



Problems Of Women's Education In Colonial India

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Abstract : Education of women plays a vital role in the construction of Modern India. The period after 1931 was the time the women's movement was in full swing. One would therefore have expected some progress in women's education. It shows the need for proper investigation into the question of its backwardness. Education for girls will have to make rapid strides if the national system of education is to be established within a reasonable period. This gives us an idea of the immensity of the problem of educating women in this country. A tremendous push will have to be given and whatever obstacles are found in the way will have to be removed.¹

Keywords: Women's, Education, Colonial, M.G. Ranade, D.K. Karve, Indian Association

Introduction

The society faced some obstacles regarding the women education. The main obstacles can be classified under two heads, social and economic/In social aspect, the two pernicious custom of child marriage and purdah are responsible for many evils in the country.² It is time that people realize this fact or made realize it. Education reconstruction or advance is not possible unless there is a social reconstruction side by side. The only remedy here therefore is to introduce compulsory education and prevention of child marriages. The compulsory period should be long enough to give the girl sufficient education to make her a important member of the society and crate enough interest in her to desire to more knowledge.³

The practice of child marriage was institutionalized by Hindu society for several year& In the 19th century the average age of marriage fix girls was eight (or) nine although it often differed a some cases or provinces. All most all Hindu marriages were arranged by parents of the couple and in keil them with the traditional norm. The reformers and political leaders were themselves, married at your age, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa married a girl of six, M.G Ranade a girl of eight, D.K Karve a girl of air and Mahatma Gandhi was engaged at the aged seven and married at thirteen.⁴ These people w1 followed the traditional system of child marriage a last turned themselves as rationalists and stoot against these type of marriages. They told that child marriage was the first and foremost bather for women education. They raised against this child marriage all over India.⁵ The only community which follow the child marriage stubbornly was Brahma therefore is to introduce compulsory education and the prevention of child marriages. The compulsory period should be long enough to give the girl sufficient education to make her a important member of society and create enough interest in her to desire more knowledge community. This community especially in Madras and Bengal preferred to marry off their daughters at the age early.

Purdah system acted as a second constraint for women's education. This system was mostly prevailed among women in Islam. The origin of boshiya the veil or the purdah has been a source of great debate in western societies. In ancient times it was a common practice for women to wear that on certain occasion in all over the Islamic nations. Even women in western courtiers occasionally they wear veils for funerals or weddings.⁶

The enlightened reformers of the 19th century preached against the purdah system and its depressive effects. They said that women's education was greatly affected at during the period. It curbed the knowledge of women.⁷ Women's organizations made ceaseless efforts for its removal. All India Women's conference angered that the-purdah mentally affects the freedom of mind and variety of interests of Muslim women. Gandhi made a relentless war on the custom through his speeches and writings.⁸ In 1934 the Nizani of Hyderabad issued an order against the purdah system in his princely state. Hence whatever it may be the dress plays a vital role in bringing confidence among human being, than any other thing. In this matter. Purdah system suppressed the women education.⁹

Among the economic reasons which have come in the way of women's education, poverty of parents is the chief cause that the parents cannot afford to spend on their children's education and when they have to choose between the education of their sons and that of their daughter. They prefer to spend on education their sons which they consider more important from economic point of view¹⁰ A boy is required to earn for his survival and therefore it is necessary to educate him on the other hand. The girl is not required to earn for her survival condition survival is being dependent to her husband after her marriage. Another reason for reluctance on the part of parents to send their daughters to school is that they are required to work at house and help their mothers especially in cooking it is a large family. Like this way women education faced various obstacles and elite women over through those things and occupied the society in the fields of polities, education etc.

Women's Organizations

Under these circumstance, the next step was to co-ordinate the work of different regions associations into one and integrates their divergent goals for a common course. An attempt was made in 1887 by Ranade to found an association of this kind. It was a social conference in national level.¹¹ Annual meetings were held along with the meeting of the newly established. Indian National Congress until 1895 when Ranade and Gokhale fell apart on the strategies for women's education. Ranade died in 1901 and the NSC did not have any healthy growth after him

The Bharat Stri Mahamandal (BSM)

The BSM may be considered the first All Women's Association at national level with under than the revivalist goal of extemporary localized women's organization. BSM was founded in 1910 by Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, a Bengali Brahmo and theosophist, daughter of Swarnakumari Devi, an early women leader.¹² It was started to necessitate the importance of women's development through education.

