

CHAPTER -2

EXAMINING THE ABSENCE AND PRESENCE OF WOMEN AND THEIR ISSUES THROUGH THE AGENCY OF 'REFORMER MEN' IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The nineteenth century is believed to be the epitome of change where the impact of 'modernization' was the most visible. Modernization here means a shift in the existing practices of the pre-modern period. The European society as we know it underwent a great transformation. Most of the social groups were affected by this change, and certain questions which were never even thought of were brought to the forefront.¹ The shift in the people's mentality and existence soon brought into light the question of women and their issues. There was a consciousness of separate gendered roles of men and women and hence existed in separate spheres.² It was laid out that women were best equipped for the private or domestic realm, while men were naturally suited to the active, aggressive, and intellectual domains of public life. In the nineteenth century, some philosophers and thinkers began to explore the subject and questioned the pre-defined roles of women. For instance, John Stuart Mill in '*The Subjection of Women*' voiced the thoughts and aspirations of many women who had already started the battle for their emancipation. During the time when Mill wrote '*The Subjection of Women*', women didn't have the right to vote. A married woman wasn't considered a separate legal entity from her husband, and any property or money she owned came under his governance. A common justification for women's inferior legal status was that they were morally superior to men, and therefore better restricted to the home, where they would be

¹ Banner, L. W. & Handlin, O. (1980). *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a Radical for Women's Rights*. Harper Collins; Donald, D. (1960). *An Excess of Democracy: The American Civil War and the Social Process*. Clarendon Press.; Stamp, K. M. (Ed.). (1965). *The causes of civil war*. World Bank Publications; Lindenmeyer, K. (Ed.). (2000). *Ordinary women, extraordinary lives: Women in American history* (No. 6); Rowman & Littlefield. (No. 6).; Rowman & Littlefield. Miller, M. R. (1998). "My Part Alone": *The World of Rebecca Dickinson, 1787-1802*. The New England Quarterly, 71(3), 341-377.; Women, O. (2000). *Extraordinary Lives: Women in American History*. Ed. Kriste Lindenmeyer. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources.; Schlereth, T. J. (1992). *Victorian America: Transformations in everyday life, 1876-1915*. Journal of American History.; Sterling, D. (Ed.). (1997). *We are your sisters: Black women in the nineteenth century*. WW Norton & Company; Sutherland, D. E. (2006). *Expansion of Everyday Life* (p). University of Arkansas Press.

² Ruskin, J. (1905). *Sesame and Lilies; The Ethics of the Dust; The Crown of Wild Olive: With Letters on Public Affairs, 1859-1866* (Vol. 18). London George Allen, 156, Charing Cross Road. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

protected from the polluting influence of public life and could shape the morals of the future generation. Mill argues in favor of legal and social equality between men and women. He writes that '*the legal subordination of one sex to the other*' is '*wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement*'.³ It was widely believed that women were more emotional than rational and did not have the intellectual capabilities of men. Mill argues that if women seem emotional, passive, and apolitical, it is because they have been brought up to be so. Mill insists that until society treats men and women equally, it will be impossible to know the natural abilities of women, or whether there are inherent differences between the sexes.

Victorian age has been often called the 'Age of Reform',⁴ but it meant reform mostly for men. Women during this time did not have many rights, especially elite women. They were viewed as housewives and mothers. However, in this era, many women did express their thoughts and ideas through writing. Throughout the nineteenth century, a considerably larger number of women chose literary life. This was not an easy path, and it was challenging for women to be successfully accepted in the male-dominated field. Despite this, women author's market share increased by the end of the nineteenth century. For example, many Victorian women writers began their careers by publishing a novel or poetry collection in book form during this time. for example, Mary Russell Mitford (1787–1855) launches her popular prose sketch, *Our Village*, in the *Lady's Magazine*;⁵ Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–61) began her literary career at age eleven by writing a Homeric epic '*The Battle of Marathon*'⁶; Christina Rossetti (1830–94) wrote her first poem at age twelve '*Verses: Dedicated to Her Mother*'⁷; Margaret Oliphant (1828–97) also began writing at a young age, composed her first novel '*Christian Melville*'; ⁸Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–65) wrote a travel sketch '*Clopton Hall*' which was published in *Visit to Remarkable Places* (1840)⁹.

³ Mill, J. S. (1869). *The Subjection of Women* (Vol. 1). Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer. United Kingdom.

⁴ Trevelyan, G. M. (2011). *English Social History*. Surjeet Publications.; Burns, A., & Innes, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850*. Cambridge University Press.; Tickner, F. W. (1923). *Women in English Economic History*. JM Dent & sons Limited.

⁵ Peterson, L. H. (Ed.). (2015). *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing*. Cambridge University Press.

⁶ Peterson, L. H. (Ed.). (2015).15

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.16

⁹ Peterson, L. H. (Ed.). (2015).16

Women, however, faced lesser success in other fields. Not everybody could be a writer or an author. Even though many elite or middle-class women needed to earn to support their family, their moving out from the private sphere to the public sphere was looked down upon. When the women entered the workplaces, they were not made to feel welcome and were often persecuted.¹⁰

The influence of the change of the nineteenth century was also witnessed in India. It is difficult to point out whether the changes in the thought process of some of the Indians were because of the Western influences or it was organic in nature. Either way India in the 19th century also witnessed a series of reform movements undertaken in various parts of the Subcontinent. These movements were oriented toward a restructuring of Indian society and removing certain apparent anomalies. The nature of reforms was characteristically focused upon the issues of caste, religion, and gender. It was realized by various social reformers when pointed out by the colonial administrators, that women have been ill-treated in Indian society. Consequently, many individuals and movements strove to study the extent of women's problems. The Indians which are to mean 'men' took it upon themselves to correct the wrongs or at least point out the wrongs done to women. Unfortunately, they did not differ much from their colonial counterpart and discussed the same problems as the colonists did such as female infanticide, lack of education in women, *Sati pratha*, and widow remarriage, etc. Questions such as women's right to property or right to work and other such issues were not discussed at all. The biggest problem was that women themselves did not have any voice. In other words, the socio-religious reform was a mouthpiece of the emerging Western mindset dominated by influential males.

'Reformer Men' (whether Indian or European) believed society could not progress if the women were not treated well. They believed that this was going to be possible only with the use of Western tools like education and legislation. So far as education was concerned, it was meant to change the outlook of society towards women rather than the outlook of women. It was mostly structured around creating 'modern' wives for Westernized men. Yet the Westernized men remained neither 'Western' nor 'Modern'. They could hardly get out of their cemented mindset. They did not understand the need for women to be treated as equal to men. Although, some of them did feel the need to uplift the downtrodden and servile groups. The work was to make them great or at least put them on the path to greatness. Men, therefore,

¹⁰ Ellis, S. S. (1843). *The Wives of England: Their Relative Duties, Domestic Influence, and Social Obligations*. Appleton. London. 15

worked more for their personal gratification rather than for correcting a balance in the society. As a result, they were declared as ‘pioneers’ a credit which they deservedly earned, for they at least provided a platform to address concerns related to women and initiated a dialogue. Men, in their capacities, whether as a reformer or a litterateur endeavored to work towards the betterment of women’s condition in Indian society. ‘Reformer Men’ of Gujarat were also sufficiently motivated to take up the cause of women of Gujarat. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, English East India Company had acquired administrative control over the districts of Surat, Ahmedabad, Bharuch, and Kheda. Due to its proximity to Bombay, Gujarat had better exposure to Western influences which led to the emergence of a new middle class. There were many reformers from Gujarat such as Durgaram Mehtaji, Karsandas Mulji, and Narmadshankar Dave, etc. who took it upon themselves to bring the questions on women to the fore. Although, throughout their discourses on women, the treatment of women did not seem to have changed much. The focus of this chapter is to understand the relation between ‘Reformer Men’ and their subject: the women that they set about to reform.

SECTION-I WOMEN’S ISSUES AND THE AGENCY OF ENGLISH ‘REFORMER MEN’

“To kill a hundred Cows is equal to killing a Brahman;

To kill a hundred Brahmans is equal to killing a Woman;

To kill a hundred Women is equal to killing a Child;

To kill a hundred Children is equal to telling an Untruth.”¹¹

‘Women’ as a category has not really been central in the discourse carried out by the ‘Reformist Men’ of Gujarat, as much as they have been discussed in other parts of the Indian Subcontinent. Women’s issues were first discussed by the colonial administrators. The English officials maintained detailed records of their notes and communication on those Indian practices which they felt garnered attention in their Indian official circles as well the circles overseas. These sources are located in various archives in Gujarat and Maharashtra and hence are considered

¹¹ Moor, E. (Ed.). (1811). *Hindu Infanticide: An Account of the Measures Adopted for Suppressing the Practice of the Systematic Murder by Their Parents of Female Infants; with Incidental Remarks on Other Customs Peculiar to the Natives of India. Ed., with Notes and Illustrations, by Edward Moor.* J. Johnson and Company. London. 166

as traditional sources. An attempt is made in this section to revisit these sources and to search for women in them.

The term English 'Reformer-Men' is used in this chapter to categorize those Englishmen who were considered Indophiles and were concerned with women's issues. They were the ones who discussed issues such as the practice of *Sati* and female infanticide but never rape, child marriage, lack of education, or any other uncomfortable issues. The Englishmen in Western India were majorly concerned with the issue of female infanticide.¹² Lots of attention was paid to these colonial administrators to showcase how Indians treated their women. It however becomes clear that most of the communities of Gujarat did not practice female infanticide. There were also several families amongst the *Kshatriya* clans of western Gujarat who dissented from the tradition. Those communities who did practice female infanticide were mostly those who gave much value to their social position. It is unclear as to what women felt because the English Reformer-Men did not have direct access to elite women. This did not stop them from trying. The questions raised by the English 'Reformer-Men' were mostly to reconfigure Indian society to further the interests of the Company administration.

1.1. FEMALE INFANTICIDE

James Tod in his work on Rajasthan writes about the way in which Rajput women were oppressed.¹³ Like Gujarat or most of South Asia, a son was preferred to a daughter. This did not mean that girl infants were killed. This practice was common only in certain regions of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The discussion on the question of female infanticide in Gujarat was first carried out by Jonathan Duncan, the Governor of Bombay Presidency. It was brought to the notice of the government that there were certain communities in peninsular Gujarat which considered daughters as burden and hence were "put to death".¹⁴ Apparently, the issue had become a cause of concern for many parties such as Nawab of Surat, Gaekwad princess and common people of Kutch and Kathiawar. Jonathan Duncan shared his abhorrence of the custom

¹² Cormack, J. (1815). *Account of the Abolition of Female Infanticide in Guzerat: With Considerations on the Question of Promoting the Gospel in India*. Black. London; Walker, A. (1856). *Measures Adopted for the Suppression of Female Infanticide in the Province of Kattywar, &c* (No. 39). Government at Bombay Education Society's Press Bombay; Wilson, J. (1855). *History of the Suppression of Infanticide in Western India Under the Government of Bombay: Including Notices of the Provinces and Tribes in which the Practice Has Prevailed*. Smith, Taylor. London; Cave-Browne, J. (1857). *Indian Infanticide: Its Origin, Progress, and Suppression*. WH Allen and Company. London; Wright, C., & Brainerd, J. A. (1869). *Historic Incidents and Life in India*. JA Brainerd. London.

¹³ Tod, J. (1914). *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, or, the Central and Western Rajpoot States of India* (Vol. 1). G. Routledge & Sons. London.

¹⁴ Walker, A. (1856). 441

of female infanticide with other Englishmen such as Captain Seton stationed at Mandavi and Alexander Walker. Captain Seton, in fact, goes on to say that “*every female infant born in the Rajah’s family, if of a Rani or lawful wife, was immediately put to death*”.¹⁵ Inadvertently in their accounts they discussed what women felt or did not feel about female infanticide. Edward Moor in his account on ‘*Measures Adopted for Suppressing the Practice of the Systematic Murder by Their Parents of Female Infants*’ describes a conversation that was held between Gajra Bai, a daughter of Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad and perhaps Jonathan Duncan. He writes about Dhankurbai, a wife of Damajirao-II from Kutch, who did not have any children as girls were born to her. Upon asking how she survived? She recounted that she survived as her mother fought for her, “*particular affection in the breast of her mother*”.¹⁶ A peculiar assumption or observation was related by one Captain Seton to Duncan in 1804, where he wrote that women were not only complicit in the ‘destruction’ of their daughters but in case if the female infants were saved, they were held in contempt and were called as ‘*majen*’ (which was an abuse for their Muslim fathers).

The Superintendent of Police for the town of Bombay made a report, which was reproduced by Moor discusses a statement given by one Damaji Kutcheraz, a merchant from Kutch. As per the report, those men (fathers) who allowed female infanticide did so because of their ‘*...bold domineering spirit, do not wish their daughters to obey their husbands.*’¹⁷ This was further corroborated by a nurse or a midwife.

Alexander Walker was another English ‘Reformer Man’ who deeply engaged with the issue of female infanticide. He became a lynchpin between the local kingdoms practicing female infanticide and the Bombay government. As a Resident of Baroda state, he discussed the issue with the king of Morbi. To his surprise, it was his mother who replied asking Walker to ‘*drop the subject, as the Jarejhas never brought up women*’.¹⁸ Walker, known as an Indophile, drew common inference with the practice of sending the daughters to a nunnery in Europe. He, while attempting to assess as to why some girls were allowed to survive, declared that it was mostly to do with how independent the mother was or how much influence she had. Upon making further inquiries it was found out that women were used as a tool to conduct the act where the

¹⁵ *Female Infanticide in Central and Western India*. Parliamentary Papers Infanticide, India. {1824, 1828, 1843}. (1846). The Calcutta Review, Vol. I. No II. 372.

