

**Women's Participation in the National
Movement From 1930-1942 :
A Case study of Maharashtra**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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1990

For
my sister
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19 JULY 1990

D E C L A R A T I O N

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled "WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT FROM 1930-1942 - A CASE STUDY OF MAHARASHTRA", submitted by Ms SURUCHI THAPAR in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy, has not been previously submitted for any other Degree to this or any other university, and all the sources used in this Dissertation have been duly acknowledged.


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe my greatest academic debt to my supervisor Dr.K.N. Pannikar who through his suggestions as well as criticism assisted in my research.

I thank the staff of JNU, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, National Archives of India for providing me adequate facilities of their library.

To ICHR whose grant gave me financial assistance.

To Paritosh whose concern smoothed out those edges of pain.

My friends, Kasturi, Ranjita, Rajendar and Dr. Sanjib Acharya who were both a source of inspiration as well as support.

My family who always encouraged me in my research

And lastly Mr. K. Muralidharan who helped to bring this piece in its final form.

Suruchi Thapar

SURUCHI THAPAR

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ABBREVIATIONS

AICC	:	All India Congress Committee
BC	:	Bombay Chronicle
CDM	:	Civil Disobedience Movement
DCC	:	District Congress Committee
FR	:	Fortnightly Report
HSD	:	Hindustani Seva Dal
NMML	:	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
NAI	:	National Archives of India
PCC	:	Provincial Congress Committee
RSS	:	Rashtriya Stree Sabha
TOI	:	Times of India

P R E F A C E

This study proposes to analyse the nature of women's participation in the National movement from the civil disobedience to the Quit India Movement.

My first chapter incorporates a brief analysis of the historiography related to women's participation in the national movement. My purpose is to expose the androcentric biases towards the 'history from below' which applies primarily to women's history and to draw out the limitations women's movement faced.

My second chapter would primarily deal with the social reform activities both by men and women during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the second section of this chapter I shall deal with the specific women associations that came up in an effort to take the issue of women in their hands. This chapter tries to analyse how in the course of tackling the women's issue by women reformers, a social awareness developed regarding the existing socio-economic conditions as well as the colonial reality.

My third chapter dealing with women's participation specifically in the civil disobedience takes up from where I leave my second chapter, how women's awareness towards the political reality urged them into participation. There are some questions which I have raised and which I find pertinent to the study. (1) whether their participation was in accordance with the creation of an 'Extended female space' for them or it posed a challenge to the domestic space.

(2) What kind of activities did they take up and were they in course able to link up their women issues to the national movement (3) Were the existing institutions and ideologies, especially the patriarchal ideology challenged by their participation (4) What kind of role was assigned to the women in the civil disobedience period, and lastly was there a growth of consciousness during this period?

My last chapter deals specifically with the Quit India Movement in which I have tried to draw links with the civil disobedience period exposing at the same time the changes that took place with respect to women. An interesting analysis which I would make would be whether the changing ideology of the time had an effect on their participation. The new set of activities in which women participated as well as the new organisations which came up will be tackled. Lastly in my last section I shall make a comparative survey as to the emergence of consciousness in the civil disobedience and Quit India Movement.

CHAPTER - I

HISTORIOGRAPHY

This Chapter is a survey of the historical writings on women's participation in various movements all over India. If it is accepted that history as a critical understanding of the totality of the past is essential then, we face the problem that the History presented as ours is only part of our history... what of the history of the 'historyless', that anonymous people who in their collective acts, their work, daily lives and fellowship have forged our society through the centuries?"¹ This quotation was used in a context - which was making a case for the further intensification of the study of "History from below. It also aptly applies to the study of women's history (as opposed to history of women) in India. Since, till recently, Indian historians of all shades of ideological commitment have only been tackling the question of a segmented history of women and that too, being regarded as peripheral to the larger whole.

Thus at the very outset, one has to make a clear distinction between those historians who provide a historical analysis of the women's question and those who simply provide a 'limited' data base on women (often, only great or famous ones) in history without a clear ideological perspective. Most of the historical literature available to us on women falls in the latter category. Some partially recognise that a study of the role of women in society of the past has a bearing for our present day situation and thus needs to be written

1. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Presidential Address, Sec.III FIHC Kurukshetra, 1982, pp.397-398.

about, others wonder on its actual importance and apologetically recount that women hardly made a mark in history of 'Political', 'Military' or with reservations, of 'literary' value while still others meticulously collect and put together conventionally available data on either the 'low' or 'glorious' status of Indian womanhood. These writings have in the first place emerged within the historiographical situation created during the early half of this century when Indian historians began writing the 'scientific history' of their past.

Historians writing in the 1920's and 1930's felt the impact of the Indian National Movement and differed from the earlier generation of scholars, who had hardly questioned the British imperialist views of the Indian past. As an essential part of their intellectual formulations within the discipline of history the idea was to glorify India's past. Thus historians like H.C. Raychaudhuri, K.P. Jayaswal, R.C. Majumdar, R.K. Mookherjee, A.S. Altekar and others who wrote essentially political history, made ancient India come to light as the age of republics and local self government.

The writings of social history per se, as independent of political history, during the nationalist phase was pertinently linked to the social and religious reform movements of the time. The zeal for social reform particularly with regard to the upliftment of women and

lower orders of society, provided a strong incentive for the study of ancient Indian social order. It was not unusual for even the later reformers to appeal to the past for the interpretation of the reforms they were suggesting.

Historians who were influenced by these ideas and who expressed these aspirations tried to recreate this utopian past with the idea of bolstering these views in supplying new data and an interpretation to the vast body of sacred literature which in the first place, provided sanction for contemporary usage and custom, particularly for the upper classes. A case in point is the classic work of A.S. Altekar on Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation.

Its value is for the lay person to learn about the 'facts' relating to women in the often inaccessible sanskrit legal texts and other literature. However in serving this purpose it also helped to perpetuate certain cultural stereotypes about women which have come down to us as representing the actual historical reality of women in history based on an essentially bibliocentric view of society.

Taken together these Nationalist historians had perceived the role of women in history as part of their general endeavour to explain the greatness of Indian civilisation. Within this limited ideological contents

their books infact brought out two contradictory positions they had consciously or unconsciously taken. Thus they created (i) the image of the 'glorious' goddess like Indian womanhood that remained untainted through the passage of time (ii) the gradual and slow degradation of her status in society as wife, mother daughter. Historical explanations that sought to elucidate these seemingly contradictory situation, often adopted a very defensive position.

