicely; for making them fit to carry the same academic work as men, which is necessary for balanced development of the nation; for uplifting women's status in society and to make them rational minded and bold enough to fight against their various social restrictions which hindered their scope of progress. Female education was all the more necessary to bring about a social, cultural and economic transformation in the society. Realizing this truth he attached great importance to female education and constantly pleaded and worked for it.

Realizing the importance of women education he categorically stated that women should not be kept in seclusion. They form one half of the population in India. "Surely a nation which kept one half of its people in darkness had no right to expect progress. How could the sons flourish when the mothers by whom their early life was shaped were themselves wholly ignorant?"⁵⁴

In so far as their personal life is concerned the role of education in improving their position in society is very significant. He realized that women get involved to various customs and superstitions largely because they knew no better, and those who should have been their guides had not that breadth of knowledge to advise them what was good and what was bad. The Maharaja strongly held that education would make them rational minded and bold enough to fight against various social customs which restricted their progress.

This idea clearly indicates that he was deeply interested in introducing social reforms for the benefit of the women through the medium of education. He wanted the society to give a fair chance and equal treatment to the females so that the age old discrimination

⁵⁴ Rice Stanley, op. cit., p. 195.

against them might be removed and their social status could be improved. Therefore, he concentrated on the development of female education.

It should be noted here that one of the early Acts of his reign was the establishment of a training college for women teachers, in 1882, in Baroda city. As such the cause of female education had been taken up by Sir Raja T. Madhavrao, through a very modest beginning of starting two girls' schools one at Baroda and the other at Petlad in 1875. In subsequent period, the measures taken by the Maharaja to open up primary and secondary schools for women were too many.

He realized the need that the theory of equality of opportunity should find increasing expression in practice, and had therefore urged that women should share with men, the life and thought and interests of the times. They are fit to carry the same academic work as men. The distribution of general ability among women is approximately the same as among men. He, however, realized that there are ways in which many interests or appropriate fields of work for women diverge from

those of men and educational programmers should take this fact into account.⁵⁵

The Maharaja said, "We in India believe that our old books are right in insisting that God or nature made men and women different and set limits to the function of each. Modern education can not safely ignore the facts of nature. Domestic economy including the physical, intellectual and moral nurture of children and the nursing of the sick, should with great benefit to the fortune of the family, be a burden shouldered by the lady of the house. Once this important distinction between the duties of husband and wife is realized and practiced, there will be a natural division of labour in the family and each partner in the family will be doing that part of the whole work to which his or her natural aptitudes are best suited. So long as this is not the case, women will remain diffident and shy and their natural growth will be dwarfed."⁵⁶

To remove the long existing defect in the system of Indian life where the responsibility of managing the household, except only in the culinary duties, fell upon the head of the family, he suggested adopting

⁵⁵ See P. W. Sergeant & Stanley Rice for details.

⁵⁶ Rice Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 659.

the European custom of putting the girls through a well devised course of education. He said:

The misgivings of some people about women's education on the ground that an educated woman will develop a slighting attitude towards her partner in life is baseless. On the contrary, the result of proper education of our womenfolk will be greater mutual respect between husband and wife.⁵⁷

He also considered chemistry as one of the science necessary to be taught to women. He added:

The curriculum of the proposed extension classes, comprising as it does scientific instruction in those subjects calculated to help in the efficient administration of a household for women who have received literary education up to the university entrance and even a higher standard, is that which is best calculated to further the cause of Indian womanhood and I sincerely appreciate the energy which has led you to formulate it.⁵⁸

At the annual general meeting of the Bombay Sanitary Association held in April 1911 he said, "Our only weapon is education - education of women, because it is their part to influence home life and to fashion future generations and education of our ignorant masses in the simple teachings of elementary sanitation and hygiene...."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 659.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 660.

⁵⁹ Widgey A. G., op. cit., p. 215.

These ideas made it clear that by giving education to women, he wanted to make them fit for running home life nicely. He believed that the education for a woman should include practical laboratory experience in the care of a home and family. A woman should learn something of problems that are certain to come up after her marriage. Her education should make her familiar with problems of home management so that she may take her place in a home with the same interest and the sense of competence as well trained men has at his callings.