¹⁶ Moor, E. (Ed.). (1811). 18

¹⁷ Ibid.27

¹⁸ Ibid.9

mother often had little or no power to affect any change. She (the mother) acted on the instructions received from her husband or the eldest male in the family and assisted in killing female infants. Moore does mention a few instances where the blandishments and influence of the mother succeeded in saving the infant but does not elaborate upon it. He did marvel at why women would carry out this heinous act? To this, he reasoned that it was perhaps because the girls were married at a young age and hence socially, they imbibe the custom and often end up becoming the perpetrators.¹⁹

Moore in his account also mentions female Rajgurus who were responsible for executing the infants. There were certain communities that did not practice female infanticide. These were Bulak, Battan, Sar Kabar, Hoti, Ubra, Jarria, Gafan, Murasi, Mokara, Kaya, Retreka, Mor, Rao, Jessa, Dessa, Danrar, Dettia, Joria, Adria, Verai, Kunerde, and Vim.²⁰ The reason why they did not kill their female infants was not because, they wanted to prevent the act, it was mostly due to 'accidental circumstances and impressions'. Many communities in Kutch and Kathiawar were influenced by Jains, who believed that it was a sin to kill anyone. Saving a daughter in the Jadeja community was a difficult task and the man had to work hard to get his daughter married off. Only those who were affluent were able to save their daughters from being killed at birth. Apparently after begetting a son often stopped sexual intercourse with their wives for the fear of daughters being born into their family. Moore cites the example of one Jadeja Mokaji, a Bhayaad Gondal chief, who decided not to consummate his marriage for many years for the fear of a daughter being born to him. Despite much pressure from society, he stayed determined. Eventually, the Chief of Gondal intervened and publicly proclaimed that Mokaji could 'preserve' his daughters. Mokaji consummated his marriage, and four daughters were born to him. This earned scoff from the Jadeja community. However, Mokaji stayed adamant, and the girls not only survived but were married to chiefs of Dhrangadhra, Wadhwan, Limbdi, and Wankaner.²¹ The fact Mokaji was a Kabirpanthi added to his determination. Another example is that of the chief of Kersura. His daughter survived because of the kindness of an Arab Jemadar (mercenary soldier), who gave up all his arrears on the condition that the Jadeja chief would not kill his newborn girl child.²² There were some men who let their daughters live

¹⁹ Moor, E. (Ed.). (1811). .36

²⁰ Ibid.59

²¹ Ibid.64

²² Ibid.67

out of principle, duty, and affection such as the families of Rajkot and Kothara despite their impoverishment. Moore observes that such men were not only affectionate towards their daughters but respected them and treated them like boys. This could perhaps be to show them equal to boys or to assume that they were the father of boys instead of girls. Moore also makes a case for the illegitimate daughters who had a better chance of survival as they could be married to low-status *Kshatriyas* or even Muslims.²³

Colonel Walker and other English officers were impressed by the Chief of Mallia, although they gave reluctant credit to the mother rather than the father.²⁴ The efforts made by the English India Company resulted in a failure. Apparently, when Walker approached the Morvi chief to abandon infanticide, he was hopeful, as the Chief was quite under the influence of his mother. Initial correspondence between the two raised great hopes for Walker. The dowager queen acquiesced to at least initiating a dialogue and held several consultations with the other women of the house.²⁵ Apparently, the women proposed the abolition of the practice. However, this alarmed the Jadeja community, and they objected to this interaction. The dowager queen refused to give an audience and wrote to him explicitly that she could not go against the community and will allow female infanticide in her palace.²⁶ Although not with her, but Alexander Walker did meet with some success as other communities who were not practicing female infanticide began to condemn this practice openly.

Although infant children were killed, the killing of grown-up daughters was unheard of. It was because of the disapproval of the society of anyone who would kill a girl after she had grown up. Despite the claims that women or mothers were the perpetrators, they often acted on orders from their men and on one or two instances, were forced to kill their older daughters.²⁷

When one looks at the position of women in the 19th century, it was no different than their status in the earlier times, whether ancient or medieval. Apart from these practices, female infanticide was largely practiced among *Leva Kunbis* of central Gujarat.²⁸ The main factors

²³ Moor, E. (Ed.). (1811). 69-70

²⁴ Ibid. 99

²⁵ Cormack, J. (1815). 145

²⁶ Moor, E. (Ed.). (1811). 385

²⁷ Ibid. 408

²⁸ Vishwanath, L. S. (1998). Efforts of Colonial State to Suppress Female Infanticide: Use of Sacred Texts, Generation of Knowledge. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1104-1112

that encouraged this practice among these communities were common to the Jadeja, the heavy expenditure incurred in girl's marriage, the dowry system, and restricted marriage alliances.

Another reason for "*Doodh Peeti*" was the huge cost involved in the marriage of daughters. In the year 1856 when the anti-girl child killing campaign was launched, the *Lewa Kunbis* of Tarapur in Khambhat agreed to reduce the cost of marriage. Similarly, party members from villages in Kheda district like Nadiad, Borsad, Napad, and Mahuva agreed for the same.

Acting Collector and Judge of Ahmedabad Mr. Borodale according to rule 1870 provisions of Article 8 Implemented prevention of Infanticide. Hence, they were requested to prevent the killing of girls in Kadwa Kanbi, as the cost of marriage was not reduced despite the confessions. Despite all these efforts, the Jadeja Rajputs continued "*Doodh Peeti*" in Leva Kunbi of Kadwa. This shows that the government was totally excluded from law enforcement. So, it was decided that in the case of Leva Kunbi, they should record the birth and death of their children.²⁹

Attempts were also made to raise public opinion against this practice but with the end of the English East India Company's administration in 1858, the issue appears to have lost its merit. This was partly because the British had learnt their lesson of not interfering into the social customs of the Indians. Secondly, the Government of India Act of 1858 had divided the Subcontinent into two administrative divisions: British India and the princely states. Most of the cases of female infanticide fell into the domain of princely states and as a result the English officers rested the case. Lastly, Indian social reformer men had taken up the mantle of carrying out reforms. The English no longer needed to prove themselves as more just rulers.

1.2. SATI

The practice of performing *Sati* (women burning themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands) was another custom that bothered the English 'Reformer Men'. In 1820 the first Blue Book on *Sati* was published, and the following year Sir Fowell Buxton, a Member of

²⁹ Note: Dowry system or what is called *Paithan* in these *nyats* is a large amount of money in daily activities in the year 1861. Consumption increased as it continued. This custom does not end today, in fact, it has found a new form, in which The boys ask for travel expenses, home decoration, entertainment equipment etc. From the Dowry Prohibition Act of 181, these Efforts have been made to curb evil practice, but no significant control has been achieved.

Parliament in England initiated the first Parliamentary debate on the issue.³⁰ While expressing his thoughts he said,

*“I have recently received a distressing account of a horrifying case of Sati (Suttee) from a Judge who witnessed this tragic event. The incident involved a Brahman widow who, following her husband's death, decided to immolate herself. Her uncle prepared the funeral pyre, but the intense pain became unbearable for her. She courageously leaped out of the flames, desperate to escape her fate. Unfortunately, three individuals seized her and forcibly threw her back onto the pyre. Once again, she managed to escape the burning flames and sought refuge near a nearby well. An attendant placed a sheet on the ground, pretending to offer help and safety, but she refused, fearing that they would once again subject her to the pyre. She expressed her determination to face a life of destitution rather than ascend the funeral pyre. However, she was deceived into believing her safety was assured, and she reluctantly laid herself down. In a heart-wrenching turn of events, she was immediately bound and cast back into the flames. As she attempted another desperate escape, one of the attending Brahmans ruthlessly severed her head with a sword, finally putting an end to her excruciating suffering.”*³¹

In the above account, it becomes evident that the practice of *Sati* was forced upon them by societal and familial pressures. The belief underlying this practice was that if a woman chose to commit *Sati*, it would bring an end to her suffering and grant her salvation. This practice was not limited to specific castes or regions and the instances of *Sati* can be found across various parts of Western India, demonstrating its prevalence and widespread nature. On April 22, 1828, a tragic incident of *Sati* took place in Bharuch. Divali, the wife of Daulatrai Desai and belonging to the Anavil caste of Brahmins, decided to perform *Sati*. Despite the efforts of Mr. Kirkland, the Senior Assistant and Criminal Judge of Bharuch, Divali and her relatives crossed the Narmada River and proceeded with the sacrifice.³² The officials were helpless in preventing this Act. Similarly, the practice of *Sati* was also common in the region of Kutch. Alexander Walker, noted that among the *Jadeja* community, it was common for women to perform *Sati*, with the exception of *rakhails* or mistresses. An example of this occurred when Rao Lakha, the chief of *Kutch*, passed away, and fifteen of his mistresses were compelled to

³⁰ Hansard, T. C. (1821). *The Parliamentary Debates* (Vol. 5). Published under the Superintendence of TC Hansard. Entry for 20 June 1821. Missionary Register. 1830. London. 251

³¹ Phelps, M. (1831). *The Suttee, and Other Poems*. Bradford. 34

³² Maharashtra State Archives. Judicial Department. Vol. 23/167 of 1828. Bombay. 188-190

end their lives on his funeral pyre. Among these women, two were Muslim concubines, while the others were Hindus. Interestingly, none of his wives chose to commit *Sati*. It seems that for women, participating in *Sati* was considered a matter of honor. However, it is important to note that the act of *Sati* was not mandatory for either wives or mistresses among the Jadeja community. This distinction arose because lower-ranking *Kshatriya* communities expected their women to practice *Sati*, which led to deviations from the practice among the higher-ranking *Kshatriya* groups.³³

According to Sir John Malcolm's account in 1823, it has been observed that there have been only three or four instances of *Sati* annually in Central India for the past twenty years. Unlike the distressing scenes witnessed during the funeral rites of princes in Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Udaipur, where numerous unwilling women were forcefully placed on the pyre, such practices were uncommon in this region.³⁴ Many cases of *Sati* were recorded in the State of Idar. In a notable incident in 1833, the Raja's funeral in Idar witnessed the cremation of the raja himself, along with seven queens, two concubines, four female slaves, and a male servant, all in the presence of a large gathering. Similarly, at the funeral of the Raja in Ahmednagar two years later, an act of *Sati* was reported.³⁵

Similarly, the Political Agent in Kutch, in April 1840, reported two cases of *Sati* occurring in Bhuj.³⁶ In a letter from Sir James Rivett Carnac, the Governor of Bombay, to His Highness Rao Desuljee of Kutch, dated August 4th, 1840, "*it is mentioned that another cruel practice occasionally takes place in Kutch: the rite of Sati, where wives are burned alive with their deceased husbands. My esteemed friend, you are well aware that although this practice exists, it is not mandated as a religious duty by Hinduism.*"

Rajasthan, known as another stronghold of *Sati*, is said to have more than 200 temples commemorating this practice. The military virtues of fearlessness and valor were highly esteemed, alongside the notion of honor, which played a significant role. A glorious death in

³³ Malcolm, J. (2011). *A Memoir of Central India: Including Malwa, and Adjoining Provinces* (Vol. 2). Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 171

³⁴ Rose, H. A. (1911). *Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and Northwest Frontier*. Government Printing Press. Punjab. 201

³⁵ Peggs, J. (1832). *India's Cries to British Humanity: Relative to Infanticide, British Connection with Idolatry, Ghaut Murders, Suttee, Slavery, and Colonization in India: to which are Added Humane Hints for the Melioration of the State of Society in British India*. author. Simpkin and Marshals Stationer's Court. 48

³⁶ Peggs, R. J. (1844). *The Infanticide's Cry to Britain*. The Present State of Infanticide in India. London: Ward & Co. (MA: JRA). 102

battle was embraced by men, while women sought a fiery end through the rituals of *Jauhar* or *Sati*, viewing it as a preferable fate to defeat, dishonor, or the threat of ravishment. Examples include the death of Bhim Singh of Marwar in 1803, where twenty-eight individuals, including rulers, performed *Sati*, and the demise of Raja Budh Singh of Bundi in 1843, which witnessed the self-immolation of eighty-four women.³⁷

Rajput women held the ideal of death on their husband's funeral pyre as the highest form of glory, deeply ingrained in their psyche. It was believed that by attaining the glorious death of a *Sati*, a woman, considered of lower caste compared to men, could achieve salvation and be reborn as a Rajput male in her next life. The commemorative slabs dedicated to the deceased often depicted the husband riding on a decorated horse, with the figures of the women who became his *Sati* wives engraved alongside, their arms crossed over their chests, symbolizing their ultimate sacrifice.³⁸

The prevalence of *Sati* became so widespread that it started to be commemorated through the inscription of courageous and virtuous acts on memorial stones. These memorial stones, commonly known as hero stones or '*Paliyas*' in Gujarat, can be found abundantly in mainland Gujarat, Saurashtra, and Kutch.³⁹ They are also referred to as "*Sati stones*". The account reveals the typical circumstances surrounding the practice of *Sati* in Gujarat. Manishankar, a thirty-year-old Modh Brahman, tragically died or was killed in a brawl. His wife Parvati, a passionate woman of about twenty-five years, was deeply devastated by her husband's sudden demise. Amidst the grief and lamentation of others near the lifeless body, an elderly woman from the household subtly inquired whether Parvati had contemplated immolating herself with her husband. Motivated by religious fervor, the somber prospect of widowhood, and a desire for eternal recognition, Parvati heeded the suggestion and exclaimed, "*Je Ambe Je Ambe*," meaning Hail to *Amba*. Following her self-immolation, a masonry platform or *devadi* would typically

³⁷ Thompson, E. (1928). *Suttee A Historical and Philosophical Enquiry into the Hindu Rite of Widow-Burning*. George Allen & Unwind Ltd. London.106

³⁸ Hervey, C. (1892). *Some records of crime: Being the diary of a year, official and particular, of an officer of the Thuggee and Dacoitie Police* (Vol. 1). S. Low, Marston. 211

³⁹ Vaidya, M. (2013). *Paliyas in Kutch: Glimpses of Women in the Past*. *International multidisciplinary Journal of Applied Research*. Vol. 1. Issue 4 July 4. ISSN 2320 - 7620

be erected at the site, often by the chief or sometimes by her family members, as a commemoration of her sacrifice.⁴⁰

Among the most revered *Sati* memorials in Gujarat, significant ones include the tombs of Shivkorbai, a Nagar Brahman woman in Surat, and a Vanjara woman in Valod, located in the Bardoli sub-division of Surat. In the Borsad sub-division of Kaira, the tomb of Dhankorbai, a Sathodra Nagar Brahman woman, holds great sanctity. Similarly, in Viramgam, Ahmedabad, the tomb of Rajbai, a Bharvad woman known for her exceptional beauty, is regarded with reverence. In Mahi Kantha, a Modh Vania woman's tomb is venerated, along with the tombs of several Bhansali women in Kutch. Rajbai of Viramgam, in particular, was renowned for her stunning appearance, which caught the attention of a Muslim noble residing nearby. The noble, accompanied by his companions, attempted to forcibly take Rajbai. In response, numerous Bharvads came to Rajbai's defense and repelled the Musalmans, albeit at the cost of around 200 Bharvads losing their lives, including Rajbai's husband. Influenced by her love for her husband and haunted by the consequences her beauty had brought upon her people, Rajbai chose to perform *Sati* by immolating herself alongside her deceased husband.⁴¹

Sati has been a highly controversial practice in various regions of Western India. Widows were frequently denied support by their husband's families, and they were viewed as burdensome dependents. This heartless pragmatism was disguised under the guise of cultural and traditional imperatives. Consequently, the act of *Sati* was perceived as the utmost virtue for women. By sacrificing themselves ritually, these women attained the status of goddesses (*Sati Mata*), as their honor was believed to be preserved through this act of self-sacrifice.