What is ignored in all these adulating accounts of Indian Women (fictious and real) in the history is that the religious data, be it 'law' or 'gospel' was infact used to propagate the values of, and to serve patriarcy. Therefore these scholars have used their source material uncritically. Thus though the first National Committee Report on status of women in India (1971-74) very rightly noted

"Any assessment of the status of women has to start from the social framework as social structure, cultural norms and value systems influence social expectations regarding the behaviour of both men & women and determine a women's role and her position in society to a great extent",¹

it is at the same time pertinent to review the historio-graphical literature that have created historical constructs of how these values and perceptions developed in the first place.

1. National Committee Report on status of women in India, ICSSR, p.7.

In my historiographical survey I would first like to discuss the work of Kumari Jayawardena.¹ She has studied six eastern countries (Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Japan, India and China) and succeeded in telling her readers in a brief and uncomplicated way the political history of these countries and women's participation in it. All the countries mentioned above had to confront the West - the cases varying from India which became a direct colony to Japan which was only pressurised to open to the West.

The primary or specific purpose of Jayawardena seems to rescue feminism from Eurocentric and male biases which allege that feminism which is based on foreign culture - is a product of the 'decadent' Western capitalism and has no relevance for women of the third world or that feminism is an ideology of women of the local bourgeoisie and that it either alienates women from their culture, religion and family responsibility on the one hand or from the revolutionary struggle for national liberation and socialism on the other.

As a result Kumari Jayawardena thought it necessary to take up some of these issues to show that feminism was not imposed on the Third World by the West, but rather that historical circumstances produced important material and ideological changes² which affected women i.e. it should be

1, Kumari Jayawardena, Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

2. Ibid, Introduction

seen in the context of the resistance that developed to imperialism on the one hand and the movements of opposition to feudal monarchies, exploitative local rulers, traditional patriarchal and religious structures on the other.

Her study reveals that feminism apart from being a part of the democratic movement was also a revolutionary force which could simultaneously help to transform society and improve the position of women in that society.

The author gives due emphasis to the growth of capitalism and consequently the rise of a local bourgeoisie and the reforms-legislatives passed were to create a greater political-economic sphere for themselves.

In the context of the rise in capitalism she correlates how women became available as wage labour. At this juncture it becomes hard to distinguish her thoughts from Marx who also talked of women providing the reserve army of labour and thus any constraints which restricted women's mobility or enforced their seclusion were thus detrimental to capitalism.

Moving from this logic she goes on to argue that the even the social reforms which were advocated were serving twin purposes of (a) making the bourgeoisie life more stable against the social evils and thereby strengthening the basic structures of society (b) positing the 'new enlightened woman' for the new bourgeois man in the

colonial society - yet whose role was confined to the home.

Although Education for women became an important

issue which enabled women to break through into avenues of employment previously denied to them it did not promote women's emancipation or independence but reinforced patriarchy. Moreover education was mainly confined to the larger cities and towns and served the needs of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

Except for China in all the other five countries, the author shows, feminist issues hardly became the points of major debates within the anti-imperialist movement. The early agitation of the social reformers regarding social evils which affected women in the family were supplanted by the nationalist issues which became pre-dominant, resulting in the neglect of agitation to combat women's unequal social and economic position.

Jayawardena may be right in her assessment that women's issues became secondary but she cannot deny that women's participation in the anti-imperialist movement marked the starting point in the women's political participation.

She cites the example of China as one which exposes the limitations of bourgeois feminism. This is a case where equal rights for women became an issue of the movement for national liberation. Since the May Fourth movement of 1919 women's issues were distinctly spelt out and were brought to the forefront of the struggle. The

author remarks that "issue of women's liberation is an issue of the revolution and not a side issue to be tackled after revolution."¹ The question one might want to ask here is that though feminist issues had become a part of China's revolutionary movement, did the China of post-liberation period accord equal status to women? The answer is a simple 'no'.

Arguing on some points aforementioned on similar lines in Meredith Borthwick² who approaches the lives of women in nineteenth century Bengal from the view point of the changes society were having on the lives of women.

In 1860's debates over women's education were divided along the lines of radical Brahmos (Dwarkanath Ganguli to cite an example) who felt that there was no justification for instituting a separate curriculum for girls or limiting the level to which girls should be educated and the mainstream Brahmos (K.C.Sen, Umesh Chandra Datta) who advocated a limited education for girls which would serve the major purpose of making women intelligent companions for the emergent Bhadrakalok and better mothers (through spread of home or Zenana education).

The introduction of female education illustrated the ideological changes that were taking place in the Bengali Society. The Bhadrakalok were genuinely troubled by the failure of the women-folk to conform to British

1. Kumari Jayawardena, Op.Cit, p.135.

2. Meredith Borthwick, The Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849-1905

standards of ideal womanly conduct. Criticisms of the position of women hit at the crux of the personal life of the Bhadrak. For some it precipitated a major crisis of identity, for most it caused at least some disquiet and forced them to reevaluate their own society. Thus they were forced into a defensive position by the persuasive rhetoric of British Liberalism and the cultural intolerance of most representatives of the British Empire.

However, the Bhadrak also responded to sustained criticism by their colonial rulers, with mixed perceptions of responsibility and guilt, inferiority and resentment. They had been made to feel that unless they initiated some changes in their domestic lives they would be regarded as inferiors in the scale of civilisation. Thus to minimise conflict and retain continuity they adapted to the new situation by 'compartmentalising' their domestic and working lives, and gave rise to the stereotype of the Bhadrak. The model of the Bhadrak was strongly influenced by the 'Victorian ideal of womanhood'¹, transmitted through the colonial connection and adapted to suit the social conditions of Bengal. This Bhadrak through the practical skill of literacy learned about the world beyond the antahpur² and used it as a channel for expressing their thoughts and feelings to a wider audience. Unforeseen consequences such as a gradual rise in the age of marriage, decline in their

1. Meredith Borthwick, op. cit., pp.358.

2. It was an inner courtyard surrounded by a kitchen and living apartments, Ibid, p.7.

familiarity with traditional household skills, white collar female employment took place.

In the final analysis Borthwick argues that women were not in a position to transform their lives according to their own needs and wishes. The possibility of women developing their own interests apart from the wife-mother role was not seen. One reason offered by Borthwick is that though social reforms seemed to pose a threat to the supremacy of the Bhadrak, the emancipation of women implied no such danger for them. For example reform of the caste system would have entailed a total restructuring of society but the improvement of the condition of women applied only within the bhadrak group, and did not represent a threat from without. Thus the women accepted the value system of the dominant male group. Consequently there were no major initiatives taken by women as a group to assert their interests in the face of male opposition. Moreover important changes in the condition of Bengali women in the nineteenth century, often made in the face of orthodox disapproval, did not lead to the development of a women's movement or a feminist consciousness. The bhadrak perceived that women were subject to social oppression, but they did not react to this awareness by what we would now describe as group militancy.