Speaking at the girl's school of Poona on 8th July 1904, he said:

Let me exhort you to make a special effort to prove to the world the necessity and benefits of girls' and women's education. You should earnestly endeavour to improve the condition of those around you and when you leave school, you will occupy various spheres of life: make it then your duty to impart to others the blessings which you have received and by your pure and holy lives convince those who are opposed to the education of women that their prejudices are without foundation."⁶⁰

He also retorted women to prove themselves as noble women in nursery school, pre-natal care of mothers, new and scientific study of

⁶⁰ Widgey A. G., op. cit., pp. 138-139.

children & some to the prophetic task of reinterpretation and reform. He said- "India needs a Jane Addams in every slum, a Pandita Ramabai in every district, a Florence Nightingale in every hospital, a Margaret Macmillan in a thousand schools, besides skilled and intelligent mothers and wives in scores of millions of homes."⁶¹

According to him, education should give woman a practical bias, especially from the point of view of families for making them good mothers, teachers, doctors, nurses and also good citizens.

Female Education in Baroda Under Sayajirao III :

Before the reign of Sayajirao III no efforts were made by the previous rulers to educate the women of Baroda State. Social customs, beliefs and practices of society greatly restricted the outdoor activities of women. Naturally the matter of female education was regarded as totally out of question.

Therefore there was not a single educational institution for girls in the State before Sayajirao III's rule. During the minority of his reign when administration was carried on by T. Madhavrao, the Dewan, a girls' school was established in 1875 in a rented house in Baroda city

⁶¹ Samders K. G., op. cit., p. 267.

under the care and superintendence of Miss Sonabai Sokharam. There were in that year 35 girls in this school.

Another girls' school was established at Petlad in the same year and in 1880 there were 8 girls' schools throughout the state with a total attendance of 502. But on the whole no remarkable progress was achieved in Baroda State, for female education before the reign of Sayajirao III.

In 1881 when the personal administration of Maharaja Sayajirao III began, a remarkable progress was registered in the promotion and spread of women education.

Progress in Primary Education during Maharaja's Period:

Immediately after assuming power the Maharaja concentrated on the development of female education. He announced his resolve in 1885 to give special attention to female education by saying - "I would particularly emphasize the importance of the education of girls. It is the unremitting watchfulness and conciliatory supervision of intelligent and educated mothers which form powerful factors in giving right tone to infant minds and which are the best agents for the eradication of crooked ways. Women regulate the social life of people and men and

women rise or fall together. To fit the girls for their functions in our social life I would give my special attention to the opening of girls' schools."⁶²

According to the wishes of the Maharaja, the Department of Education declared the policy of opening schools for girls in all places of Baroda, where a sufficient number of pupils were forthcoming. Where this sufficiency was not present girls less than twelve years of age were admitted to the boys' schools. In all cases inducements in the shape of special prizes and scholarships were given to encourage regular attendance.⁶³

In 1892, when compulsory primary education scheme was introduced on experimental basis in the town of Amreli and in the villages of that Taluka, all the girls under the age group of 7 to 10 years living within a mile of the school were compelled to attend that school unless they were privately taught or had already passed the standard declared to be compulsory or for several other reasons. In the beginning compulsory standard limit was third standard for girls side by side with the boys.

⁶² Desai G. H. & Clarke A. B. Gazetteer of the Baroda State, Vol. II, Bombay, 1923.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 315.

No punishment was given for the failure to attend school. He ordered that in particular, the objection of the upholders of the 'Purdah' system must be respected. He said that it was not necessary that they should send their girls to government schools. All that they would be expected to do was to educate their girls to the standard fixed by the Government from time to time.

By 1904 the number of girl pupils under the experimental compulsory educational scheme was 2,200 out of the total attendance of 5,201 pupils. When the primary education scheme was finally implemented throughout Baroda State, after successful fifteen years experiment (1892-1906) in Amreli Taluka, the education of girls in Baroda progressed fairly. The school age was at first fixed at 7 to 10 for girls. In 1913 the last year was raised from third to fifth for them side by side with the boys.

In 1915 schools for girls were separated from the boys, though in some schools co-education or mixed education continued. In the small girls' schools in addition to the ordinary literary subjects, needle work and singing were taught and in more advanced schools embroidery drawing, singing and cooking were taught. Before he

assumed full powers there were in the state, only eight girls' primary schools with more than 1 lakh girls students. (See table - 3).

Table- 3

No. of Girls Primary School including No. of Girl students

Year	No. of Girls Primary Schools	No. of Girls attending Various Primary Schools	No. of Girl sin mixed Govt. Schools	Total No. of Girls receiving Primary Education
1881	8	600	Not Available	Not Available
1941	291	46079	70488	116567

Source: *Baroda Administrative Reports* 1881-82 & 1940-41.