In the year 1829 by the regulation of XVIII *Sati* was made a punishable offense with fine and imprisonment. The Bombay Government took decisive action in November 1830 to address the practice of *Sati*. However, it is important to note that even prior to this official ban, there were instances where British officials demonstrated sincere efforts to save the lives of women who found themselves in the tragic circumstances of being widows. These officials⁴² recognized the inherent injustice and cruelty of the practice and were motivated by a genuine

⁴⁰ Campbell, J. M. & Enthoven, R. E. C. (1901). *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency. Vol. IX, Part: I. Gujarat population: Hindus*. Government Central Press.360

⁴¹ Campbell, J. M. & Enthoven, R. E. C. (1901). 359

⁴² Criminal Judge of Bharuch Mr. Kirkland in 1828, he tried to prevent Diwali and her relatives from performing *Sati* however he failed. Maharashtra State Archives.Judicial Department, Vol. 23/167 of 1828.188-90. Bombay; James Piggs in Surat 1834, Piggs, Peggs, R. J. (1844). 10

desire to protect the lives of these unfortunate women. Their endeavors exemplified the early recognition and acknowledgment of the need for intervention to prevent such tragedies. The subsequent formal prohibition implemented by the Bombay Government in November 1830 solidified the stance against *Sati* and paved the way for further measures aimed at eradicating this deeply rooted tradition.

After the Bombay Government declared the practice of *Sati* illegal, it embarked on a determined mission to enforce this prohibition not only within its own territories but also in the princely states of Gujarat. Engagements were established with native princes, such as those of Devgadhi Baria (1840), Baroda (1840), Lunawada (1840), Rajpipla (1840), Mahikanta (1843), and Palanpur (1848),⁴³ to extend the scope of the law. While some rulers initially violated the ban, the Bombay Government firmly confronted them, ensuring that severe actions were taken against both the princes and the relatives who participated in the *Sati* ceremony. A notable instance occurred in 1862 when a case of *Sati* took place in the State of Sirohi (Rajasthan),⁴⁴ resulting in heavy fines and imprisonment for the ruler and the individuals involved. These efforts by the Bombay Government reflected its unwavering commitment to upholding the abolition of *Sati* and deterring any attempts to revive the practice.

The practice of *Sati* was a deeply entrenched and harmful tradition that plagued Indian society for centuries. The immolation of widows on their husband's funeral pyres was not only a reflection of gender inequality but also a manifestation of various social, cultural, and religious norms that perpetuated the subjugation of women. This practice resulted in the loss of countless innocent lives and perpetuated the notion that a woman's identity and worth were solely tied to her husband. English reformer men played a significant role in challenging and stopping the practice of *Sati*. They used legislative and administrative measures, as well as raising awareness among the Indian population, to curb this. The introduction of laws, such as Lord William Bentinck's Regulation XVII, 1829, which made *Sati* illegal, was a significant milestone in ending this barbaric practice.

⁴³ Maharashtra State Archive. Political Department. Vol. 81/2087 of 1848.

⁴⁴ Maharashtra State Archives. Judicial Department. Bombay. Vol. 20/167 of 1828.214

SECTION-II: WOMEN'S ISSUES THROUGH THE AGENCY OF INDIAN 'REFORMER MEN'

In Western India things began to change when the upper castes began to be influenced by western ideas. This was a social group that although did not have wealth but were armed with ideas of modernization. For example, Durgaram Mehtaji, Narmadshankar Dave, Dalpatram, Karsandas Mulji, or Navalram. The narrative by men on women in the nineteenth century was influenced by the colonial mindset and Western influences. It was this very mindset that began to see points of problems where women's issues were concerned. The major women's issues that were raised by men in Western India were infant and child marriage, the miserable condition of widows, female infanticide, and *Sati*. Apart from this lesser attention was paid to lack of educated women or education among women. Females since their birth were considered a burden in many communities of Gujarat.⁴⁵ Such as Jadeja Rajputs of Kutch⁴⁶ and Kunbis of central Gujarat⁴⁷, Lewa patidars, Jethwa clan of Run of Kutch.⁴⁸ Their importance was believed to have been restricted as mothers and nurturers. A girl belonging to a higher caste group or a lower one was believed to rise at a subsistence level. Apparently, their presence was noted only when she stepped out of a private space into a public space and did something extraordinary.

The truth of the matter is women's lives have not been recorded and thus have not been mapped. There have been (must have been) many instances where the ordinary lives of women did create extraordinary opportunities for men. Nonetheless, history is not based on confiture but facts. Facts, which are based on records left by interested parties. Due to a lack of sources, attention has been paid to what men thought women's problems were.

⁴⁵ Census report showed the *Jadejas*, who had had virtually no daughters in 1805, had a sex ratio of 47 females to every 100 males by 1852, and by 1872 it was claimed that the ratio was 90 to 100. (*Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, New Series. Nos. 294, 295, and 337. Bombay. 1895. Papers Relating to the Revision Survey Settlement(s) of the Anand Taluka, the Nadiad Taluka, and the Borsad Taluka of the Kaira Collectorate (hereafter SRBG NS 294, 295, 337.48)(The overall sex ratio among the Kanbis in Kaira district, based on this census, was 72 to 100; the talukas that later became Nadiad, Anand, and Borsad had the lower ratios of 70, 5 and 71); Wilson, J. (1855). *History of the Suppression of Infanticide in Western India*. Smith Taylor and Co. Bombay. 36

⁴⁶ Walker, A. (1856). 81

⁴⁷ Vishwanath, L. S. (1998). 1104-1112

⁴⁸ Alexander Walker, the Resident at Baroda reported to Duncan in 1800 that his inquiries showed that in the family of the Rana of Porbandar, the head of the Jethwa clan, not a single female child had been preserved for more than a hundred years; Vishwanath, L. S. (1998). 1104-1112

2.1. WIDOW REMARRIAGE

The problems associated with widows were twofold. One was related to the Act of *Sati*, and the other was related to the inferior and dependent place of the widow in the society. As in Bengal, the *Sati* Act was enacted in 1829, the same way it was implemented in Western India. Compared to other parts of India, the practice of *Sati* was uncommon in Western India, but not unheard of. The problem of widow remarriage is mostly seen in the middle and upper classes. So far as the lower caste groups are concerned Ethoven noted that in the caste groups like Agasa, Ager, Babria, Bhamta, Bhavsar, Gavandi, Ghanchis, widows were allowed to remarry.⁴⁹ Bhatias, Gudigar, Ghisadis⁵⁰ a widow was not allowed to remarry. Divorce was not allowed in the caste of Lamani, Lodha, Kolhatis, Golas.⁵¹ Divorce was allowed in Gadigars,⁵² Gollas,⁵³ Godhalis,⁵⁴ Gopals.⁵⁵ In Lingayat Males and females⁵⁶ were not permitted widow remarriage⁵⁷ but divorce was permitted. Where they experienced the problems of forced widowhood, whether in the form of their mother, daughter, sister-in-law or favorite aunt. Thus, a dialogue was initiated to carry out reforms and improve the conditions of widows. Especially child widows. Most of the Indian Reformer men were from higher castes.⁵⁸ Durgarama Mehtaji, for instance, himself felt the pain of a widow.⁵⁹ As a result, he launched a very strong campaign for the right of widows to remarry. If he ever stepped on stage or assembly hall to give a speech on widow remarriage, that place was believed to be polluted and was sanitized.⁶⁰ Another case of famous social reformer Karsandas Mulji can be stated over here when he was thrown out of

⁴⁹ Enthoven, R. E. (1990). *The Castes and Tribes of Bombay*. Vol. II. Reprint Asian Educational Services. New Delhi.1

⁵⁰ Ibid.4

⁵¹ Ibid.7

⁵² Ibid.154

⁵³ Ibid.9

⁵⁴ Ibid.15

⁵⁵ Ibid.17

⁵⁶ Ibid.20

⁵⁷ Ibid.356

⁵⁸ Dahyabhai, D. (1924). *Dalpat Kavya*. Part. 2 (Gujarati). Gujarat Vernacular Society. Ahmedabad.210

⁵⁹ Rupram, M. (1879). *Durgaram Charitra* (Gujarati). Ahmedabad. 1-7, 111-115; Maharashtra State Archives. Political department Volume, 95/1628 of 1844-46, letter No.1203 of 1845.118; and letter No, 262 of 1845.145.

⁶⁰ He had to face social condemnation as the society was not ready to even listen to the idea of a change, let alone carry it out. Rupam, M. (1879).111-115; Rupram, M. (1877). *Uttam Kapole Karsandas*(Gujarati). Ahmedabad.1

his own house as he wrote an essay on widow's problem, for the essay competition organized by Bombay Gyan Prasarak Mandal.⁶¹

Karsandas Mulji married thrice and only his third wife survived.⁶² He continued to write articles pertaining to the welfare of women in '*Stree Bodh*'.⁶³ Gokuleshadhishji Maharaj took over the house of Manikbai, the widow of Kalianji Okhai, late Mukhadam to Messrs. Graham & Co. The Maharaj apparently imprisoned the widow and forced her to give him the property papers. He also forced her to write that she had handed over the house to the Maharaj as a gift.⁶⁴ The widow sued the Maharaj in 1861, the report of which was also shared by Times of India on 28th feb 1861.⁶⁵ Before the case could be taken up in court the Maharaj caused a private settlement to be made. He turned over the deed of the house, but the widow still had to pay Rs.1500. Despite the fact that Karsandas Mulji was called a social reformer, he does not seem to be doing much for the upliftment of women. The anger was directed against the Maharaj rather than women.

Karsandas Mulji also does not make an attempt at empathizing with the females. It was the Vaishnavas as a group/community who hoped to obtain 'some reform' of the abuses that they complain of. The notorious adult intercourse of Maharaj with the females was seen as a problem only because the Hindus generally set high values to the chastity of women and any violation of this is considered a sin.⁶⁶

The Vaishnavs were also upset with the Maharaj because their wives and daughters were required to give them presents in the form of ornaments and jewelry. The men also were upset because their females were expected to gratify the 'cupidity' not lust or desire of their Maharaj. It is difficult to gauge why or how Mulji believed that women willingly had sexual intercourse with the Maharaj? According to him, women were not active in their involvement with the

⁶¹ The popularity of this form is revealed when we notice that Dalpatram in one of his poems gives instructions (*Mehtaji Durgaram Manchharam Charitra*, 1877) as to how an essay should be written; Tribhovandas, H. (1924). *Dalpat Kavya*. (Gujarati). Part 2. Gujarat Vernacular Society. Ahmedabad. 44

⁶² Motivala, B. N. (1935). *Karsandas Mulji: a Biographical Study*. Karsandas Mulji Centenary Celebration Committee. Bombay. 22

⁶³ Mulji, K. (1865). *History of the Sect of Mahārājas: Or Vallabhāchāryas, in Western India*. Turbner & Co., 60, Paternoster Row, London. 151-155

⁶⁴ Ibid. 151

⁶⁵ *Law Intelligence: Supreme Court. Equity Side*. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India. 3

⁶⁶ Mulji, K. (1865). 155

Maharaj but forced consent for the act from their husbands.⁶⁷ Karsandas Mulji does not see a problem with women being sexually abused within the private spaces, but shows a concern that they were 'Indecently' abused in the 'thronged crowds of the temple.'⁶⁸ As there was an upwards social mobility, it is observed that more restrictions were imposed on women. It had a decided impact on widow remarriage amongst various communities. Widow remarriage in many communities of Western India was performed before Lord Ganpati such as Ghanacis, Golas, Kachchia, Kikadis, Kumbhar, Lonaris.⁶⁹

As a result of the efforts of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and other reformers of Bengal, a law was passed in 1856 to remove the barriers to widow remarriage. Despite this widow remarriage was not allowed. In Western India as was the case with the rest of the country, the widow's condition was very difficult. She had to shave her head and dress in certain colors and live an austere life. At home, she was made to work hard, serve the family. Many child widows spend their lives in humiliation and find no escape. They were exploited both by women as well as men. The Indian reformer men accepted three ways to deal with this issue: Creating public consciousness; legislation and women's education.

The Indian reformer men can be divided into two categories: those who were not in favor of remarrying the widow but believed that the society should adopt a softer attitude towards them. For instance, Fans of Eastern culture like Manilal Nabhuhai and Govardhan Ram were not in favor of widow remarriage.⁷⁰ However, they advocated that society should adopt a better attitude to work widows. Those who advocated widow remarriage. In either of the cases, the India reformer men like their counterpart English reformer men were able to initiate a dialogue on issues related to women.

⁶⁷ Mulji, K. (1865). 155

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Enthoven, R. E. (1922). *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay* (Vol. 2). Printed at the Government Central Press. 2,7,123,128,279,394-95

⁷⁰ Note: Here it is interesting to note that the epoch-making novel 'Saraswatichandra' which ran into four parts, created a great resentment in the minds of a section of the reading public, because the author who had full opportunity of getting his heroine remarried to the hero, did not do so. (*D.B. Zaveri Lekh Sangra* ed. by Majmudar Manjulal, correspondence between Govardhanram and Dayaram Gidumal. 274-299; Manilal, Nabhoobhai Sudarshan, *Gadyawalli*. 328-329; also refer to Govardhanram Madhavram Tripathi, *Saraswatichandra*, Part IV).