There are some reasons suggested by Borthwick as to why this did not happen, A cultural stereotype of womanly behaviour did not encourage expressions of militancy B the household atmosphere was not conducive to the creation of a group consciousness such as could be generated in public forums C the economically dependent position of women inhibited any rebellion against those responsible for their support. The fundamental factor she suggests was that the Bhadramahila saw themselves as representatives of "modernity" in opposition to "tradition" rather than as women opposed to men.¹

Borthwick's analysis becomes interesting when she suggests that the Bhadramahila efforts to make changes in social relationships was affected by the narrowness of class interest. They did not extend their analysis to the relations of men and women of the chotolok to arrive at a more generalised feminist perspective. At that stage they were intent on reforming traditional customs that adversely affected women of their own class, but were not particularly concerned with improving the overall condition of women. For them class was a more significant means/^{of}self-definition than sex. Moreover the struggle against a common oppressor (colonial rule) effectively diverted attention from other potential conflicts within the social system.

1. Ibid., pp.360-361.

Even the betterment of relationship between men and women in marital relations gave men more control over domestic concerns without providing women with opportunities to influence public life in return.

Agreeing with Borthwick on the narrowness of class interest of women in social relationships is Gail Pearson who discusses the participation of women in the national movement in the twentieth century. Through an extensive survey of primary sources as well as personal interviews she draws some interesting conclusions.

She argues that a slow growth of the 'female intelligentsia'¹ can be discerned who provided a bridge between the world of the household and the world of public affairs. But in her analysis this participation by the female 'intelligentsia' obscured the real condition of the women in the household. Not only was patriarchal society (which maintained segregation of sexes) unchallenged, it was wrongly assumed that the limited participation of the female intelligentsia had resolved the question of women's social role.

For her the transformation of the female intelligentsia into the female political elite enabled individual women to have a political status but within only a slightly modified ideological and spatial stature. And this political

1. This 'female intelligentsia' was a creation the social reform movement.

role obscured the political powerlessness of most women and further stifled the possibility of mass social transformation among women.

Pearson through the course of her work traces the growth of a political and social consciousness among women wider than the household. Even the participation of the women in the civil disobedience movement opened the way to offer a challenge to the structure of a society built on the separation of sexes or there was a possibility of desegregation in common political space that was created. But for her the lacunae lay in the emphasis put upon the women participants to play only a mediating role.¹ At the same time the powerfulness of the woman in the household was maintained. Within the national movement and the women's movement the dual nature of womanhood was maintained. The feminine virtues of benevolence, self-abnegation and sacrifice was emphasised.²✓

Apart from this she makes two crucial points regarding the role of female intelligentsia. Firstly though they used

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1. Gail Pearson, "Nationalism, Universalisation and the Extended Female Space" in Gail Minault (ed.) The Extended Family: Women and Political participation in India and Pakistan, pp.177.
 2. Ibid., The nationalist ideology did not provide liberation for women, merely an alternate form of male social control, pp.176-77

the extended female space¹ as a mobilising resource for civil disobedience they failed to transform the mass movement into one incorporating other sections among women particularly from the working class. Secondly they themselves did not perceive any contradiction between social roles of men and women or had an independent analysis of women's role. No challenge could be offered to the patriarchal order.

Gail Pearson has also critically viewed the role of Gandhi in the national movement. Due to emphasis on the importance of household and feminine virtues the patriarchal order of society could not be questioned.

Veena Majumdar agreeing with Borthwicks analysis of reformers/^{argues}that the question of women's political power or equality between the sexes was not on their agenda though most of them shared the rising aspirations of the English educated intelligentsia for a share in the governance of the country. Their urban middle-class origin and bias was evident from their perception of women's problems. Education and removal of oppressive customs (as mentioned above) would allow women to develop to be better wives and mothers. Veena

Majumdar argues that the reformers and the reforms they advocated were far removed from the problems that affected the majority of Indian women. The instruments of change advocated by the reformers - education and legal reform -

1. Ibid., p.182.

could not have touched the lives of the vast masses of working women.

Veena Majumdar gives a commendable note to Gandhi's contribution in bringing about a completely new dimension into the debate on the women's question. For her Gandhi broke away from the reform tradition by preaching the philosophy not only of absolute equality of rights between the sexes but of the pragmatic necessity of enrolling women's support to transform the nationalist struggle for the transfer of political power from British to Indian hands into a social revolution for abolishing social inequality of all kinds. The non-exploitative social order that he had visualised had to be achieved by the participation of the masses of the people and the resolution of social conflicts by non-violent protests. Women, he claimed were better than men in waging non-violent protests.¹ She adds that one of Gandhi's justification for his economic policy for reviving the village economy and cottage industry was to restore to women their lost economic strength (his ideas draw a close parallel with Karl Marx). The mass produced goods of modern technology and capitalist mode of production had eroded women's productive roles.

1. Vina Mazumdar, "The social reform movement from Ranade to Nehru" in B.R. Nanda(ed.), Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity, pp.58-60.

To sum up her views on Gandhi; for her Gandhi's greatest contribution lay "in his revolutionary approach to women in society"¹. He respected their personal dignity "without belittling their roles as mothers and wives" and gave women with men "equal tasks to perform in the achievement of freedom". It is interesting to note here that though other feminist writings more or less agree with Veena Majumdar aforementioned conclusions but, their critical evaluation come up with some interesting thesis. Madhu Kishwar acknowledges the existence of some inherent contradiction within Gandhi relating to his ideas on women. She accepts that as opposed to the reformer's perception of women as recipients of more humane treatment. Gandhi saw women "not as objects of reform and humanitarianism but as self-conscious arbiters of their own destiny."² But she says that the fruits of Gandhian ideology were not scale neutral and were specifically used by women who came from the middle class family and whose male members were involved in the national movement. She also accepts that Gandhi failed to put an economic content in his conception of women. But if the 'economic content' was distilled in Gandhi she does not ask why and thus evaluate the social roots of this absence. On the question of 'economic content' Veena Majumdar gives credit to Jawahar Lal Nehru for

1. Ibid., pp.53.

2. Madhu Kishwar, "Gandhi on Women" in Economic and Political Weekly, vol.20, n.40 Oct. 5, 1985-

emphasising on it.