Table - 3 shows that in 1941, i.e. after sixty years of his personal reign, the number of girls in girls' primary schools had increased seven times since 1881 and the total number of girls receiving primary instruction had increased more than nine times which was quite remarkable.

Secondary Education:

The spread of primary education among females of Baroda state under Sayajirao created opportunity for the spread of secondary and higher education. Before 1896 there were no facilities for higher education of girls. In that year two private English classes were opened in the city for them, but owing to the lack of sufficient support they were soon closed. In 1906, some English classes were opened in the city in connection with the female training college. In the following

year this became the Anglo vernacular School (A.V. S) for girls and ultimately developed into a high school. In 1917 this high school was provided with a building of its own, and a separate staff, with an English lady as principal. This institution later on came to be known as the Maharani Girls' High School. The school had a hostel attached to it. Besides this school, two A.V. Schools were opened in the city in 1939-40 and in 1940-41 the number of A.V. Schools for girls numbered four in the state. Besides, many girls were receiving secondary instruction in various boys' high schools throughout the state. Table-4 shows that while in 1911 not even a single girl was receiving secondary education, there number had increased to 2,741 in 1941 in various secondary schools in the state.

Table - 4

Number of Secondary Schools and Pupils

Year	No. of Schools	No. of Students		Total
		Boys	Girls	
1911	40	6577	--	6577
1941	152	22035	2741	24776

Source: *Baroda Census*, 1941

The spread of primary and secondary education created opportunity for the spread of higher education. In the course of time women students joined the Baroda College in steadily increasing numbers. Special arrangements were made for their accommodation.

English classes had also been attached to the Vernacular Girls' Schools at Petlad, Visnagar and at Patan. But as compared to the girls receiving primary education, those receiving secondary and higher education was very few. In fact university / college education i.e., higher education among females shows a beginning only. Table -5 shows that from no female student in Baroda College then in existence in Baroda in 1911-12, 179 female students were studying in 1941-42.

Table - 5

No. of women students in Baroda College since 1911-12

Year	No. of Women Students in Baroda College
1911-12	-----
1931-32	33
1934-35	48
1941-42	179

Source: Baroda Adm. Reports 1911-12 to 1934-35 & Census of India 1941

Thus as far as university/college education was concerned not much progress was registered under Sayajirao III, in spite of his serious and sincere effort to make women education popular in all stages. He regarded that higher education of varied types was necessary for practical utility and considerations and that women's higher education programme should include subjects like home science. The reason behind poor enrolment of girls in higher educational level was prevailing social, cultural and religious beliefs

and practices which restricted outdoor activities of especially grown up girls and therefore it was not because of the lack of enthusiasm, interest and efforts of the Maharaja.

Female Training College:

The efficiency of teaching depends to a large extent on the training given to the teachers. Realizing this fact Sayajirao III established a Female Training College in Baroda in 1882 for training women for the employment of teachers in girls' schools. In the beginning it was opened as a training class and after one year it was developed into a College in Baroda. Table- 6 shows that the number of female students had risen from 32 in 1895-96 to 290 in 1941-42, which was remarkable.

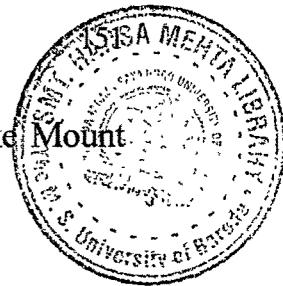
Table - 6

Year	No. of Women Students Under Training
1895-96	32
1925-26	70
1931-32	234
1938-39	276
1941-42	290

Source: *Census of India* 1941

Among the college activities, the girl guides movement, physical culture, badminton club, debate competitions, garba competitions,

discussion of current topics and excursion trips to places like Mount Abu were noticeable.⁶⁴



There was a practising school, Gujarati Girls' School No. 1, attached to this college. The pupils of the fifth standard of this school were taught along with the preparatory class of the college. Cookery also was taught in common to the female training college and the practising school. Besides, political economy was taught in the Female Training College as an extra subject in accordance with the Huzer Order. The College had a good hostel attached to it near Sursagar tank which has 41 boarders in 1911-12; and 144 in 1941-42. But trained women were not yet available in sufficient numbers which was indeed a great problem faced by the Maharaja in educating his female subjects.