Starting from Dalpatram, all Gujarati writers have presented this problem in different literary forms, such as poetry, essays, plays, and novels.⁷¹ Organizations like Gujarat Vernacular Society, *Gyanprasar Mandali*, and *Buddhi Vardhak Sabha* organized lectures, discussions, and essay competitions to address these issues.⁷² Books were published on the subject for instance Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's book on widow remarriage was translated into Gujarati.⁷³

Some of the Indian social reformer men often openly challenged *Sanatanis* to openly debate the issue of widow remarriage. For instance, Narmad carried out a public discussion on the subject of widow remarriage with Acharya Jadunathji Maharaj of Vaishnavism on 15th August, 1860.⁷⁴ There was no clear loss or win. Most of the time the 'Reformer Men' were content even when they lost. The idea was not to bring about impossible revolutionary change but to create awareness of the fallibility of the system. Similarly, in 1870 a great debate on the same subject took place in Bombay, with the specially invited Brahmins from Banaras and Calcutta on one side as parties and the social reformer Vishnu Pandurang Shastri with the help of Mahadev Govind Ranade.⁷⁵

The Indian reformer men since the very onset had picked up issues relating to enforced widowhood. A number of concerted efforts were made such as: Create awareness for legal acceptance of widow remarriage; Advocating widow remarriage; and protecting those who did marry the widows.

So far as the method of legislation is concerned, 'Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act of 1856 had provided legal safeguards for the widows, but the task was very difficult. Due to rigid social

⁷¹ *Mithyabhima* Natak by Dalpatram, *Bal Lagna Batrisi* by Navalram, Play *Laita Dukh Darshak* by Ranchhodbhai Udayram Dave, *Saraswati Gunvantni Katha* by Bhatt Ganapatram.

⁷² Dalpatram, Narmadshankar, Mahipatram and a host of others who were active members of associations like *Biddhivardhak Sabha* or Gujarat Vernacular Society, which were non-caste, non-communal, were also taking interest in their own caste organizations.

⁷³ '*Venacharitra*' by Dalpatram, '*Vidhva no Vakil*' by Rameshwar, '*Buddhi Ane Rudhini Katha*' by Vakil Keshavlal, '*Vaidhava Chitra*' by Narmad.

⁷⁴ In the case of poet Narmad, a very interesting episode occurred. Poet Narmad belonged to Vadanagara Nagar Brahmin caste. In that caste there was a convention, that if one wife is living, the husband cannot marry a second time. In the year 1870, a widow named Narmadagauri fell in love with him. He as a staunch believer of widow remarriage thought that he must marry this widow, but the caste convention did not permit him to take a second wife. On this point, Narmad had an interesting discussion with his wife about what course Narmad should take in such a situation. His wife, like a true Hindu wife, told him to do whatever he liked but she was not going to leave him. Subsequently, Narmad married the widow; Dave, S.N. *Uttar Narmad Charitra*. Gujarati Printing Press. Mumbai. 65-71

⁷⁵ Parekh, H. (1936). *Arvachin Gujartnu Rekha Darshan*. (Gujarati). Part 2. Gujarat Vernacular Society. Ahmedabad. 88

norms, the law was not accepted on a large scale. It took efforts by the reformer men to start a consciousness drive to find more acceptability of the law. Different organizations like 'Paramahansa Mandali' and 'Buddhivardhak Sabha' like 'Vidwapunarlagh Mandal' were established in Ahmedabad in 1868. This congregation continued into the 20th century, encouraging the remarriage of many widows. In a report of 1930, it is stated that in the shelter of this organization seventeen widows were remarried in Ahmedabad.⁷⁶ For the first time in 1860, remarriage of an upper-class widow was recorded in Bombay, in which Karsandas and Narmadshankar persuaded and helped a Brahmin to marry a widow. Members of 'Paramahansa Sabha' and 'Buddhivardhak Sabha' took an active part in this marriage. However, this event caused social upheaval in Gujarat.⁷⁷

As per the newsletter from *Buddhi Prakash*, a case is reported titled as 'Punarvivah Thayo' from the cast of Vaishnav Vaniya on 26th August 1872 at Ahmedabad. A woman named Jivkor had become a widow at the age of eleven, she had a mother, and in order to make ends meet; she was educated but in a girl's school in Bharuch. As she turned eighteenth or nineteenth, she thought of remarrying to Lallubhai Mathuradas, a twenty-three year old boy. It was a tough decision as both her family and her relatives were expected to create a problem. She sought help from 'Punarvivahouttejak Sabha' of Ahmedabad. By the time the help could reach them, Jivkor was forced by her family to leave her job and cut her hair and they imprisoned her. A complaint regarding the matter was registered with the *Cutchery* of assistant magistrate. The magistrate issued summons and warrants. Expecting a riot, a 'Bandobast' was made. Jivkor was rescued and then taken to Ahmedabad when she was offered money she declined and only accepted support. Despite great resistance, she got married. Reformer men who had remarried were Raobahadur Gopalrao Hari, Raobahadur Bholanath Sarabhai, Raobahadur Bachardas Ambaidas, Raobahadur Mahipatram Ruparam, Rajeshree Rancholal Chotalal, etc.⁷⁸

A widow of Kapol Baniya community of Bhavnagar became pregnant. Despite trying to save the baby from hiding and carrying out a forceful abortion. The widow then was taken back

⁷⁶ Trivedi, N. (1934). *Samaj Sudharanu Rekha Darshan*. Gujarat Vernacular Society. Ahmedabad. 81

⁷⁷ Dave Narmadshankar. (1994). *Mari Hakikat*. Kavi Narmad Yugavarth Trust, Surat. 73-74; also refers to Mahipatram. *Uttam Kapole Karsandas*.134

⁷⁸ (Ed.) Trivedi, J.N& Raval.M. (1941). *Buddhiprakash Lekh Sangarh* Part-I.Gujarat Vernacular Society. Ahmedabad. 30-31

home. But her partner approached Madavrao who with the help of the government sought her out and got her married.⁷⁹

Titled as '*Widow Remarriages*' in which the news was published, another widow remarried at the bungalow of Madhowdas Raghunatha at Girgaur under the auspices of the Hindu Re-marriage Association. The news also talked of twenty-five such marriages since the times of Madhowdas's marriage to Dhankorbai. The widow Jumnabai was twenty-seven years old. Apparently, she chose Premji and declared him to be a suitable Husband. All this appeared to be romantic, but some women suffered more because of her desire to remarry. In case if the widow carried any kind of ornaments, she was accused of carrying out theft. A case of similar kind was reported by times of India⁸⁰ where a widow named Malbai had run away to Bombay to remarry. Her father accused her of stealing the ornaments (which was a gift to her father at the time of her previous marriage). The magistrate had asked her to report to the court and give an explanation. The newspaper also reported another widow remarriage at the residence of Madhowdas between Shah Manshukhram Soorchand married a widow Bai Laxmi of Ahmedabad.⁸¹ There are many such instances where at the initiation of educated and working women the Indian reformer men were forced to be encouraged to take sometimes coerced action.

In the introduction itself, Madhowdas makes it very clear that "*marrying a widow is nothing to be proud of, nothing to glory in.*"⁸² This statement is further clarified when he feels that widow remarriage should be treated as an 'ordinary event' rendered extraordinary by a happy custom.

Madhowdas who belonged to the Gujarati Kapole Baniya caste had married three times already and had many children. Unfortunately, all of his wives had died and all, but one girl child had survived.

While narrating about the proposals that came his way after the death of his third wife, he mentions an interesting insight that many proposals were of the girls who had remained unmarried till they reached twenty years of age. He is happy to note although child marriage was prevalent among Kapol Baniyas, some girls of the 'good' families were educated. In such

⁷⁹ (Ed.) Trivedi, J.N& Raval.M. (1941). 66-67

⁸⁰ *Widow Remarriage*. The Times of India (1861-2010); October 10, 1881; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India. 3

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Raghunathndas, M. (1890). Introduction

a case, the groom was not required to pay any money.⁸³ He showed great empathy for the plight of women, especially little girls who were forced to marry older men. Understanding the consequences of such a crusade, Madhowdas anonymously placed an advertisement in *Rast Goftar* in April 1871. The result of the advertisement was that all the widows were safeguarded.⁸⁴

Madhowdas among other things, gives an account of how women reacted to this. This indeed becomes an important window into the lives of women of the Kapol *Baniya* caste. For instance, the widow (who later marries him) asked her mother about whether Madhowdas would find a widow. The mother replied '*Scornfully, that only someone who was starving or desperate would take such a step?*'⁸⁵ The widow herself had not considered remarrying till she was made to realize this by one Mathuradas Khetsey. The account of Madhovdas also became extremely important because he writes about the feelings of the widow.

The widow Dhankorbai, realizing an opportunity for her, jumps at it. On the pretext of visiting someone's house, the widow met Madhowdas at the first instance. She had hoped that her mother would consent to the wedding, but she was made to understand by Madhowdas that if her mother were to know of it, she would do everything in her power to prevent the marriage. Dhankorbai according to Madhowdas deeply reflected on the course of action that she was to take. She was aware that she had two options. First, to kill herself and make her mother unhappy. Second, to remarry and make her mother unhappy. She realizes as she chooses the second option. She would be the first in her caste to do so. A storm would break out and she would be considered as 'bad' and 'sinful' woman. She would never be able to meet her mother or any other relatives. She pondered at the unfairness of this the people of her society would accept her if she were to become someone's mistress but would not allow remarriage?

Despite a clear discussion, she asked her mother indirectly what her friend should do. She asked her mother hypothetically and talked of a young widow who had gotten pregnant. Was it right for the parents to take her to their own 'pilgrimage'⁸⁶ and get rid of the fetus or baby? She

⁸³ Raghunathndas, M. (1890).7

⁸⁴ Ibid.14

⁸⁵ Ibid.18

⁸⁶ Gidumal, D. (1888). *The Life and Lifework of Behramji M. Malabari: Being a Biographical Sketch, with Selections from His Writings and Speeches on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood: and Also, His "Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer"*. Education Society's Press. 65 (Note-Mr. Chipsonkar says that the solitary pilgrimage to Nasik, Pandharpur, Benares, and other holy shrines was all about abortion).

asked her was it not advisable that widows be allowed to remarry? Dhankorbai's mother consented that widow's remarriage was a good thing, but the *shethias* of the caste would never permit it.

Dhankorbai later raised the question to her grandmother, (or her mother's mother), who also confirmed the answer of her mother. She however added that '*what is a good thing for others may not be a good thing for Brahmins and Baniyas.*' (જો બાલ અરજો તે અરજો કાંઈ બાણીયા બ્રાહ્મણો તે ગરજો?)⁸⁷ Such marriages here were impossible for Baniyas and Brahmins.

Dhankorbai later went to the Harkhuwar Sethani and asked her about the remarriage of widows. She also affirmed that it would be good if widows were allowed to remarry. Dhankore then went to another woman and posed her the same question and to her she confided in her design to remarry. The woman (remained unnamed), although approving of her intention, asked Dhankore to be cautious. To this, she replied that the man she had decided to marry was of affluent means, but even if he was a fraud, her condition could not be more miserable than it already was.⁸⁸

The very rude rendition of the experience of Dhankorbai with the women of her caste showcases that women were educated and thinking individuals and had an ambition to at least better their lives. Marriage was an outlet for them from their enforced widowhood. Dhankorebai's note to Madhowdas had sexual undertones which are covert in nature. Instead of talking of the miserable life led by a widow, she talks of the 'immortal life' led by the widows of her caste, hunting widows copulating with different men; this was acceptable to a limited degree, whereas widow remarriage was completely unacceptable. Dhankorbai also was content to leave her mother and bask in the protection that she offered rather than being with her brother. Her response belies this notion that women(elite) were totally dependent upon men. She did lament that her property (*Streedhan*) has been taken away by her relatives.⁸⁹ Before leaving to remarry Dhankorbai wrote a letter to her mother. She stated the reason for such a drastic step. She called her condition as '*cruel pangs*' of widowhood. She had forsaken all kinds of food and had lived only on 'curd'. This made her weak and ill. She categorically

⁸⁷ Raghunathndas, M. (1890).26

⁸⁸ Ibid.27-28

⁸⁹ Raghunathndas, M. (1890). 28

mentioned in the letter that she had not taken anything from the house. Whatever ornaments that she possessed; she gave them up.⁹⁰

The marriage of Dankore and Madhowdas took place in great secrecy. Many reformer men, such as Karsandas Mulji, blessed the couple. The case of widow remarriage was celebrated in almost all the reform circles of the state. However, as was expected, Madhowdas faced Banishment, boycott, and excommunication. This was not the first experience; prior to the marriage of Madhowdas and Dhankorbai, there were other widows who had remarried and as a result, suffered grave consequences. For instance, Rao Bahadur Morabba Kanoba was among the first Prabhus to get married. A short time after this marriage, the corpses of both husband and wife were found floating in the well.

Backlash faced by Madhaowdas can be seen as follows:

1. Investors withdraw their money.⁹¹
2. He had to keep bodyguards, ie. *Kabuli pathans*.⁹²
3. In the evening for a month, the crowd would gather to protest.
4. Excommunication by wives under Gopaldas. Vurjeewandas, Narotamdas and Purushotamdas Mohandas.⁹³
5. Kandolia Brahmins were prevented from performing any religious ceremonies.
6. No *Thakurwadi* Brahmins were to cook in their house.

Support from male social reformers:

1. Articles '*verses in favor of the reform*' appeared in the Bombay Samachar, the *Rast Goftar*, *Arya Mitra*.⁹⁴
2. Handbills containing reprints of the songs were distributed.
3. The songs were sung on the streets.

⁹⁰ Raghunathndas, M. (1890).35

⁹¹ Ibid.40

⁹² Ibid.35

⁹³ Ibid.44

⁹⁴ Ibid.43

4. Songs were published in pamphlets.
5. Karsandas Mulji supported.

Courageous steps were needed to protect remarried couples and their friends from harassment. Police protection, recourse to the courts of law, special measures to rescue harassed couples and people, and efforts to reduce the damage caused by economic and other forms of exclusion, these and other measures had to be adopted. In fact, in those days, every widow's marriage proved to be a saga of heroic resistance to extreme hardships.

The result of all these efforts was that by the 1870's many widows were remarried social reformer men such as Dr. Ramkrishna Bhandarkar and Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve and Justice Ranade etc.⁹⁵ Indian men besides Madhavrao and other reformers such as Kavi Shankar Lal Shankar described the miserable condition of widows in their works. Narmad opposed widow remarriage and was one of the first to welcome a bill in support of it in 1859.