For Sujata Patel, Veena Majumdar's assumption that "Gandhi facilitated the acceptance of the women's cause by the nationalist particularly in public life" has guided her interpretations and commentaries on him. As a result an attempt has been made to "look" for the liberationist aspects inherent in his ideology. According to Sujata it has led to a construction of one perception of Gandhi and his ideology where women appear as a homogenous category, undifferentiated in terms of class and caste. For her Gandhi's reconstruction of women and femininity did not make a structural analysis of the origins and the nature of exploitation of women; infact Gandhi used essentialist arguments to reaffirm her place as mother and wife in the household.¹ He emphasised her distinct social role in the family by glorifying some of her 'feminine' qualities. By giving qualities a seperateness and a justification of morality he was simultaneously able to assert a positive and a creative role for the married women in certain situations but enclose her in those of the other that extended outside the family and the household.

Neera Desai also builds up the genesis of her arguments from the social reform movement to ^{the} role of Gandhi in ameliorating the condition of women, giving full emphasis to the role the British rule had to play in the above

1. Sujata Patel, "Construction and Reconstruction of Women in Gandhi", in Economic and Political Weekly, No.8, vol.XXIII, Feb 20, 1988.

mentioned cause.

She argues that the position of women in pre-British days was 'ideologically'¹ inferior and institutions of patriarchy, polygamy, purdah, child-marriage, sati, permanent widowhood further smothered her development. It was only with the establishment of the British rule and its associated capitalist economic system as well as modern state based on principle of liberty and equality that a background for 'enlightened' changes by social reformers was formed. Consequently the social reform activity occupies a pre-dominant place in her analysis.

The movement for emancipation of women was carried further by women themselves through their organisations like All India Women's Conference, Women's India Association and Bombay Presidency Women's Council to cite a few. But for her these activities of women on an individual plane would not have been possible without the efforts of the social reform movement which recognized 'woman as a personality.'²

Her analysis of Gandhi remains uncritical. Here she differs from the arguments of Sujata Patel and Madhu Kishwar. Gandhi for her carried on the activities of women further by providing an opportunity for them to participate in politics and this assisted in removal of various

1. Neera Desai, Women in Modern India, p.49.

2. Ibid., p.114.

restrictions imposed by society on women.

Her arguments fall in a chronological order i.e. at every stage of the national movement she has tried to link up the subsequent growth in the women's movement and in her final analysis she opines of a creation of a 'new womanhood'.¹ This emergent 'new woman' with a wider social consciousness realised the importance of her participation in public life, beyond the precincts of the household.

If one were to deduce then one would suggest that a revolution in the status of women and an extension of their roles was well on the way. But the review undertaken in the early seventies by the Committee on the status of women in India reached a conclusion, that though "women did not constitute a minority numerically, they were acquiring the features of one by the inequality of class, status and political power. Development plans and supportive services have tended to view women only as target groups for social services ignoring their productive roles."²

In the Extensive study of participation of women in nationalist politics of states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Assam to name a few, certain broad trends are discerned though levels of political awareness vary from region to region conditioned by the political

1. Ibid, p.253

2. Committee on the Status of Women, ICSSR report, 1975, p.8.

culture of the area, the approach of the political parties to women and the quality of local leadership.¹

FIRSTLY though literacy is found to be an important determinant for both awareness and participation, education does not command a similar influence. While a co-relation can be established between education and awareness, this does not extend to participation. Similarly urbanisation alone cannot be identified with high political awareness or participation.

But the difference has been brought about by Tanika Sarkar who opines that a definite equivalence existed between the politicisation and a direct involvement with the production process,² a feature closely related with urbanisation. Her case study of Bengal reveals that women workers in the Industry in the 1920's were active in the Calcutta and Howrah Municipal Scavengers strike.

In 1929 official reports on the administration of Bengal (1927-28) commented on women's militancy in the jute mill strikes at Bauria and Chengail as well as their demand charters ranging from issues like maternity leave, adequate housing facilities, concessions during pregnancy.

SECONDLY there was no positive relationship between higher

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1. Veena Mazumdar (ed), Symbols of Power: Studies on the Political Status of Women in India
 2. Tanika Sarkar, "Women and Politics in Bengal," in J. Krishnamurthy (ed), Women in Colonial India.



socio-economic status and degree of awareness. From Prof. Sirsikar's study in Gujarat the high income group was less aware and participated less in the political process.¹ By and large, politics constituted a peripheral interest for women from his stratum, though a significant number of women legislators came from an affluent background.

THIRDLY it was evident there was a difference in the level of political information and perception regarding implications of the right of franchise etc. between men and women both quantitatively and qualitatively. Many have blamed the political parties and women's organisations for this. "A study of urban voters in Rajasthan provides an illustration. 44.5% of the women did not have any clear cut idea about their criterion for voting, 19.5% considered the personality of the candidate, 22.3% caste and family while only 8.3% and 5.5% considered the party and the issues respectively."²

FOURTHLY the state profiles indicated one common trend, that women were concerned with problems that affected their day to day lives. Some common issues were price rise, non availability of essential commodities, unemployment and poverty.

However it is evident that during the freedom movement since a general unity existed between the political, economic

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1. V.M. Sirsikar, Politicisation of Women in India.
 2. C.P. Bhambhri and P.S. Verma, The Urban Voter, p.149.

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and social issues, a high degree of political participation was seen as opposed to their low participation in politics in recent years.

Specific to Maharashtra the most influential factor in the motivation of politicization was Ideology. Other factors that mattered were family tradition, influence of personalities, specific political events such as Independence struggle. Even if the participation was low an overwhelming majority of the respondents revealed a high degree of politicization. They seemed to be aware of their political rights and also political events. Most of them held clear perceptions on questions regarding scope in politics for women, franchise to cite an example.

A general consensus exists that for women of lower classes and lower castes who constituted the greater majority of female population, traditional Hindu religious orthodoxy and patriarchalism did not apply to them so stringently as it did to higher class and higher caste woman. The great barrier was thus not of caste orthodoxy as the socio-economic inequities that made it impossible for lower class women to capitalise on the democratising gains of the national period.

The cause of the lower classes has been taken up strongly by Gail Omvedt who sees the poor peasants, landless labourers as the political vanguard of the revolutionary

movement.¹ They would fight not simply for higher wages (socio-economic inequities) but against male oppression, caste division, religious superstition and ultimately spearhead the struggle for revolutionary power. Though these women fought from a disadvantaged position² they showed their militancy as well as a consciousness about the oppression of women.

But this potential has hardly been recognised and for this Omvedt holds (a) Women's organisations whose primary task remains mobilising women not organising them.
 (b) Left parties and agricultural trade unions who continue to flounder on the rocks of caste discrimination
 (c) state's lack of interest, responsible.