Zanana Classes for Grown-up Girls:

For the education of women and grownup girls who considered themselves too old for attending the girls' school, the Maharaja had ordered the opening of Zanana classes. The women in these classes were given instructions in elements of reading, writing, keeping accounts, drawing, music, needle work and embroidery.

⁶⁴ G. H. Desai & A. B. Clerke, op. cit., p. 316.

In addition to this Zanana class at Baroda, there were three more unaided Zanana classes one each at Petlad, Kathor and Amreli.

As a result of his sincere efforts the percentage of female literates had increased satisfactorily which was evident even in 1891, i.e., after ten years of his effective rule. Table-7 shows that comparing to the figures for females of 1881 the figures for that showed great improvement. In Amreli for instance, the total educated females in 1881 was only 69; and in 1891 it increased to 463; or the increase had been 571 percent. In Baroda city, the increase was over 380 percent. Comparatively the increase was small in the Kadi Division. The least increase was in Navsari; but there the percentage was already high and so the scope for development was less. Taking the state as a whole, there had been an increase of nearly 45 percent in numbers of the educated males and of 236 percent in that of females.

As time passed, female literacy showed increase, as the state and the people began to respond positively. Table -6 shows that general literacy amongst females of Baroda State had increased from the negligible 76 per 10,000 in 1901 to 1235 in 1941. The progress amongst the city female was more rapid and in fact very high as can be seen from table-8.

Table - 8

General literacy among females in Baroda State & City since 1901					
Area	All ages (per 10,000) Females				
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941
Baroda State	76	205	403	617	1235
Baroda City	241	708	1892	1837	2475

Source: *Census of India, 1941.*

Thus though the Maharaja died in 1939 but the progress in female education continued even after his death. At the end of the year 1946 there were in all 293 girls' primary schools in the state of which 283 were Government and 10 were private schools. The number of girls attending these schools was 47,332. Besides these, there were 69,710 girls attending mixed schools. Thus the total number of girls attending primary schools in 1945-46 was 1,17,042 or 8.5 percent (the percentage of boys was 10.8).

To encourage education among girls in secondary level 25 to 45 percent, varying with the district, of the girls studying in secondary schools were awarded free-ship.

There were in total 197 secondary schools in 1946 out of which 2 Government High Schools and 7 Anglo-Vernacular Schools were

especially meant for girls. The total number of pupils in secondary schools during the year was 41,036 of which there were 4235 girls and 36081 boys. Among the mentioned 4235 girls 2481 were in Government schools, 1,706 were in aided schools and 48 were in other recognised institutions.

For higher education though there were no separate colleges for women before independence but in four colleges named Baroda College, Visnagar College, Navsari College and Petlad College there enrolment in 1946 were 177; 3; 24 and 7 respectively.

Thus Baroda State advanced satisfactorily in the promotion and spread of female education before independence under Sayajirao III. His earnest efforts to give special attention to female education and the introduction of free and compulsory primary education were largely responsible for educational development among his female subjects. To encourage education in secondary and higher level the state had a fairly comprehensive scheme of free studentships and scholarships. To encourage education among girls, half fees concession was given in secondary schools and special scholarships were given to poor girls. Six scholarships were also reserved for Muslim girls in secondary schools. As a result of his efforts the number of girls schools and that

of receiving education had increased considerably especially in primary level.

His ideas, methods and activities for women education and reforms created the climate for further awareness and reforms for women in Baroda which continued to show further progress even after his death in 1939.

II.2.3 Role of Chimnabai II

The Maharaja of Baroda in the upliftment of Women:

Chimnabai II, the bold and dynamic wife of Sayajirao III, shared with her illustrious husband, the zeal for social reforms, women's uplift programmes and nationalism. She gave a wholehearted support to Sayajirao's social reform measures. She was moulded by Sayajirao and gradually she in her own right emerged as a prominent women leader of India and a great champion of the women's cause in the early 20th century. She worked for more than half a century for the upliftment of women. She hailed from an orthodox background from the small princely Maratha State of Dewas near Indore.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ "She was illiterate and was entrenched in the orthodox tradition of the Maratha Court. She strictly observed 'Purdah'. The Maharaja could not educate or mould his first wife as he still was dominated by the orthodox section of the court. However, in 1885 he was in command of his state and had started the process of transforming the medieval feudal state of Baroda into a modern progressive state. He was now determined to educate his second wife and instill into her new and progressive ideas, in spite of the opposition from the orthodox family members. He employed two lady teachers, Gangubhai and Nandubhai to teach her Marathi and English respectively. In the beginning the Maharani was not interested in learning, but after her first visit

The wellbeing of women was the main issue which was close to the heart of Chimnabai II. This concern for women spurred her to write a book titled, "The Position of Women in Indian Life", which was published in 1911 and was dedicated to Indian women. It was written in collaboration with a famous scholar S.M. Mitra.