By way of an example, Narmad was a big crusader for widow remarriage. In his essay on the subject, he explained by way of providing examples that widow remarriage was practiced in ancient times.⁹⁶ He wrote *Vidhavya Chrita* (1859-63) and *Vaidhavya Vrah*. Inner play titled '*Tudji- Vardhivya Chitra*' Narmad describes the plight of a widow. The play showcases the condition of an innocent woman. Tudji got married in her childhood and had just reached her puberty. Her father Nagar Seth Tapidas Varjivandas was a wealthy man of Surat. One day he receives a letter that his daughter Tudji's husband Tribhovandas had passed away at the age of eighteen. Tudji's mother was given the name of Tapivahu.

Tudji or Tulji however, receives the news from another widow where she was given a bath after breaking one of her bangles. Tudji is still a young girl lamented in a poem where she writes about her virginity. Being young, she comes under the influence of her maid servant, Amba. Amba convinces her that widows have more fun than married women. It is clear that

⁹⁵ Ghurye, S.G. *Sociological Bulletin*. Vol, III. No, 1. Indian Sociological Society. New Delhi. 59. Note-Dhondo Keshav Karve mentions the remarriage of Venubai from Murud in the Ratnagiri District in 1869. He also mentions the marriage of Gungubai Bhandare in 1874. It is likely that Ghurye had a similar marriage in mind when considering it as the first widow remarriage in Maharashtra. Karve adds a note while referring to this marriage: "My friend Sadashivrao Kelkar later informed me that this marriage took place in Bombay and not in Poona." Therefore, Karve claims that his own marriage, according to him, was the first widow remarriage in Poona, as Shantabai's marriage was performed in Khandala. *Atmavritta* (1928). 145, 158, 155 with footnote; Karnataki, S. N, *Dr. Bhandarkarayanche Charitra*. 288-89; Prof. S. D. Jayadekar, *Athunik Bharat*. 137, however, writes that Jyotirao Phule played a prominent role in facilitating the remarriage of a Saraswat widow in Poona in 1864.

⁹⁶ Dave. N. (1912). *Junu Narmagadya*. Gujarati Printing Press, Mumbai. 221-229

despite writing from a woman's position, Narmad is thinking and writing like a man. This can be proven from the depiction of women as being concerned more with sexual exploits than anything. Narmad's sole intention of writing this play is to create public consciousness.

લોકને વિનંતી (Request to people)

(દોહરા)

વિધવા દુઃખ દરસાવંતુ, દરસાવ્યું નાટકક;

આજે આજે તેથિ રે, જીઓ છો ટકટક,--૧

દીન હીન વિનતિ કરે, રડતી વિધવા નાર;

તે સહુ મનમાં લેઇને, કરો દુઃખ નીવાર;--૨.

યથાશક્તિ દરસાવિયું, અલ્પણુક્રિત કામ;

ભાવ અભાવે આણુજો, સાર અમલધરિ હામ.--૩

એક ચિત્તથી વાંચજો, વિધવા પીડ પોકાર;

એક ચિત્તથી સૂણુજો, થશે સફળ શ્રમ ધાર.--૪

અર્થ અથથી નહિ રચ્યું, રચ્યું સુધારા કાજ;

વિધવા દુઃખ સાલે બહુ, તમને સાલે આજ.--૫

સાર્થક લખ્યું તેનું થશે, અમલ આણુશે। કાજ;

એકદમે તોડો અરે, વ્હેમ બેડિ તજિ લાજ.--૬

બહુ જેટૂ ને સાંભળ્યું, શું કહું તેનું તેહ;

પૂરી પૂરીને બોલુછું, કરો કાજ ઝટ એહ.--૭

ધરમાંડે રાંડેલિઓ, પીડ પાપ લોપાય;

વાધે ઉદ્યમ નીતિને, સુખડાં ઝાજાં થાય.--૮

ઈધર તમ મનમાં વસો, સજ્જન સમજો સાર;

પુનઃવિવાહનો ચાલતે, સુખ સંપત્તિ દેનાર.--૯⁹⁷

Translated version:

(This drama depicts pain of widows)

On this day the drama you are watching with focus, Poor and inferior widow, crying widow,

*With these thoughts, cure their pain/sorrow, As, much as possible, try to look without
foolishness,*

Follow this, Read the pain of widow with attention,

Listen with attention, so that the efforts are successful, Not only for starting but to reform,

Widows suffer the pain, but you might experience today,

If you abide this, then only it will be fruitful,

To break false notion/ misconception and shame immediately,

We have seen and heard about it persistently, why to talk about it repeatedly,

Reminder for you that it is required to do this quickly,

Remarriage of widow will cure their pain and sorrow,

Implementation of this change will lead to happiness,

With the grace of god, the wise people will understand,

Remarriage will grace you with happiness and wealth.)

(Dandiyo Narmad, Priyamvada, Sudarshan, At Mani Majjan.)

In spite of being punished with excommunication for extending his protection to the widow, he soon ran (1869-70) to the help of another widow and married her privately, although his wife was alive. In the testament on his deathbed, however, he regretted that he was wrong in revolting against the traditions of Aryan sages and admonished his near ones ‘to live and die by one’s own dharma and others’ dharma being dangerous. After an adventurous life of a

⁹⁷ Dave, N. (1912) .214-266

passionate reformer for sixteen years Narmad resigned himself for the last twelve years of his life to his *swadharma*, the orthodox traditions.⁹⁸ Whatever the reasons for this change, the fact that he found his last solace in being conservative is significant.

Narmad in his essay titled ‘*Vyabhichar Nishedhak*’ discusses the reason why Gujarati women marry. The first reason he states is because of lust, followed by happiness, and material gains, such as expensive jewelry and clothes; to not lead the life of a widow. In the essay, ‘*Kaam*’ or sex is addressed and blamed as due to women and men engaging in sexual activities has taken a toll on the health of men. Narmad says that women of today do not treat sex as procreation but as recreation (કામતુરણી ન ભયં ન લજ્જા/ ‘કામાતુરાણાં ન ભયં ન લજ્જા’).⁹⁹ One who is blinded by lust has neither fear nor shame.

It is not clear as to why he blames women for this. His one line bears an extreme connotation where young women, under the influence of lust or sex have changed the laws of marriage. At the same time, Narmad also says that if a woman expresses her attraction to someone, men notice it and condemn her publicly. Later, the same men would not hesitate to rape her either by enticement or forcefully.¹⁰⁰

He then defines what according to him was *Vyabhichar*. *Vyabhichar* essentially was connected with adultery on both sides, i.e., by women as well as men. In higher social classes, women experienced harsher consequences when they became victims of rape or committed adultery. Many of these women had to endure social shame and were even coerced into engaging in prostitution. According to Narmad, a married woman also possessed the right to seek redress if her husband compelled her to do domestic tasks or failed to meet her sexual needs. Such women according to Narmad do not give sexual pleasure to their husbands. Narmad calls such women as *Randi*. ‘રંડી, રંડ, ચંડાણ’. Despite this, Narmad is aware of the helplessness of women in the domestic sphere. He advocates women should also be forgiven for *Vyabhichar* if they ask for forgiveness. Rape is one thing that Narmad discusses. When a married woman is raped, her husband refused to accept her, insults her, and abuses her:

⁹⁸ Trivedi, J. N. & Bhatt, M.V. (1962). *Veer Narmad*. (Gujarati). Author. Rajkot.10-1

⁹⁹ Dave, N. (1912). *Junu Narmagadya*.11

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.11-12

“જ રાંડ, બે હાથ વના તાણી પડે નહીં, તારી પણ મરજી હશે”

(Go whore, one cannot clap without both hands, you must be willing).¹⁰¹

Narmad believes that women commit adultery because they have less work than men. Although in those classes where women have to work alongside men, they are less susceptible to *Vyabhichar*. Those women who are at home are on lookout for excuses to have sex with other men ‘પરપુરુષ ભોગવવાની’ Women are attracted by men’s look, skills, power and money.

Nonetheless, despite ascribing such an attitude to women, Narmada blames the men for some kind of transgressions. Narmad’s account makes it clear that despite a general belief that middle-class women were restricted to four walls of the house, women appear to have relative freedom of movement.¹⁰²

According to Narmad women are believed to have these bad qualities such as lying, misrepresentation, brevity, foolishness, greed, cunning, and cruelty. However, this is not true of every woman except prostitutes and adulteresses.

2.2. PROSTITUTION, ADULTERY & PREGNANCY

In this subsection the account of women as prostitutes is seen through the agency of Narmad as very few men talked about widows who ended up as prostitutes.

According to Narmad prostitutes were not different in their *jati or dhandha*. The difference was in the behavior and approach to business. *Ramjani* was proficient in singing and went to wealthy people's houses to perform and entice the patrons. They were also known as *Tayafa*, *Gunaka*, *Vaishya*, *Kanchani*. They were able to attract males by *chaturai and prapanch*. They wanted to be with men only for some time. Some of them did not seek physical relations. Sometimes they lived with their patrons, however, starvation forced them into prostitution.

In the upper caste/class widows were not allowed to remarry. Child widows, elderly widows were often seen engaging in sexual activities. Due to social ridicule, the widows didn’t open shops but didn’t have a problem seeking illicit relationships. Narmad also discusses how

¹⁰¹ Dave, N. (1912). *Junu Narmagadya*.14

¹⁰² Ibid.15

widows in order to survive often resorted to luring men to loot them. It is very difficult to understand who Narmad calls Rand (रंड), were they widows or professional prostitutes?

दर्शनाद्धरते चित्तं स्पर्शनाद्धरते बलम्।

संभोगाद्धरते वीर्यं नारीप्रत्यक्ष राक्षसी॥

The meaning is:

Showing her face steal consciousness,

With her touch she steals strength,

By sex she steals Semen,

Women are obvious monsters.

The *rand* of those times also knew how to successfully abort a pregnancy. According to Narmad, only 5% were adept at singing and dancing, and the rest 95% knew perfectly well about abortion. The widows who were forced into prostitution, whether child or in older age, did not lure men openly. Narmad makes it abundantly clear that it was rampant. Some widows engage in sexual relationships because of lust but others because of money. Many widows committed suicide.¹⁰³ Here, Narmad does not talk about rape by men in the family or forceful widowhood.¹⁰⁴

The sexual transgression by women is seen as a huge problem by Narmad. He felt that adultery amongst women was mostly circumstantial. Some women took to prostitution out of monetary needs, but some, because their husbands were not living with them. He did not spare women belonging to the upper caste, for they used their servants to satisfy their sexual urges.¹⁰⁵ He even went on to say that a larger number of women engaged in adulterous relationships than their male counterparts.¹⁰⁶ Adultery was committed because of reasons such as: younger husband, older wife; husband living somewhere else; child bride when reaches puberty & husband is absent. (eg. Among Patel and Marwadi women.); when women listen to music;

¹⁰³ Dave, N. (1912). *Junu Narmagadya*.20

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.20

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.26

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.27

when husbands talk about other women; those who were adulterous in their younger days were bound to carry it out in their older days; childless women; to acquire the qualities of some person in their children and with gurus of some sects.

Narmad says that women gossip more than men. This was expressed through sexual annotation in folk songs or other such mediums such as marriage songs. For instance, women express their anger through song Futana (ફૂટલણ):

1. જા જા છિનકી, (Go, Go whore)

2. રાંડ સસરો ને જમાઈ મડયા (Widows father-in-law and son-in-law became sexually intimate)

3. આપણો ઉચ કુળમાં જન્મી નીચની સોબત પૈસા સાડુ કરવી એ નહાડું છે! (It is wicked to sleep with someone from a lower caste for money)

4. પોતાનું કાઠાડે છે, ગદેડી છોકરાં ૧૦ થયાં તોપણ તારો યરસ કેમ જતો નથી. (Abuse! You have ten children, yet your sexual desire is endless)¹⁰⁷

Men accept such behavior from women because they realize that women have no way out, as upper caste women were not allowed to divorce, and widows were not allowed to remarry. Narmad also focuses on polygamy. For example, he says that when a king has a hundred wives, he will be unable to satisfy all of them. It is only natural that they commit adultery. Narmad of course runs with the idea when he says that women spoil other women and thus create a nexus of social influences. Ironically, he says that if a man ever complains then he is suitably warned by his wives to keep quiet.¹⁰⁸

Narmad paid a lot of attention to the problem of abortion. Like other Indian Reformer Men, Narmad saw children as a gift from God and therefore abortion as a crime. Despite this, he was sympathetic to the cause of women who were forced to abort their pregnancy. According to him, abortion was especially related to the lack of widow remarriage.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Dave. N. (1912). *Junu Narmagadya*.28

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.28

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.31

Narmad discusses methods used for abortion by pregnant widows or by their families. In case if the baby is born then he writes about different methods devised by women to kill their newborn babies.¹¹⁰ There is no evidence which proves Narmad to be right, or to know of women's responses to such claims. However, there are more Indian reformer men who talk about adultery and the role of women in killing their infants.

Narmad demarcates between rural women and urban women. He says that since rural women are busy alongside their men, they do not commit on a scale that women from cities do. While classifying caste structure on the basis of adultery committed, women of the upper caste such as Brahman and Vaniya women, adultery was very common. Adultery is also found in the Kanbi Kansara community. Amongst the upper caste poverty also forces women to go into prostitution.

Despite vehemently opposing widow's licentious behavior, he shows a level of understanding that if the widow has to take care of her family she is justified to resort to prostitution.¹¹¹ He also accepted that there was a practice among men to send their wives to their senior officers for favors. Men, because they are earning, can spend money as they wish, but what do women do?¹¹²

Surprisingly Narmad uses the word 'human' and says it means both men and women. Once the marriage takes place, a woman becomes the leader as without a woman there is no home. The solution to all such problems according to Narmad was 'education'. However, he understands that educated women pose a threat to the 'manhood' of their husbands. He ridicules such notions and believes an educated woman can become a leader (head) of the family and guide her husband to follow the correct path. Also educated women will not cross the line, disobey her husbands, will not talk rudely and most importantly will not commit adultery. As a mother an educated women would instills good '*sanaskaras*'.³⁶

Further Narmad also talks about the joint family system and daughter-in-law. As he says, in the joint family system the son is totally dependent on the family, especially his mother. Since the wife has no support from her son, she stops trusting her husband. The only time a family respects the daughter-in-law is when she gives birth to a son/daughter. Internally (within the

¹¹⁰ Dave. N. (1912). *Junu Narmagadya*.31

¹¹¹ Ibid.32

¹¹² Ibid.

household) she faces daily conflicts with her mother-in-law and sister in law. Young couples were not expected to be in the same room as the In-laws. The wife meets her husband only during the night when the husband is tired. He just caresses her and sleeps. This leads to women looking for love outside. Another issue which he highlights in a family is domestic abuse.