Omvedt provides a solution to the aforementioned problems when she says that (a) base level committees should be established which have the potential to carry forward the mobilisation of women which is at the stage of agitations i.e. marches, demonstrations, conferences
 (b) Breaking the stranglehold of patrilinear patrilocal family by establishing an economic base and social

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1. Gail Omvedt, "Rural Women Fight for Independence", in Economic and Political Weekly, No.17, vol.XXIV, April 29, 1989.
 2. Here her study involves the Porityakta women's or Taklelya (Women thrown away by their husbands) movement in the Sangli district of Maharashtra.

legitimacy for women to live singly.¹

Overall in Omvedt analysis the main thrusts discerned are (a) Anti state thrust (c) rural orientation of the women's movement and her disenchantment with the left parties.² These two points shall be further elaborated by me.

THE STATE:

Along with the state that assists in justifying patriarchal structures is religion. The two broad levels at which religion has intersected with society and consequently affected women's rights are (a) the role religion plays in gender construction at the level of culture and (b) the level of state at which religion engages as an institutional force in policy formulation.³

At the cultural level religion defines our notions of sexuality, marriage and so on and creates a value system which becomes intrinsic in our life. In this sense, religion becomes a structure which projects a cultural pattern. At the second level i.e. at the level of state, the relationship of the state and religion reflects the particular configuration of political forces that exist within a social formation at any particular point of time. The rise and strength of these religious forces is directly linked to the broader

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1. Gail Omvedt, Chetna Gola, Govind Kelkar, "Unity and struggle: A Report on Nari Mukti Sangharsh Sammelan," in Economic and Political Weekly, No.18, vol.XXIII, April 30, 1988.
 2. See Gail Omvedt, We will smash this prison.
 3. Sadha Arya, "Women, Religion and State", in Teaching Politics, vol.XV, No.1, 1989.

process of social, economic and political change, which provides a basis to these religious forces to grow along with the state support. Religion lays claim to those elements of state policy that pertain to women e.g. in controlling the sexuality of women by putting religious codes on dress, reducing marriage age, against any inheritance right to women. Though religious forces, through various means like educational and religious institutions, social customs sustain patriarchal ideology, it is the state which legitimises as well as limits their exercise of power on women. For the women's movement it is very important to understand how both religion and state operate in a symbiotic relationship with each other trying to subvert the process of women's emancipation.

Thus Borthwicks pre-independent India analysis holds true when she tries to show how patriarchy religion and state had a clean nexus between them. Thus when social reform movements took up the ^{course of women's emancipation a radi-} onslaught on patriarchal ^{cal} bases of Hinduism and Islam in India was avoided. Both in Hindu and Muslim cultures the elite hoped that Indian women, through education would be able to serve their families and communities in a better manner as women. As the national movement advanced there came a tendency to retrieve aspects of the past, glorify mystify and use them as national identity. Their use of religious ideals to

legitimise their activities further made it difficult for women leaders to attack Hindu law, Islamic law or caste system. For women who came out of their homes to join nationalist movement, it became imperative to justify their actions by appealing to religion and patriotism in order to counter opposition.¹ Upendra Baxi opines "the great debates on the reform of Hindu Law in the late nineteenth and twentieth century on the reform of Hindu Law show the typical ambivalence of male reformists, some of whom insisted that any reformist legislation by the British favouring change in the status of women should be opposed and the matter must be left to the internal conscience of the concerned communities."²

The same patriarchal ideology persisted in the Constituent assembly which strongly opposed gender equality in the spheres of marriage and family, which were governed by religious laws. A conflict between freedom of religion and women's rights was anticipated by Amrit Kaur and Hansa Mehta who objected to the guarantee of freedom of religious 'propagation' and 'practice'. They rightly believed that the 'terms might invalidate future legislation prohibiting child marriage, polygamy, unequal inheritance laws etc. as these customs could be construed as part of religious practice. They wanted that religious

1. See Jane Mason Everett, Women and Social change in India".

2. Upendra Baxi, Patriarchy, Law and state; - a paper presented at the 2nd National Conference on Women's Studies, Trivandrum, 9-12 April, 1984. pp.4-8.

freedom be limited to religious worship.¹ The fact that the final document retained both the terms 'practice' and 'propagation' alongwith the provision that the clause did not preclude social reform, was another success to religious forces as against the rights of women.

Moreover the state in the name of religious freedom and 'protecting' minority interests, has not only tried to legitimise its actions but also acquiesced in the anti-secular and anti-women demands of religious force. Even the ruling party's attempts to get majority vote makes it imperative for it to assure the minority that its rights will not be touched. This, in other words, means that Muslim and Christian men would be assured that their superiority in family will not be touched.²

Lastly along with the deeply entrenched role of state and religion the women component is absent from the left party politics. It is 'invisible' everywhere. This aspect was clearly visible in the communist lead movements like Tebhaga Movement³ (1946-50), Telengana (1944-51) movement, the Worli Revot (1945-47) in Thane district of Maharashtra.

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1. B. Shiva Rao (ed.) The Framing of India's Constitution, pp.64-170.
 2. Gabriel Dietrich, "Women's Movement and Religion", in Economic and Political Weekly, no.4, Vol.21, Jan 25, 1986, pp.57-61.
 3. See Peter Custers, Women in the Tebhaga Uprising: Rural poor women and revolutionary leadership, 1946-47

This was a brief historiographical survey of studies carried on the various activities in which women were involved during the national movement. I have also discussed important issues like the role of the state, religion and the party ideologies that had an impact on the very activities women undertook.

CHAPTER - II

THE SOCIAL REFORM TRADITION

The nineteenth century reform movement took place against the backdrop of colonisation which was deeply entrenched in the Indian Society.

The most common theories attached to the growth of the reform movement have been seen in the light of 'the social protest and religious dissent'¹ due to the introduction of European institutions and ideas. The Indian social reformers were seen to be responding both to the challenges and demands of the British imperial presence.

The other reasons have been traced to the spread of English Education and to the religio-cultural resistance of Hindus to the spread of Christianity. However these explanations have proved inadequate to explain the whole phenomenon of 'renaissance'²

I shall not go into detail in these aspects but try to focus on (how the 'women's question' served as a pivotal issue in the nineteenth century as part of the larger concern for reform in Indian Society).

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1. K.N. Pannikar, Presidential address to thirty-sixth session of the Indian History Congress, Dec.29-31, 1975, p.3.
 2. Vina Majumdar, "The Social Reform Movement in India- From Ranade to Nehru," in B.R. Nanda (ed.) Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity, pp.48-49.

Improving the position of women was one of the earliest tasks taken by the movement and (the causes taken up by the reformers were in a chronological order of sati, ill treatment of widows, ban on widow marriage, polygamy, child marriage and the denial of rights to women).