In the preface of the book the Maharani lamented "The cooperation which exists between western men and women in public affairs is practically unknown in India....What can be the reason for this great differences? Should the Indian women continue to be isolated from all public affairs? What is the remedy and how is it to be applied?"⁶⁶ She suggested that the failure of many progressive schemes in India might be due to lack of systematic female co-operation.

The book gives us insight into her thoughts of different ways and means to improve women's position in terms of education, professions, women organization, urban and rural banks, home and

abroad in 1887 her attitude changed and she became a keen and enthusiastic student who learnt Marathi, English, Gujarati, Sanskrit and later also French." Kunjlata Shah N., "Chimnabai II, The enlightened Maharani of Baroda (1871-1958)", P.2.

⁶⁶ Her Highness The Maharani of Baroda and S. M. Mitra, *The Position of Women in Indian life*, London, 1911, p. VII

domestic professions, women organization, applied science and technology, health and hygiene.

Her ideas were not different from the feminists of the 19th century England and Europe. She too like them believed in the different 'Sexual Spheres' and separate but complementary roles for man and women in society. She wrote in her preface, "what is required is not antagonism, but co-operation between the sexes; that women needs the guidance of man to enable her to achieve the highest of which she is capable, as man needs women's help and sympathy to aid him on his path through life. Feminine individuality is essentially from masculine."⁶⁷

The book contained many useful and practical suggestions for women who wanted to take up career or professions either to earn livelihood and become economically independent or to do honorary welfare work for society.⁶⁸ She had analyzed many professions vis-a-vis women in terms of the drawbacks, strengths and feasibility. In the conservative times of 'purdah' she related woman with professions like agriculture and farming, arts and crafts, intellectual occupation,

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. II

⁶⁸ Kunjlata Shah N., op. cit., p. 6.

philanthropic work, hotel industry, superintendents, finance and credit and charitable organizations.

Her vision, revealed in the book long back, was surprisingly close to the reality today. Surprising because her list of home professions for women included vocations like domestic architecture, interior decoration, textile design, furniture carving, temple and mosque decorations, her visualization of women as intellectuals as lecturers and advertisement writers and she saw women as matrons, superintendents and sanitary inspectors in organization and caterers in hotels.

Manu Bhagavan asserts “Chimnabai took an international view of the ‘women’s movement’ and examined the successes and failures of Women across Europe, America, and Japan, and contrasted them with the status of women in India. The book contained a number of radical ideas and assertions, including a critique of the exploitation of female labour, a recommendation for co-operative credit banks, and a discussion of women in male-dominated professions, including law, inspection and advertising.”⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres, Princess, Education and Empire in Colonial India*, New Delhi, 2003, p. 58.

She emphasized that education, organization and specialization were necessary for those women who wanted to pursue successful careers. She strongly believed that “in the proper use of education lies the salvation of her sex.”⁷⁰ She further wrote “it is education and useful organizations that alone can give their freedom and enlightenment.”⁷¹ She advised Indian women to follow their western sisters for setting up organisations.

These views clearly show that Maharani Chimnabai shared the progressive ideas of her husband. She also urged and encouraged female education in the state and gave liberal financial aid to such institution as were engaged in the work of amelioration of women. She set apart two hundred rupees per month for scholarships to girls studying in colleges. Her contribution to women’s progress in the state of Baroda was evident in the various institutes she established, inspired and encouraged. She became the president of four well known females institutions in Baroda, namely, Maharani Chimnabai Mahila Pathasala; Maharani Chimnabai Udyagalaya; Maharani Chimnabai High School; and Maharani Chimnabai Maternity and Child Welfare League.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 14.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 14.

Owing to her clear and open views, the Maharani was unanimously chosen the first president of All Indian Women's conference, held at Pune in January 1927. In a period when conservative beliefs and practices regarding women were very popular and strong in society she surprisingly advocated compulsory primary education for girls and demanded abolition of child marriage at the conference which was attended by some of the dynamic and prominent Indian women of the time including Ms. Sarojini Naidu, Ms. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, Mathu Laxmi Reddy and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

Looking at her illustrious and dynamic career, Chimnabai II can be regarded as one of the leading ladies of India who worked for the cause of Indian women in the early 20th century. "Women from across the globe will gather at the end of the century to ponder over, their future and day to day life..."⁷² was predicted by the Maharani, and so it did happen when ten years back, in 1995, a World Congress solely for women and their peculiar problems was held at Beijing in China.