According to Narmad domestic abuse was common among the couples, especially before the children were born. In his *Junu Narmgadhy* Narmad states:

ઘાંડણીઓની ઘીયાળાની તજઘીજ (once they were born, women were beaten by their husband).¹¹³

Within the family, Narmad also sheds light on the subject of pregnancy. He brings attention to the challenges and experiences related to pregnancy that women encounter within the domestic sphere. He says that, in the upper classes/upper caste pregnancy, especially the first pregnancy, changes the status of daughter-in-law. Women in Gujarati families often hope to get pregnant soon. Narmad classified two situations: those who had good relations with their in-laws and those who did not have good relations with their in-laws. In the former case the girls are eager to conceive (even at an early age) so that they can be respected in the families. In the latter case they want children so that there will be larger social acceptability.

The pregnancy when announced brought joy to both the families. Problem was more pronounced when a woman remained childless. If a sixteen-year-old girl doesn't get pregnant, she gets taunted by her mother In-law and faces social ostracism.

Childless women according to Narmad try various method to conceive:¹¹⁴

1. By becoming devotees.
2. Get treated by quacks.
3. By consuming oleaginous products such as coconut, banana, etc., So that the sperm sticks to the ova.
4. Consume *osad* (ઓસડ) or *Aushadhi* or medication by midwives.

¹¹³ Dave. N. (1912). *Junu Narmagadya*. 336

¹¹⁴ Ibid.338

5. Use any products possible.
6. Sleep with other men or commit adultery.

Another prominent figure who talked about women's issue of widowhood was Sursinhji Takhtasinhji Gohil, popularly known by his pen name, Kalapi was a Gujarati poet and the Thakor of Lathi state in Gujarat. He is mostly known for his poems depicting his own pathos. Not all the poets or literature felt the same way about widow remarriage being a bane. For instance Sursinhji Takhtashinji Gohil or Kalapi was a poet. In 1895 Kalapi in a letter to the widowed (via a pen) his wife's sister, wrote of a greater purity in widowhood and misery. He called remarriage as heinous and considered marriage only for the sake of physical love.¹¹⁵

Neither does Kalapi nor others record their wives or her sister's reaction. Their referring to his wife as 'simple' indicates that he thought she was gullible and therefore susceptible to influences of change. As opposed to this Ramanbhai Nilkanth, another prolific literary figure of the 20th century wrote in favor of the remarriage of the widows. Through a Gujarati play written in 1914 and was titled '*Raino Parvat*', he advocated widow remarriage. In *Raino Parvat* a mother fights for her son's rights (*Jalak*)/Amritdevi acted as gardener or "*Malin*". Ramanbhai's women in his play are strong and he often gave expressions to the hope and desires of women. Using the agency as a playwright he explored the relationship between women and men in the society. In his sixth act, Ramanbhai explored the problem of widow remarriage and problems of child marriage. Towards the end of the play, Ramanbhai showcased a larger acceptance of widow remarriage in the 20th century.

The issues faced by women were not limited to the middle class or upper-middle-class, but also extended to elite class women. Indian reformer men recognized and addressed the challenges and struggles that elite woman encountered in their lives.

2.3. INDIAN REFORMER MEN AND THEIR 'WIVES'

Karsandas Mulji, a strong adherent to the colonial interpretation of Indian social structure adhered to the position of the white men regarding women according to him. "*The measure of*

¹¹⁵ Meghani, Z. (1940). *Tulsikyaro*. Adarsh Prakashan. Ahmedabad: The story primarily focuses on portraying the challenges faced by widows in society and the various reactions of people towards widow remarriage. It also highlights the clash between traditional values and the ideals of the younger generation, wherein the latter is ultimately compelled to compromise. While this narrative strikes a responsive chord in the readers' hearts, considering it follows *Raino Parvat* (1913), one might have anticipated the youth to triumph over orthodoxy and advocate remarriage as a matter of principle. Nilakanth, R. (1913). *Raino Parvat*. (Gujarati). Jivanlal Amarshi Mehta. Ahmedabad. 76

the social state of a country is taken from the status of the women of that country. The social condition of that country is bad in which the position of women is low."¹¹⁶ He drew a parallel between the relationship of man and his wife and states his country. As he says, "*if a man's wife turns out to be bad, his social life is spoiled. Just so is the state with a country. Just as a well-mannered, kind, and cultured lady is an ornament of a house, so are well-mannered, kind, and cultured women, ornaments of a country.*"¹¹⁷

Being part of Victorian India, (as opposed to Victorian England) Mulji approved of the laxer rulers of interaction between English males and females. His overseas travels are too well known to be mentioned here. While in England, he understood the importance of an equivalent, if not equal relationship between husband and wife. He also advocated that exposure was important for women. "*Women get the advantage of seeing all good things, hearing all good things. Attending good functions and participating in the pleasures of a good company. Husbands and wives moving together at all times and at every place, their love and affection towards each other increase.*"¹¹⁸

Karsandas Mulji under Western influences also saw women as objects of entertainment and civility. For instance, he says "*Men derive a kind of pleasure in the company of women. Their minds get joy and become cheerful by their sweet talk; they forget for the time being worldly anxieties, and their minds, being thus refreshed, they join their work with new and fresh vigour. Mulji also believed that women too benefitted from such interactions. 'Women too derive great benefits. They are kept informed of all new talk and new things. Society too gets benefits. In a mixed society, men are obliged to talk decently and with propriety and they do not get any opportunity of joking lightly or cracking indecent jokes. Indians, in this matter, cherish false shame.*"¹¹⁹

Mulji appreciated the exposure that western women had in the public spaces, but he certainly felt that Indian women should not completely emulate their western counterparts. He advocated women wearing sarees and speaking only when spoken to. Despite this reservation, he felt that Indian women were far more sensible as they invested money in gold rather than wasting it on

¹¹⁶ Motiwala, B.N. (1935). *Karsandas Mulji: A Biographical Study*. Bombay: Karsandas Mulji Centenary Celebration Committee. Bombay Vaibhav Press. Bombay. 235

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.236

¹¹⁹ Ibid.237

fashionable clothes.¹²⁰ Despite his talks of modernity and equivalence, Karsandas patronized his wives and treated them as subordinates. He did not educate them and did not even write about them. We find a voice of one of the wives of Mulji, through a letter that she wrote to *sheth* (Mulji) a few days before his death. The letter showed a sense of detachment and wariness. Karsandas was the man of the world and had left little for his wife and children. The family had to suffer a lot due to reformist activities of Mulji. Even on his deathbed, the wife spoke of her concern for her children and herself.¹²¹ Apparently later in life she was not very welcoming of her husband's friend.

Contrary to Mulji's account, women as wives were made the most visible by Kavi Narmad. Narmad writes on women with great authority and dedicated a special section on his wife Dahigauri.¹²² Narmad was first married to Gulabbai in 1844 when he was only eleven years old. Gulabbai lived with her parents in Surat till she reached puberty. Her father wrote to Narmad six years later to come back. It was time that Narmad returned to Surat, took a job, and began married life as his wife had reached puberty.¹²³ Like all adolescents Narmad was enamored by his wife but only for conjugal relations. Gulabbai according to Narmad's '*Mari hakikat*' was uneducated and complacent and did not offer any intellectual challenge or stimulation to Narmad. Gulab died very early during childbirth which was one of the common reasons for women to die at the time.

Narmad's second marriage to Dahigauri was more interesting and brought sparks into his life. Dahigauri was a daughter of a respected and learned man. There is not much in Narmad's autobiography regarding the initial years of marriage. Their marriage was childless but seems to have been a happy one. This can be determined from the fact that in 1866, he dedicated his work '*Uttam Nayika*' to Dahigauri.¹²⁴ He described Dahigauri as fair-complexioned and lean. In 1865, Narmad gave shelter to Savitagauri, a young widow. Inviting her from the Nagar Brahmin Community. Apparently, at the time, it was Dahigauri who encouraged him to marry the widow, thus inspiring him to practice what he was preaching. Although there are many who

¹²⁰ Motiwala, B.N. (1935).237

¹²¹ Ibid.365

¹²² Narmadshankar, L. (1994). *Mari Hakikat*. Kavi Narmad Yugavart Trust (First published in 1866). Surat. 94-121

¹²³ Brokara, G. (1977). *Narmadshankar*. Sahitya Akademi. Delhi. 22-23

¹²⁴ Ibid.103

refute this, apparently Narmad despite his dubious behavior towards Dahi asks for her forgiveness on her deathbed. There are contradictory viewpoints regarding this matter.¹²⁵

While going for widow remarriage with Narmadagauri (Subhadragauri) Narmad was in dilemma whether to marry once again when he was already married. In this dilemma, he asked for help from Dahigauri.¹²⁶ Dahigauri, being a bold woman, asked him to do as he liked. He gave her the option of separation after marriage which she refused.¹²⁷

An alternative version of the event is also talked about, Subhadragauri, was widowed as a child, but had continued to live at her parent's home. "*..Subhadra's mother-in-law was Narmad's maternal aunt, and had a soft corner for him....Narmad was a frequent visitor to Subhadra's home. She was very impressed with Narmad's reformist ideals, especially regarding remarriage. They fell in love, and this resulted in a situation which made it imperative for them to marry...*". The conversation between Dahi and Narmad that Desai refers to did indeed take place and it was, as he says, recorded by Narmad in his diary. But it was not a conversation between a concerned husband and a dutiful Hindu wife, who acquiesces to Narmad's second marriage with Subhadragauri.

Narmad moved to Bombay with his new wife, leaving Dahi behind in Surat. In 1870 Subhadragauri (later known as Narmadagauri) gave birth to her son Jayshankar, whom Narmad brought up as his own. After moving between Bombay and Surat, Narmad settled down permanently in Bombay. Dahi was left to her own devices for long periods. Despite being away from each other, Narmad in his autobiography, '*Mari Hakikat*' gives an interesting account of his verbatim with Dahigauri after she was recalled from Surat to live with him. This record is very important to write women back in history. It is a dispassionate account of a dialogue between a husband and wife, who both meet each other equally at an intellectual level. It showcases that women were not as subservient as the society and the state would have liked them to be.

To many, the discussion is only about Narmad and his ideas, but from the point of this thesis the question and answers and the responses of Dahigauri offer a rare window into the mind of

¹²⁵ Brokara, G. (1977). *Narmadshankar*. Sahitya Akademi. Delhi.82

¹²⁶ Ibid.60

¹²⁷ Ibid.62

an abandoned woman and her life.¹²⁸ In the discussion Narmad had left Dahigauri at Surat (while he was in Bombay) and therefore wanted to account for her time in Surat and wanted to know what all she did.¹²⁹

The dialogue opens with Dahigauri being angry at her husband for not sending someone to pick her up, which meant that she traveled on her own without an escort.¹³⁰ Apparently, although she had accepted Savitagauri as Narmad's second wife, Savitagauri did not return the favor. Narmad had also not provided any money to Dahigauri. He called her to Bombay and had left her to make arrangements. Dahigauri made arrangements by taking loans from people she had to deposit her jewelry in lieu of the loan. Narmad in her noting doesn't seem to record his very own response. As per many of his articles, the advised men want to be responsible and take care of their wives. However, as this instance shows, he had full confidence in his wife to take care of the financial matter by herself. This can be referred to from the fact that Dahigauri had to fend for herself. Dahigauri had to mortgage her jewelry.

As an educated woman, Dahigauri was also expected to be frugal. Narmad interrogated her and tried to learn the truth. When women marry, they bring along with them the traditions of their maternal house with including the religious traditions. What becomes clear from the Dahigauri's account is that she even had to account for possessing the idol of *Balkrishna*.¹³¹ As a wife Dahigauri was aware of her responsibilities but also understood that as the daughter of the house she had a choice in doing the household chores. She gives an interesting insight into her daily life which is mundane but significant. For instance, the use of soap was not considered to be an appropriate thing, but she insisted and despite reservations used it every day. As a daughter of the house, she did not follow a strict schedule and had a lot of leisure time. She went for a walk and cooked only for herself.¹³²

Narmad was concerned about Dahigauri's independence and therefore wanted to know who all she went with. As generally believed women being extremely religious, Dahigauri was not religious at all. She was fond of reading which would displease others. Her independence was a cause of concern at her maternal house. The fact that she was literate and therefore was

¹²⁸ Dave, N. (1994). 94

¹²⁹ Brokara, G. (1977). 60-61

¹³⁰ Dave, N. (1994).94

¹³¹ Dave, N. (1994). 95

¹³² Ibid.

uncontrollable has been retreated on multiple occasions. Despite the fact that Narmad had left her, the men around Dahigauri held her independent character responsible for the separation rather than Narmad's infidelity. Women of Dahigauri's house, on the other hand, blamed Narmad. They blame not his infidelity but her intellect. Dahigauri, of course, seemed to have defended him for a time being, which she stopped later¹³³ Despite facing social distrust on multiple occasions, she remained imperturbable. This was remarkable, considering how important being married was for women in the 19th century. Dahigauri does not appear to strive to be with her husband. However, when she does finally meet him, she appears to be eager to please him. At least that was how Narmad wanted her to be projected, as it was Narmad who had penned down the dialogues. He projects her as an obedient, yet this submission comes across more as a relief to Narmad than to serve any other purpose.¹³⁴

It is also doubtful whether it was she, who was saying or was it Narmad's willful thinking. Throughout the course of the narrative Narmad created these tests to observe Dahigauri's behaviour. Narmad had (perhaps to test), asked one Mehta Ji to deliver a letter to Dahigauri in Surat. He also had given him verbal instructions to pass on to her. However, the Dahigauri vehemently rejected the verbal instructions, although she did follow the written ones.¹³⁵

It was clear to Dahigauri that her social position was in proportion to her acceptance by her husband. In Narmad's account, Dahigauri was not seen challenging that. For instance, when asked by Narmad what according to her were the duties of 'their relationship', Dahigauri also describes Narmad's duties towards her.¹³⁶ Dahigauri was very clear that it was her duty to act according to her husband's commands, but she did add the words 'as far as possible'. She reluctantly accepted herself as a complete slave and covertly/ inadvertently mentioned that she might not obey if she did not accept it being reasonable. Dahigauri, like her husband, did not have a clear-cut definition of love or expectations of it. She also did not consider wealth as important. Duty to her was not sacrosanct and she did admit to few transgressions. It was not clear whether there were sexual transgressions or the fact that she was disobeying her husband. Narmad, of course, doubted her sexual integrity and baited her to tell the truth. However, she

¹³³ Dave, N. (1994). 97

¹³⁴ Dave, N. (1994). 94-119

¹³⁵ Ibid.96

¹³⁶ Ibid.104-106

held her ground and gave a non-committal reassurance of her sexual integrity. Although she did admit to the guilt of consumption of *Bhaang*.¹³⁷

Dahigauri because of having a strong and independent character was aware of social rights and wrongs. She showed her eagerness to convince Narmad of her awareness of honor and *Izzat*. Narmad's enquiry however was to prove her to be guilty of promiscuous behavior.¹³⁸ She was also at the same time aware of what she wanted vis a vis what her *Dharma* was.¹³⁹

The social reformers often lead a solitary life as they were socially ostracized. However, that would not have been possible without the support of few women in their lives. One more such special reformer was Dayaram who was supported by many women such as Ratnabai. Ratnabai had been widowed when she was just a child and was left to her fate. It is unclear as to how they met. Ratnabai had to serve him as she had no other choice. Dayaram would beat her, and she had to take that beating. Apparently one time she had too much of it and came back after much pleading. Ratnabai was not a qualified nurse but had all the qualities and experience of it.