The issue which the reformers took up initially before tackling the social evils of society was education for women. This was a problem most amenable to reform, the question generally being not whether but (to what extent and in what manner to educate women. This was a safer issue than others which interfered with social institutions and aroused profound resistance.¹

EDUCATION - The prominent advocates of female education were Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar (Calcutta), Mahadev Govind Ranade (Maharashtra), Vishnu Krishna Chiplunkar (founder of the Deccan Education Society), Gopal Ganesh Agarkar² and D.K. Karve of Maharashtra.

In the revivalist stream we had reformers like Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekanand and Mrs. Annie Besant.³

The social reform movement was carried on in the latter half of the nineteenth century and early phase of

1. Quoted from D.K. Karve's "Atmavritta" in Meera Kosambi, "Women, Emancipation and Equality: Pandita Ramabai's Contribution to Women's cause", Review of Women Studies, Economic and Political Weekly, vol.XXIII, no.29, Oct. 29, 1988, p.44.
2. He started the paper 'Sudharka' in 1888.
3. "The common distinction between the revivalists and reformers is that though both recognised the co-ercive character of social institutions, one group (reformers)

the nationalist movement with B.G. Tilak, G. Gokhale and organisations like the National Social Conference (1887) which had for its objective of reforming the Indian Society. I shall discuss their activities in the following pages.

Bengal took considerable initiative in women's education. This was partly reflected in the ideological changes taking place in Bengali Society. The Bhadrakol were genuinely troubled by the failure of the women folk to conform to the British standards of ideal womanly conduct.¹

Debates took place on women's education in 1860's between the Radical Brahmos who felt that there was no justification for instituting a separate curriculum for girls or for limiting the level to which girls should be educated. Mainstream Brahmos and the more enlightened sections of the Hindus advocated a limited education for girls which would serve the purpose of making women intelligent companions for the emergent bhadrakol.²

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struggled against it because they (institutions) contradicted the democratic principles of liberal philosophy while the other (revivalists) considered them as deviations from the customs and institutions of the ancient Vedic society of the Hindus".
Neera Desai, Women in Modern India, p.59.

1. Meredith Borthwick, The Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849-1905, p.57.
2. Malavika Karlekar, "Kadambini and the Bhadrakol: Early debates over women's Education in Bengal", Review of Women studies in the Economic and Political Weekly, vol.XXI, No.17, April 26, 1986.

Education was meant to inculcate in women the virtues of orderliness, thrift, cleanliness, the practical skills of literacy and the ability to run the household according to the new physical and economic conditions set by the outside world. At the same time by (creating the stereotype of the well educated yet unquestioning and docile girl, modernising educators minimised the purportedly liberational potential of learning for women.)

Though Education was meant to bridge the intellectual gap or levels of understanding between the men and women of family and foster equality, the educational system brought about a new difference between boys and girls namely the difference in access to the kinds and levels of knowledge. To cite an example the argument against teaching women medicine was based on women's allegedly weak physique and intellect. The social reasons accorded were that since women's primary functions in life was to bear and raise children formal education was unnecessary and wasted.¹

The Kanya Mahavidyalaya² (a girls school which later turned into college), Jalandhar, a product of the Arya Samaj's³ religious and social reform movement served as a primary example in the efforts of promoting women's education. But this education was envisaged

1. Quoted from Pandita Ramabai, 'United Stateschi Lokasthiti and Pravasavrita' in Meera Kosambi, Op. Cit., p.44.

2. It was founded by Lala Devraj and controlled by the the Mukhya Sabha (Managing Committee) in 1895-1896.

3. Founded by Dayanand Saraswati, 1875.

as a means to an end. The aim was to build character and efficiency in their homes and adjustments in married life. Even the teacher's training course at KMV was seen not so much as a way of opening employment opportunities for women but as a mission.¹

Thus it isolated them in the separate female space with their own language, own concerns and own ideology.

Reform movement was not confined to the male reformers only. Even women took up the cause of 'women' as such. In Maharashtra Pandita Ramabai Saraswati's efforts culminated in the establishment of the Arya Mahila Samaj² which aimed at the general upliftment of women.

Ramabai saw a clear co-relation between the condition of women and the state of the nation.

"Those who have done their best to keep women in the state of complete dependence and ignorance vehemently deny that this has anything to do with the present degradation of the Hindu nation... The doctrine of 'prenatal influence' can nowhere be more satisfactorily proved than in India. The mother's spirits being depressed, and mind as well as body

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1. Madhu Kishwar, "Arya Samaj and Women's Education: Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Jalandhar" in Review of Women Studies, E.P.W. vol. XXI, no. 17, April 26, 1986.
:"Daughters of Arya Varta: Arya Samaj Efforts for Women's Education and social reform in Punjab", Indian Economic and Social History Review, March-April 1986.
 2. It was started in Poona on May 1, 1882 and in Bombay on 30 November, 1882.

weakened by the monotony and inactivity of her life, the unborn child cannot escape the evil consequences.... The seclusion complete, dependence and the absolute ignorance forced upon the mothers of our nation have been fatally telling upon the mental and physical health of the men.... The Chief needs of a Hindu woman are first self reliance second Education and third Native Women teachers.¹

When placed before the Hunter's Education Commission in Pune in 1882 her suggestions on the subject included the need for female teachers of respectable families and also the need for female inspectresses for girl's schools. She also made (a plea for training women as medical doctors because Indian women being reserved would rather die than speak of their ailments to men).

Elaborating on the above points Pandita Ramabai also stated that (Education for women was a must to do away with the wrong notions religion had enjoined on women regarding their subservience to men.) (She argued that men to promote this objective had prepared the Dharma shastras which propounded that women had no right to the study of the Shastras and that service of the husband alone entitled them to salvation.²

1. Pundita Ramabai Sarasvati, The High Caste Hindu, Women, p.94, 97,100.

2. Ibid, pp.53-54.

Pandita Ramabai was not alone in her campaign for Women's rights. From the progressive quarters she was helped by Ramabai Ranade (1862-1924) & Kashibai Kanitkar . . . the supreme example being of Ramabai Ranade who even after the death of her husband was not intimidated by widowhood and continued her social reform work.¹

One notices that in course of time there took place an internalisation of the stereotype female roles suited to the men. Ramabai Ranade in stating that 'my life would be worth living only if I can be of use to him self (i.e, Justice Ranade) and which was endorsed by Gopal Krishna Gokhale² in her book, effectively expressed the woman's life-long commitment to her husband's welfare. Even in an address on the objectives of Seva sadan her emphasis was more on 'motherhood'. The development of an attitude can be also partly attributed to the education imparted to Ramabai by M.G. Ranade who though gave her a Marathi and English education never encouraged her to think independently. Implicit and willing obedience to his wishes was laid down as a guideline.