She encouraged an important women organisation named Chimnabai Stri Samaj which was established in 1913 by Shardaben, an educationist and social reformer who was the wife of Dr. Sumant

⁷² *The Indian Express* (Newspaper), 8th March, 1996, p. 2.

Mehta, a royal physician. She founded this organisation for the middle class women in order to broaden their outlook and to extend their social space. It ran language, nursing, first aid, sewing classes and organised lectures by well known scholars. Chimnabai gave a whole hearted supported to this institution and gave a donation of two thousand rupees to it in 1916.

The most important women's institute inspired and founded by Maharani Chimnabai II was- The Maharani Chimnabai Udhogalaya or The Chimnabai Women's Industrial Home. It was started in 1914 with a view to maintaining and training middle class and working class women especially widows in some crafts, so that they may become self supporting. Its activities were organizations of classes in sewing, embroidery, bookbinding, calico printing, carpet preparing, weaving and cooking. It also organised for sale of these articles. Maharani Chimnabai donated one lakh rupees as corpus of this fund to be utilized for providing scholarships to female students for receiving higher education in Bombay.

Moreover, she donated six thousand rupees in starting a women's college in Baroda in 1920 and thus Chimnabai Mahila Pathasala was established. But time was not ripe to start a separate

college for women. For conducting maternity and child welfare work Shree Maharani Chimnabai Maternity and Child Welfare League was founded in Baroda City. Its income was Rs.10,736 in 1938-39. The league had employed a lady sub-assistant surgeon, four health visitors, and a male sub-assistant surgeon for school medical inspection, and was running four baby clinic centres.

A trust called Shree Maharani Shanta Devi Trust was formed in 1939. Its aims were i) to provide medical relief to women; ii) to construct, equip and manage institutions for this purpose, specially maternity centres, child welfare clinics, centres for antenatal advice to woman and similar institutions; iii) to supervise and control associations, trusts etc., in the state working with similar objects and help them with grants; and iv) to arrange for the education of women in medicine, nursing etc., by offering them scholarships and stipends.

The Government had transferred five lakhs of rupees to the Trust representing the amount accumulated from the fines levied under the Child Marriage Act and paid every year to the Trust about 50,000 rupees of which about Rs.40,000 will be from the yearly income of such fines and Rs.10,000 from the Sayajirao III Memorial Fund.

Besides, Shree Maharani Chimnabai Maternity and Child Welfare League continued to do maternity and child welfare work.

Thus women organisations established, inspired and encouraged by Chimnabai II rendered very useful services for the women of Baroda. The ideas and works of Maharani Chimnabai II show how she co-operated with Sayajirao III in his social work and reforms. The role played by her in social and educational spheres might be secondary but it was no less insignificant in the life and work of Sayajirao and her contribution was no less important to the society at large which becomes clear from the various women organisations established by her in Baroda.

Thus the women of Baroda were benefited by the social reform measures introduced by Sayajirao III by way of legislations and by the spread of education and also by the efforts of Chimnabai for their emancipation through establishing various women organization.

The ideas, methods and activities of the royal couple for women education and reforms created the climate for further awareness and reforms for women in Baroda in particular and Gujarat in general,

especially among Brahmin, Bania and Patidar women which continued to show further progress even long after his death.

Among the three higher caste women i.e., Brahmin, Bania and Patidans, I have chosen the third caste group i.e., the Patidar women because from an agricultural group they have successfully emerged as an influential business community of Gujarat through ages and had made significant progress in business, trade and commerce. Therefore I felt curious about the condition and status of women of this influential community and tried to find what were the social problems faced by this caste group? And what steps had been taken by the members of this community to improve women's status by progressive legislations and also by education? I have chosen Baroda for my research field because during my M.Phil. studies on "Women Education & Social Reforms Under Sir Sayajirao III" I have found that significant measures had been taken by the Maharaja for the development of women education which I have narrated in this chapter in the former pages. Therefore I tried to find out how many the women of Patidars- the influential agriculturists who also became successful business community of Gujarat responded to Maharaja's wise educational steps. Therefore the next chapter is designed to access the social reform measures & educational development of Patidar women.