Dayaram was another Indian social reformer who attempted to undertake reforms for women. He, like the others, was not successful in achieving much but his account of a woman Ratanbai in his life gives us an insight into the lives of the women in the nineteenth century. Dayaram a prolific litterateur and a reformer of some sort lived a colorful life till he reached forty years of age. Later he sobered down¹⁴⁰ and lived his life with a widow.¹⁴¹ Dayaram had sheltered the widow when she was just a child. Despite the fact she belonged to a lower caste, he lived with her for many years, although he would not eat the food that she used to cook, on the contrary, he would cook for both of them.¹⁴² During the time that Ratanbai stayed with Dayaram, he

¹³⁷ Dave, N. (1994).107

¹³⁸ Ibid.104-106

¹³⁹ Ibid.104-106

¹⁴⁰ The cause of his return to sobriety is said to lie in the following incident. As was usual with him while at Baroda, he once put up in the house of an admirer of his. His wife was devotedly waiting on him but Dayaram took the services in another light and wanted to force her into intimacy. She cried out, and Dayaram had to take to the stairs and run away. The experience proved to be a great eye-opener. Jhaveri, K. M. (1993). *Milestones in Gujarati literature* (Vol. 1). Asian Educational Services, New Delhi. 290

¹⁴¹ Jhaveri, K. M. (1914) .290

¹⁴² Ibid.291. Dayaram was an excellent cook himself, and he knew how to prepare several toothsome dishes. He used to cook for himself and her. Nagars are proverbially experts in wielding their pens, ladles and Barchi (a short javelin). As a Vallabhaite Marjadi Vaisnava it was considered a devout action to cook and present dainty dishes to his beloved.

would beat her and subject her to various forms of physical pain. She was believed to have borne it all without much complaint. There was one occasion when it became too much for her to bear and she left him. Later she was persuaded to come back as she was very good at handling Dayaram. It is unclear whether there were any sexual relations between the two. The account makes it very clear that Ratanbai had a substantial hold over Dayaram instead of the other way around. Despite being a widow, a child widow at that, Ratanbai's dependence on Dayaram was almost like that of a wife. The fact that Ratanbai's illicit presence in the house was socially acceptable says much about the life of a middle-class and upper-caste Brahman. Although after his death, her 'widowhood' was restored to her. Till the time Dayaram was alive, Ratanbai made herself indispensable. She acted as a nurse and his caretaker even when he turned blind.¹⁴³

During this time a very important event took place in Western India which brought the issue of marital rape to the forefront. So far rape was seen as adultery and seduction, where the victim was forced into sexual intercourse and was tagged as seduction. However, in this case, the issue of child bride and child widow came to the forefront. Phulmoni Dasi, a ten-year-old Bengali girl was married to a thirty-year-old man. Unfortunately, the girl died when her husband tried to rape her. The mother of Phulmoni Desi was the torchbearer as she filed a case against the husband in court.¹⁴⁴ Discussion about the mother is outside the purview of this thesis, however, the whole case triggered a dialogue amongst the Indian reformer men.

2.4. INFANT MARRIAGE AND WIDOW REMARRIAGE

The practice of child marriage had a pan Western India reach and was carried almost in all the regions and communities. However, it was more common amongst the upper castes. The practice of child marriage was so prevalent that almost all the pioneers of the social reform movement of the time were married at a very young age or had married young girls. For instance, Navalram got married two times till he was studying in the class third at the age of eleven and after the death of his first wife, he remarried to a nine-year-old girl.¹⁴⁵ Similarly,

¹⁴³ Jhaveri, K. M. (1914). 291

¹⁴⁴ Anagol-McGinn, P. (1992). The Age of Consent Act (1891) Reconsidered: Women's Perspectives and Participation in the Child-Marriage Controversy in India. *South Asia Research*, 12(2), 100-118. 100-18

¹⁴⁵ Mahipatram Rupam.(1877). *Uttam Kapol Karsandas Mulji Charitra; a Memoir of the Reformer Karsandas Mulji*. Ahmedabad United Printing Press. Ahemdabad. 15-16

Ichcharam Desai married a girl of thirteen years old, and Narmad Shankar married at the age of twelve.¹⁴⁶

For addressing the issue of child marriage Indian Reformers men, wrote poems, plays, and essays. Social reform societies held essay contests and discussions on this issue. Moreover, in order to resist the traditional practice, magazines like '*Buddhiprakash*'¹⁴⁷ based on the scriptures have shown that it also contains a statement that marriage cannot take place without the consent of the bride. They declared that marriage cannot be considered mature until the bride was ten years old and the groom was fourteen years old.

Further, a concerted effort was made to eradicate practice by establishing the '*Child Marriage Prohibition Council*' in 1871.¹⁴⁸ The members of the council decided not to marry their children until the age of sixteen and to maintain a gap of at least five years between the bride and groom. It was claimed that the congregation consisted of 300 members. They also published a magazine called '*Child Marriage Prohibition Magazine*'. The members of this congregation made a valiant effort to obey the rules of the congregation, but the task was very difficult for that time. As in those days it was very difficult to keep daughters unmarried until they were eleven or twelve years old. For instance, Navalram an active member, could not marry his daughter till she was ten years old and after that age it became difficult to find a suitable groom.

Even after the marriage many girls did not survive. This was due to the limited progress of modern medical science during that era, the average age of death was relatively high. Consequently, many girls became widows even before comprehending the true essence of marriage. These widows were often regarded as unfortunate and considered inauspicious during auspicious occasions. One of the detrimental consequences of child marriage can be seen in the book '*Gujaratma Narichetana*' by Shirin Mehta, where she cites a British survey in her book that 85% of widows were raped by their families.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Dave, N. (1994). 84

¹⁴⁷ In the year 1886, Vadnagar Kanbi community passed a rule that till a girl reaches five years of age, betrothed. If someone does so it will be considered a violation of rule.

¹⁴⁸ Raval, R. L. (2002). *Mahipatram*. Sahitya Akademi. Bombay. 6

¹⁴⁹ Parekh, Falguni. (2019). *Gujaratma Nari Chetna Ane Samajik Parivartn Ni Chadavado*. Mahatma Gandhi Labour Institution. Ahmedabad. 108

On the other hand, the natural sexual desires of widows were completely disregarded and overlooked, neglecting an essential aspect of their human experience. Under such circumstances, many widows became pregnant and to get rid of such pregnancies they dug wells (*Kuwa hawado*) or killed their newborns. As many as 381 such cases of illegal killing of children were reported in the Bombay area during 1880. Moreover, a total of 152 widows were convicted and handed life imprisonment for the crime of child murder. It should be noted here that even British law, which was considered humanitarian and modern, did not find the man guilty. In the book "*Oriental Memories*", James Forbes, who was a British bureaucrat from Dabhoi, recorded the deaths of widows in the year 1772.¹⁵⁰ He mentioned that "*if a boy dies during that interval, the girl must remain a widow for life, have her head shaved, be divested of every ornament, and perform many menial offices. One delicate attention which most of the Hindoo women voluntarily pay to their husband, is, that when he is absent from home for any length of time, they seldom wear their jewels, or decorate themselves with ornaments; since the object they most wished to please is no longer in their presence.*"¹⁵¹

The issue of child marriage did not only receive attention from English reformer men but also from Indian reformer men. Behramji Malabari, a famous reformer played an important role in influencing, amending the law and in creating public opinion. His famous note '*Child Marriage and Mandatory Widowhood*' was presented in the British Parliament.¹⁵² He did not only focus on the issue of child marriage but also the Phulmani Dasi rape case which is too well known to be mentioned over here. In his notes '*Infant marriage in India*' he wrote that infant marriage was not successful because of the age difference, as when the girl became an adult, the husband would become old or even would be dead. Due to the age difference, there was a partial or total absence of physical compatibility between them. Further, it resulted in the birth of sick children or many children. Feeding many children in turn led to poverty.¹⁵³

In his notes "*The Problems Explained*" Malabari wrote that the parents were excommunicated if they were unable to marry off their girls at a young age. This was mostly seen in the

¹⁵⁰ Forbes, J. (1834). *Oriental Memoirs*. London. Vol. I. 77.211,284

¹⁵¹ Ibid.102

¹⁵² Gidumal, D. (1888). *The Life and Life-work of Behramji M. Malabari: Being a Biographical Sketch, with Selections from His Writings and Speeches on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood: and Also His "Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer"*. Education Society's Press. Bombay. 1

¹⁵³ Ibid.4

Brahmans.¹⁵⁴ He even mentioned that almost 20% of marriage were ‘ill-sorted’ i.e., *Kajodas* in where the girl was older than the boy. Following table shows the data of widowed boys, girls and married boys and girls in the year 1884.¹⁵⁵

Age(years)	Widowed Boy	Widow Girl	Married Male	Married Female
1-9	21,000	63,000	6,68,000	19,32,000
10-14	65,000	1,74,000	18,08,000	43,95,000
15-19	1,08,000	3,12,000	27,40,000	53,23,400
20-24	2,06,000	6,10,000	43,35,000	66,51,000
25-29	3,33,000	9,61,000	60,45,000	65,90,000
30-34/39	7,86,000	27,97,000	1,08,10,000	87,97,000
40-49	8,77,000	34,01,000	71,89,000	43,42,000
50-59	8,67,000	34,06,000	40,97,000	17,53,000
60 plus	11,33,000	41,77,000	26,72,000	6,84,000

The data presented clearly illustrates a significant disparity in the number of girls married at a young age compared to boys within the age group of one to nineteen years. The figures revealed that a total of 11,650,400 girls were married in this age group, while the number of boys was only 5,216,000, resulting in a substantial difference of 6,434,400. This indicated that a large

¹⁵⁴ Gidumal, D. (1888).14

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.62-64

number of females were married to much older males aged twenty-five or above. The data further demonstrated that over the years, the trend of males marrying at an older age was increasing, while the number of girls getting married at each age interval was decreasing. This stark contrast underscores the deeply rooted problem of Child marriage, which disproportionately affected girls.

Behramji explains the horrors of child marriage. For instance, *“the husband comes to fetch his wife home. Her first impulse was to cling to her mother. But the father thinks the child-wife not accompanying her husband would be a disgrace to him. So, he takes up a cane or a thong, and orders her to walk out. The husband took the lead, followed by the little wife, now crouching at his feet, then attempting to run away, but prevented by the father who came immediately after.”*¹⁵⁶

Behramji in his account mentions an intriguing case of infant marriage, where a girl was educated, and as she grew older, her husband returned to claim her, mainly enticed by the money she was earning. Behramji's perspective on women highlights the transformative power of education and independence for women. Through this example, he envisions a future where women can overcome challenges and break free from traditional constraints by empowering themselves with education and self-sufficiency.¹⁵⁷

While talking about the issues, Behramji also offered a solution for child marriage, which was firstly, to get the state involved and make civil marriage compulsory. Secondly, the state could tax child marriage.¹⁵⁸ He Promoted heavy involvement of the state in the matter. Thirdly, he proposed that the university should declare the married candidate ineligible for appearing in the Matriculation exam. He also insisted that married boys should be debarred from applying for scholarships. Other suggestions were to provide inducements to girls in the form of scholarships, prizes, medals, etc. (Bombay 3rd October 1884)¹⁵⁹ In order to stop this infant marriage few steps are suggested by Behramji such as:¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Gidumal, D. (1888). 150

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.247

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.25-26

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 38-42

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.4

1. Educated society and educated men can play a great role in stopping this, as if an educated man takes a pledge to not marry till a certain age.
2. The education department should add a few topics on evil forms of infant marriage and indirect inducement should be given to the students for remaining unmarried.
3. State should prefer an unmarried man over a married man for the service.
4. University can make bachelors as a qualification for the entrance exams.¹⁶¹
5. Taxation by the finance minister on child marriage.¹⁶²

With these institutional steps he asks for some changes which should begin from the home itself that were:

1. Value should be given to the life and liberty of a woman.
2. There must be equality between men and women.
3. Women should not be treated as something which should be gotten rid off.
4. Some changes in the habits of the people such as sleeping in the same room, talking about forbidden subjects in the presence of girls, foul language and filthy jokes, and insane ceremonies at marriage, pregnancy, and birth. The studied segregation of women in their monthly trouble, and other stupid practices, ought to be slowly stopped.¹⁶³

The study of the life of Behramji throws an important light on women in Bombay. Behramji was very close to his mother. Being a Parsi, widow remarriage was not a taboo, therefore Bhikibai remarried when Behramji's father died. She was a strong and compassionate woman who had a deep impact on her son.¹⁶⁴ Behramji was a powerful writer and his 'Notes' which were printed on August 15, 1884, had a powerful impact on women. For instance, they inspired the widows of Surat to appeal to *Nagarsheth*, widows of Navsari made similar appeals to Gaekwads¹⁶⁵ for increasing the age of consent and stopping the enforced widowhood. As far as widow remarriage was concerned, Behramji suggested that the widowers should only marry the widows.