Some of the prose tracts written by the women of the

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1. Ramabai Ranade's, Ranade: His Wife's Reminiscenes, p.221.
 2. He said, "It is very instructive that women like Vahinibai retain their mental attitude in spite of the new education, novel ideas and changing circumstances, Ibid, Foreword, p.11.

Stri Samaj¹ (Punjab) are more in the nature of appeals to men to give them a chance to become enlightened life partners than demands for women's rights. (Pativrata Dharma² a pamphlet by a young woman tells the leader that the depressed condition of women is the fruit of their 'adharmā' because women have forsaken Patidharma) (duty towards husband).

Later advocates of women's education in early phases of the national movement were B.G. Tilak and G. Gokhale. B.G. Tilak voiced strongly his opposition to higher education in the curriculum of Female High Schools. On the grounds that it was identical with the curriculum for boys and therefore socially unsuitable as well as detrimental to the society.

G.K. Ghokhale though taking a less extremist stand as Tilak also justified woman's education to the requirements of modernisation and preservation of traditional roles when in his speech to the Educational section of Victorian Era Exhibition in 1897 said

"A wide diffusion of female education in all its branches is a factor of the highest value to the well being of every nation)... Combination of (enforced ignorance and overdone religion not only makes them willing victims of customs) unjust and hurtful in the highest degree but also

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1. Primarily established to provide support for women's education in early years in Punjab
 2. Madhu Kishwar, Op. Cit, p. WS-22.

makes them the most effective opponents of all attempts at change of innovation.

....It is obvious that under the circumstances a wide diffusion of education with all its solvent influences among the women of India..... will..... restore our women to the honoured position which they at one time occupied in India'.¹

Thus through a modicum of education some notion of the dignity of the woman was maintained. The reformers in turn would be assisted, with education, in amelioration of women's condition in the household, not for women's sake but to make them better wives and mothers.²

(Education also helped the reformers in creating an educated class of women reformers who would interpret the new ideals of the male social reformers and intermediate between the outside world and the separate space of the female world.)³ The social reformers groomed the first woman themselves. Pandita Ramabhai was taught by her father,

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1. In Suresht Renjen Bald, "From Satyarth Prakash to Manushi: An Overview of the 'Women's Movement in India, Paper presented at the 1982 Annual Conference of Asian Studies in Conjunction with the Conference on Independent India, June 25-27, 1982, pp.3-4.
 2. (This dualism in men's attitude towards women's role in society and family is characterised by Prof. K.N. Pannikar as 'Public veneration and private humiliation'.)
 3. Gail Pearson, Women in Public life in Bombay City with special reference to the civil disobedience Movement (Ph.D. thesis), p.108.

a member of the reforming Chitpavan Brahman community.¹ Ramabai Ranade was educated by her husband M.G. Ranade. This activity was extended from education to the establishment of girl's schools, and consequently the establishment of women's associations like the Arya Mahila Samaj, Hindu ladies social and literary club, Gujarati stree Mandal etc.

In the process women were themselves subject to the process of colonial acculturation. But while this group of intermediaries whose whole role in society was predicated on segregation symbolised the path of desegregation their function was dependent on the very structure of segregation. They did not exist in contradiction with the household.

During the National movement the group of highly educated women who had emerged, entered the political arena and were very active in mobilising support for (the cause of women's education, then for women's right to vote. Both these activities were intimately tied with the larger concern for self government and later total independence) from British rule. Nevertheless, (they continued to perceive men in the role of givers.) Sarojini Naidu a leading figure in the 20th century women's movement re-affirmed the social reformists expectations and hopes regarding education for women.

'we ask only that we may be given that chance to develop our body and spirit and mind in that condition that

1. Padmini Sengupta, Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati: Her life and work, p.6.

will reestablish for you..... ideal womanhood, that will make noble wives who are helpmates, strong mother'.

CHILD MARRIAGE AND WIDOWHOOD - Refōrms were directed against institutions like child marriage and plight of widows. These issues arose from the pivotal elements of the patriarchal system which measured the woman's usefulness only in terms of her sexual and reproductive functions and dictated her inherently subservient role.¹ Sex and procreation (preferably of males) as two elements of an ideology, were translated into the institutions like child-marriage and enforced widowhood (the woman's existence being justified only in terms of her usefulness to her husband).

Pandita Ramabai's motto of self reliance for women was in direct confrontation to the patriarchal system. She for the first time in the recent history of Maharashtra helped in establishment of institutions which provided shelter and food for homeless widows. In addition vocational training and means of economic self reliance was made available to them.

Ramabai was not alone in her campaign. There was Anandibai Joshi², Kashibai Kanitkar³, Ramabai Ranade, Anandibai Karve⁴, and Tarabai Shinde⁵. However somewhere along the way their militant protest against the injustices to women ended in a re-affirmation of the patriarchal ideal. The best known defence of a woman's subservience to her husband

1. Meera Kāsambi, Op.Cit, p.WS-43.

2. First Marathi Women Novelist 3. First Marathi Women Novelist

4. Child widow and a pupil at Pandita Ramabai widow's home

5. Novelist and literary figure

was articulated by Ramabai Ranade when she said that 'A Wife's true commitment is to abstain from causing hurt to her husband... This is a woman's true marital blessedness (Saubhagya) and her sacred commitment.'¹

Anandibai Joshi shared Ramabai Ranade's faith in the existing institutional framework of society when being quite eloquent of his rough treatment towards her. She dreaded the thought of 'hurting your dear heart with those unpleasant memories and causing a rift in our affection...'²

Tarabai Shinde after lashing out at men for their un-restrained behaviour and oppression of women concluded: 'But it is not implied that women should have unhounded freedom.... By their good behaviour women should do credit to both their families, honour their husbands.'³

Kashibai Kanitkar gave her feminine endorsement to child marriage when she said 'Rao saheb Ranade in marrying a young girl (Ramabai Ranade)....was able to mould her according to his high ideals and society's wishes.'⁴

On this point there was a convergence of views with orthodox leaders like Tilak who affirmed the view that men were responsible for social uplift and political achievements.