Women's Indian Association (WIA)

Mrs. Annie Besant, Dorothy Jinarijadasa and Margaret cousins found WIA in 1917 and it was centered in Madras. These founders were British theosophists. WIA was the Women's association in India to bring together all types of Indian women for mutual assistance. The goal of the WIA included, among others, equality of rights and opportunities between men and women, compulsory primary education for every girl, abolition of child marriage, and other social evils. Right to vote for legislative and municipal councils on equal terms with men, adequate representation of women in municipalities, taluks, local boards, legislative councils and assemblies and to band women into groups for their purpose of self-development and education for the service of others. The Home Rule Movement was started and WIA naturally plunged itself into it demanding vote for women and representing for women.

A part from political activities WIA also engaged in programmers of social upliftment of women. The most important of these was education. It not only supported the Child Marriage Restraint Act, also called arada Act, but also constituted the sarada sub-committee for the vigorous enforcement of the act WIA was also responsible for the great extent for the abolition of devedaei system and suppression of immoral traffic in women.”¹³

Another area of social uplift was adult education village uplift and harijan welfare. The association gave a number of scholarships for the deserving girls including Harijan girls. It started and maintained the rescued homes and opened an orphanage in Madras. The WIA became the parent of the all India women’s conference which was established in 1927. It became the vehicle for the expression of united voice of the Indian womanhood and was the pioneer in transforming women’s association from a revivalist and welfare agency for equal rights.

The National Council of Women in India

The NCWI was founded in 1925 by (NCWI) Lady Aberdeen of the International Council of Women Lady Tata and others. They had already established Bombay Presidency Women Council in 1918. The NCWI linked with the BPWC, the Calcutta women’s league of Service and the provincial women’s councils formed in Delhi, Bihar and Orissa.

The major objectives of NCWI were:

- (1) To promote sympathy of thought and unity of purpose among the women of India.
- (2) To work for the removal of disabilities of women whether legal economic (or) social and for the promotion of the social, civil, moral and educational welfare of women and children ensuring opportunities for their full and free development and advancement.
- (3) To organize, develop and coordinate the work of its existing councils as may hereafter be formed under its auspices or may be accepted by it.
- (4) To coordinate the activities of other national organizations of India whose aims are in conformity with it and,
- (5) To form a link with National Councils or other countries through the international council of mm

The NCWI played a significant role in raising the status of women by working for the removal of various legal and social disabilities from which women suffered for centuries. Like other women’s organization of the time, NCWI also has stood for women suffrage and has joined hands with them to mobilize support for adult franchise for both men and women and against reservation of seats on the ground of gender. A major programmer of the council was the spread of education of women¹⁴ The NCWI was composed of branches and councils in important provincial and state capitals and cities. These units were engaged in field activities which included running of schools, child welfare, health, hobby and recreation centers, rescue homes, orphanages, clinics, hospitals and hotels for women.”¹⁵

The All India Women’s Conference (AIWC)

The AIWC was founded in 1927 through the efforts of Margaret Cousins, the first conference was held in Poona. It was intended to give importance towards women education. The objective was to draft a plan for the promotion of education among women and to solve the problem of women education. The Second Conference was held in Delhi in 1928 and a new fund for women’s education known as “All India Women’s Education Fund” was created. The first Home Science College of India was established in 1932 namely Lady Irwin college. The third Conference was held in 1929 and 2 sections were presided over one for education and another for social reforms. Like this Conferences continued for another 5 years. The 4th Conference gave importance to Registration of the society, the 5th Conference laid foundation for the representation of women association. The Sixth Conference combined the associations of women such as WLA, NCWI and AIWC to prepare joint memorandum for women franchise¹⁶

Conclusion

The study has proved that women faced so many problems especially in the field of education. The child marriage and purdah system played a major role in the degradation of women's education. The women's organizations stood stubbornly and brought out the women folk. They sowed the seed for women's education and now it has grown up as a big tree and it gives shadow to the whole society.

Notes & References

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