¹⁶¹ Gidumal, D. (1888).14

¹⁶² Ibid.26

¹⁶³ Ibid.17

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.iv

¹⁶⁵ Gidumal, D. (1888). xiii

Behramji Malabari in his notes '*Enforced widowhood*' dated 15th August 1884. While talking about Hindu widows he states that women were sufferers; it was not in her nature to publish her wrongs; Hindu widows complained very little. They showed their grievances through folklore, for example Ranakdevi, the wife of Rakhengar who the ruler of Junagadh was, showed her plight of being widow through this couplet- *उंचो गढ गिरनार, वादळथी वातुं करे, मरतां रा खेंगार, रंडापो राणकदेवडी*. That means "The fort of Girnar is so high that it touches the sky. By the death of Rakhengar, Ranakdevi becomes a widow."¹⁶⁶ In Gujarat and Kathiawar Rajijai's were usually sung (singing of dirges upon the death in the family) by the females of the house.¹⁶⁷ Behramji called the death of wives as '*wife murders*'. Perhaps he was the first one to do so¹⁶⁸ He not only discussed premature consummation but also of physical abuse, abandonment, and infidelity. For instance, on 27th March 1887, he wrote, "*Girls of 11 are assaulted by their husbands in a fit of jealousy or anger*'... *we had a case last year, in which a man was accused of having murdered his wife of 11 at Parol.*" He went on to describe how young children (girls) were killed easily.¹⁶⁹

In Behramji's account, an article from Bombay Samachar titled '*Widows for Widowers*' highlighted the unhappiness faced by widows due to the lack of hope for remarriage. The article compares widows with virgin girls, emphasizing that the certainty of marriage for virgin girls lead them to behave well. However, widows, aware of the uncertainty of their remarriage, often ended up choosing a wrong path out of desperation. The article emphasized that if there was hope for remarriage, their lives would not be unhappy. This perspective underscores the significance of providing widows with the opportunity for remarriage, offering them a chance at a happier life.¹⁷⁰ Behramji also discusses '*widow shaving*' as a cruel practice that deprived a widow of her dignity and all the comforts of life, leaving her desperate and desolate. The intense suffering experienced by widows was so profound that some believed that if the British Government were to leave India, the barbaric practice of *Sati*, or widow immolation, would be revived as a desperate response to their plight."¹⁷¹ Moreover in the '*Subodha Patrika*,' the

¹⁶⁶ Jhaveri, K. M. (1914). 346

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.239

¹⁶⁸ Gidumal, D. (1888). 20-21

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.21

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.32

¹⁷¹ Gidumal, D. (1888). 33

patriots expressed their hypocritical views on widows, saying that in the tropical climate, girls cannot be trusted once they reach puberty. As a result, they advocated marrying them off before they even attained adulthood. This attitude highlighted the double standards prevailed in society where widows were often subjected to unfair treatment and denied the freedom to make their own choices.¹⁷²

Due to such complexities that the widows faced in traditional societies, they often resorted to unconventional means to seek companionship and emotional solace. For instance, Behramji in his writings, referred to the Bhabhutgar case or Ahmedabad Tichborne case, where a widow, seeking to alleviate her sorrowful situation, decides to marry a man who closely resembled or impersonated her deceased husband. Through this union, she is believed to have found happiness and contentment once again.¹⁷³

For addressing issues like child marriage, widow remarriage, and widowhood, Behramji proposed various remedies to combat these social challenges, such as:¹⁷⁴

1. To not practice or encourage infant marriages.
2. Child marriage should not be compulsory for any of the party.
3. There should be an undertaking between the families that a wife will be sent to her in-law's house once she reaches the age of fifteen years.
4. Passing rule in the meeting of *Mahajan*, that if a girl becomes a widow before fourteen years of her age, in that case, she was eligible for remarriage just like a virgin girl.
5. Arrangements should be made for facilitations of remarriage.
6. Punishment should be given to the seducer of the widow i.e., Excommunicate.
7. Prohibition on the selling of infant girls.
8. Deal similarly with Kulin polygamists.
9. Encouraging intermarriage.
10. Reducing marriage expenses.
11. Behramji proposed *swayamvara* (girls chose their own partners).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Gidumal, D. (1888).46

¹⁷³ Ibid.77-78

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.87

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.103

As an Indian Social Reformer Behramji played a very important role in bringing to light the lost voices of women. We often hear about social reformers playing an important role in allowing widows to remarry. However, very few reformers point out that it was women who helped themselves as well. They were not silent and certainly not dormant. In this instance there was some sort of a momentum amongst young widows which was noted so vividly by Behramji.

He was hoping that the state as well as the society would take note of the plight of the widows of Nanavat, Shahpura and Gopipura. For their identity they say “*we are in momentary dread of ill-treatment even death*” “*we were sold for money into perpetual slavery, with a cord pressed tight round the throat*” While talking about their husbands age they say ... “*Some were younger than ourselves, some older three or four times even five and a half times, than we girls.*”¹⁷⁶... “*we were sold for thousand and fifteen hundred rupees. Chamars and butchers sell the bones and hides of dead animals; our parents sold our bones, skins and flesh whilst we were alive and too young to oppose the bargain*” ...¹⁷⁷

Inequality between male and females to exercise their will or men getting married number of times. This questions that are asked by these widows had become very relevant and no man can express them better as the women who had faced the horrors themselves.¹⁷⁸ The question of rape was raised by these widows, along with forced prostitution.¹⁷⁹ Along with the child, the wife was burnt by the husband and the husband got free of this crime by just paying eight rupees fine.¹⁸⁰ In his ‘note’ on “*Save the widow*”, Behramji discusses how law should be made which would punish the men who ‘seduce’ the widow. However, we can safely presume that what he means was ‘forceful physical intercourse or rape’.¹⁸¹

Behramji makes a very important connection between Infant marriage and upper caste Hindus. Infant marriage often means the marriage of a little girl with an old man for the sake of his money, When the man dies the little widow becomes mistress of his property. In her turn she was a slave of the parents and the caste. If she remarries, she and her parents lose the property.

¹⁷⁶ Gidumal, D. (1888).90

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.91

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.237

¹⁸¹ Ibid.92

So, she, the little widow, may do anything with her life, but must not contract an honorable alliance again.¹⁸² Behramji also wrote about ill treatment of young widows at the hands of her own family. He cited the case of one Jani who was branded on several parts of her body because she ran away from her *sasariyu* (husband's house)¹⁸³ He also talked of a widow who was sentenced for life because she killed her newborn child.¹⁸⁴

An interesting insight into the response of men with regards to enforced widowhood can be seen from a letter written by Nathubhai Talakchand. He was not married due to certain circumstances which are too mundane to be mentioned here. However, in his plea to Behramji, he was clear about one thing that the widows should be allowed to remarry especially with the active intervention of the state. This was mostly because widows in the society were either on their own accord or due to social pressure were engaged in immoral activities which was shredding the moral fabric of the society.¹⁸⁵

Behramji in his account also talks about mental state of a widow. As he described how widows were driven to madness. For instance he writes about a Gujarati Bania widow who was very young and she used to live with her family. Over there when she saw everyone being happy that made her feel sad for her own situation. As a consequence, she found herself trapped and forced to endure her struggles in isolation, shedding tears alone. Which was seen as an act of madness by others.¹⁸⁶

He says, '*Enforced widowhood is dangerous, not only to the Hindus of those classes in which it prevails, but to other sects, and also to non-Hindu communities. In fact, it is a national evil. Unprotected young widows, all whose sins are connived at by Caste (save the 'sin ' of remarriage), at times mislead maids and married women (especially young women married to old men). They ruin young men of all classes They become in a manner teachers of immorality and crimes like foeticide, infanticide, and so on. They give incessant trouble to the Police, whose services are paid for from the general revenues. Thus, the Government is bound, in public interests, to discourage enforced widowhood.*'¹⁸⁷...He also says, 'Enforced widowhood

¹⁸² Gidumal, D. (1888).99

¹⁸³ Ibid.102

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.103

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.108-109

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.166

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.110

*leads to the most unnatural and fiendish cruelty. In populous cities like Bombay new-born infants are at times pounded to death or cut up in small pieces and then thrown into the sewers, mixed up with rubbish and so on. There is a class of women whose business is to do this.*¹⁸⁸

Behramji also discusses in great details the opinion of Sir T. Madhavrao (the Dewan of Baroda State) on duties of a Hindu husband such as:¹⁸⁹

1. Husbands and wives should live separately from their families if they can.
2. If the former can't be done, then in that case have a separate room for yourself and wife.
3. Your wife should have the freedom to spend her time in her room, where she can discuss or express her feelings, troubles, grievances, difficulties or where she can have her alone time.
4. Wife should have that much comfort to meet the husband freely or ask for husband's support.
5. Number of problems arise due to control over the wife by elders over her intercourse and communication with her husband.
6. Try to teach your wife reading and writing.
7. Giving some money on a monthly basis to her for her expenses.
8. In case of arguments between them or elders of the family there should be impartial justice.

Behramji despite reiterating the weakness of the fairer sex yet unwittingly he makes such rebellious women visible by talking about some important cases where women and girls themselves revolted against the system for instance, the Case of Poona in which a girl of twelve years named Kasi, whose marriage was proposed by her guardian i.e maternal uncle to a man older enough as her father. She rebelled and left the house but was forced to go back by the police and court. Later on she cleared it that if marriage will be done against her will she will destroy herself.¹⁹⁰ Behramji also mentions how carelessly bad casually widows were killed.¹⁹¹

In his notes '*another evil of infant marriages*' Behramji mentioned the plight of women when they were married off young. The husbands were given education and they soon outgrew their

¹⁸⁸ Gidumal, D. (1888). 111

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.122-123

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 146

¹⁹¹ Ibid and His "*Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer*". Education Society's Press. 148(case of Narpat Singh, accused, dated 31st August 1885).

wives. These young brides often were sent away, so that the 'educated' youth could marry a mature and wise woman.¹⁹²

Hence it can be that Behramji Malabari played a pivotal role as an Indian reformer in visualizing and advocating for women's issues and showcasing women's experience in the 19th century. With his progressive ideas and writings, he sought to challenge the oppressive norms and practices that held women back. His relentless efforts focused on addressing issues such as child marriage, widow remarriage, and widowhood, which were prevalent in society. Behramji was a strong advocate for legal reforms and social awareness campaigns to improve the status of women. He believed in the power of education for girls and women, aiming to empower them intellectually and economically. Through his writings and activism, Behramji aimed to bring about a positive change in the lives of women.

Unlike Behramji, another Indian reformer, Mahipatram Rupam used literature to visualize the issues of women. It is not very clear whether Mahipatram Rupam¹⁹³ can be called as a reformer as he was mostly a litterateur. However, his contribution towards visualizing women in the nineteenth century was indeed very important. As it is believed that literature is the reflection of the society, therefore Mahipatram writing about women in his novels often mirrored what was happening in the society and what he hoped the reformers would be able to achieve. Being the first Gujarati writer who wrote about burning social issues of the period in the form of a novel, his work becomes extremely important to understand the changing nineteenth-century society. Mahipatram was born in Surat and was married early like most of his contemporaries. While growing up he was influenced by the Western education system and mostly by his senior contemporaries such as Durgaram Mehtaji and Dadoba Pandurang.

Hence it can be seen from the above discussion that Indian reformer men whether in Gujarat or Maharashtra played a very important role in bringing to light about the conditions of women. Despite the fact that their women, except Dahigauri, the wife of Narmad, had no voice in their activities or discussions. These men and their activities were able to initiate a dialogue. They were the ones who unwittingly offered a glimpse into the real nature of women's world. This was a world which was full of activities. Young girls since their birth were married off to either young boys or older men. Sometimes they were treated harshly by their in-laws but most of the

¹⁹² Gidumal, D. (1888).213

¹⁹³ Raval, R. L. (2002)., 3-7; Mallison, F. (1995). *Gujaratis in the Nineteenth Century*. Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture.76

time, they were supported by other women. Although we don't see a development of comradeship between women, yet they appear to stand together in case of crisis. These men unwittingly portray a picture of women (very small but significant in number) who fought for their rights. They wrote about how a widow would write a proposal of marriage to the newspaper such as *Dandiyo*, explaining why she was the best suitable candidate as a bride. Many Indian Reformer Men wrote about issues such as seduction, rape, adultery (both in marital and non-marital relationships) which were considered a taboo by the middle- and upper-class society. It is true that the family was supposed to be the first priority of nineteenth century women according to the India reformer men, yet they write about how women were fast learners and had already picked up reading, writing, and nursing skills. One of the important discussions in many of the writings have centered around the sexuality of women. It appears that women were aware of their sexuality and often did not hesitate in expressing it. Many of the essays written by the Indian reformer men advised the women to maintain decorum and not be overtly sexual. Many essays and articles have also focused on women's health issues, especially problems related to mensuration, pregnancy, abortion, and childbirth etc. Though most of these articles were advisory in nature, yet women's presence in these were duly noted. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, it became amply clear that at least the reformer men were more than ready to expect their wives, sisters, and daughters to act a torch bearer and guide other women to come out more in the public spaces.

CONCLUSION

By the above discussion one can conclude that both the English reformer men and the Indian reformer men, picked up issues which were at their individual level, they considered as a problem. On one hand, the English reformer men discussed issues revolving around *Sati* and female infanticide, Indian reformer on the other broadened the spectrum. They discussed, wrote, and dwelled on issues pertaining to child marriage, problems with widow remarriage, and other social stigmas attached with women. They were not really bothered about the lower-class women who perhaps enjoyed a relatively free status. Their concerns were more with women of the middle and upper classes. For instance, they wrote about young widows who had not either seen their husbands or consummated their marriage. They discussed how such women were seduced or even raped, physically abused by men in the family, neighborhood, and even religious men. This led to forcible abortion which created a somewhat rudimentary structure which was fallible and often played with the lives of the upper caste and upper-class women. In conclusion, there are many other reformer men who have written on the condition

of women in the nineteenth century Western India. Due to paucity of time and space it is almost impossible to cover them all. Nonetheless, those few who have been mentioned above unfortunately were not able to give an exclusive window into a woman's life. Perhaps this was the task that had to be done by women themselves. The next chapter attempts at visualizing the life of women by women themselves.