On the subject of remarriage Tilak instead of advocating re-marriage for widows, advocated restraint on

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1. Ramabai Ranade's, Op.cit.
 2. Bodley, Rachel, 'Introduction' to THE HIGH CASTE HINDU Women, p.vi.
 3. See S.G. Malshe (ed.), Tarabai Shinde, Stree Purusha Tulana
 4. See Umakant, Kai Shri Ramabai Ranade, p.12.

the part of widowers, claiming that the reformer's cause of equality of the sexes would be better served than by encouraging 'loose behaviour in widows'¹

The general tenor of Tilak's writings suggested a humane treatment of women and, also in keeping them in a sub-ordinate position within the home but idea of equality of the sexes was not broached.

An emphatic and unequivocal statement of women's inherent equality with men and their moral superiority was made by Jotirao Phule and Agarkar. Both advocated for the formation of a new and equalitarian husband-wife relationship and breaking down the old authority structure within the family. Phule seems to have sensed accurately that as long as there was inequality in the family there could be no true equality in the society.²

Agarkar also lashed out at the early consummation of marriage.

When one views the social reform movement in totality one feels that terms like 'Emancipation' 'liberation' have been used very glibly³. The stress was more on emancipation from than on 'attainment of'. Women were to be emancipated from

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1. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Samagra Lokamanya Tilak, vol.V, p.259 cited in Meera Kosambi, Op.cit, p.Ws-44
 2. Gail Omvedt, "Joti rao Phule and the Ideology of Social Revolution in India" in EPW, vol.6, no.37, Sep.11, 1971.
 3. Veena Mazumdar, "The social Reform Movement in India - From Ranade to Nehru" in B.R. Nanda, Indian Women From Purdah to Modernity, p.63.

practices like enforced widowhood, carry consummation of marriage etc. but the idea of encouraging women to be self-reliant was rarely propounded.

Even on these issues the reformers had dis-similarity of views.

As for the mass of women, much of what agitated the reformers hardly touched them. For example the ban on widow remarriage was a problem^{of} essentially upper and middle classes, not for the masses of women.

Even the campaign for property rights for women which culminated in the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, was also essentially meant to give more security to widows among propertied classes. But this had a negative effect on some lower caste women. The Act deprived the widow of any claim in her first husband's property on remarriage. The lower caste women who had traditionally enjoyed the right to retain property even after remarriage lost it as a result of the Act.

The Education Campaign, touched the middle classes or the reformer's houses only.

The greatest failure of the reform movement lay in its inability to expose the nature of the oppression that affected women in different layers of our society. Instead of being absorbed in elimination of all inequalities, exploitation

and oppression in society, the movement for woman's cause remained confined to the urban middle class.

SECTION - II

There was not a sharp break in the social reform activities and the growth of the national movement. In fact the nationalist intelligentsia realised that in preparing the society towards Poorna swaraj the social and cultural impediments had to be cleared simultaneously. The liberation from the hegemony of colonial ideology and culture and the backward looking indigenous social customs had to be achieved.

In the arena of women's activities the social consciousness¹ attained as a result of the social reform movement now got a basis for an extension to a nationalist consciousness. This phase of growth in nationalist consciousness saw the growth of women's organisations which I shall discuss in the last section of this chapter.

Even the participation of women from different communities,² created a consciousness of communal solidarity.

A major attack was unleashed on dowry, selling of brides (Kany sulkam), child marriages, widow remarriage, even

1. This can partly be attributed as a result of education and the available literature i.e. contemporary 19th century accounts in the form of auto biographies and biographies, Gail Pearsøn, Op.cit., pp.68-70.
2. In Maharashtra we had the Brahman Intelligentsia (Chippavan Brahman). In Gujarat it was the Nagar Brahmans. In Bombay we had the Banias and Bhatias and Parsis (Sirinbain Cursetjee)
See: E. Kulke, The Parsees in India, AmnORITY as agent

deeper social problems like conflict that emerged in man-woman relationship when a woman tries to enter public life,

In 1920's women tried to legislate a more protected position for themselves. They legislated for a raise in the age of consent to consummation of marriage from 12 years to 14 years. Related to it was the Sarda Bill which provided that child marriage in itself was not invalid but that the act of permitting or solemnising such a marriage of a male under 18 years and a female under 14 years was a punishable though non-cognizable offence. This also provided a new consciousness about their lobbying tactics which was clearly demonstrated when a signature campaign among women resulted in the withdrawal of a Bill from the Bombay legislature Council restricting the Hindu Widows right to adoption.¹

But one should also keep in mind that though the political movement shared many common leaders of the social reform movement like Ranade, Naoroji, Sankaran Nair and C.V. Chintamani some peculiar reluctance was shown to ally with the reformers cause.² Tilak's opposition to the Age of consent Bill and refusal to permit the National Social Conference to hold its meeting under the Congress Platform

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of social change

S.A. Natrajan, A century of social Reform in India;
C. Dobbin, Urban leadership in Western India, politics and communities in Bombay City, 1840-1885.

1. Bombay Chronicle, July 4, 1935, p.1.
2. Veena Mazmdar, Op.Cit, p.54.

is an insight in this dichotomy. Tilak who subsequently became one of leaders of the militant nationalist movement believed that political reform should precede social reform and moreover social reform should not be imposed upon the people by the government through legislation.¹

One reason accorded to this was that feeling that the reformers had a likeness for the British government and the progress of the Indian women depended on the continuation of the British Raj.

A more plausible explanation has been offered by Partha Chatterjee who argues that Nationalism located its own subjectivity in the spiritual domain of culture where it considered itself superior to the West and sovereign. 'It could not permit an encroachment by the colonial power into that domain'. Thus proposals for legislative enactment effecting social reforms were not welcomed for this seemed to deny the ability of the 'nation' to act for itself in a domain where it was sovereign. In the specific case of women the nationalist position was strong to avoid any guidance or intervention of the colonial state.²

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1. Neera Desai, Op.Cit, pp.130-32.
Also see, S.A. Wolpert, Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the making Modern India
 2. Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question", p.249 in Kum Kum Sangari, Sudesh Vaid (ed.), Recasting Women Essays in colonial history.

But not extending the purpose of the movement to a general attack on the existing social structure, caste inequalities and confined lives of women or not to project the social movement as an important aspect of the general nationalist upsurge itself served as a problem.¹

The political leader who realised that political identity divorced from social environment would lack root and strength was Gandhi.

For him the attainment of 'Swaraj' was meaning less without a change in the social structure. He denounced in unequivocal terms, the customs of child marriage, enforced widowhood and dowry. Critical of the custom of child marriage he observed:

To force widowhood upon little girl is a brutal crime for which we Hindus are paying dearly. So long as we have widows in our midst we are sitting on a mine which may explode any moment²

His greatest contribution to the woman's cause lay in his revolutionary approach towards women and his belief in their ability of self sacrifice filled his campaign of Ahimsa and Salt satyagraha. However he firmly believed in gender specific roles³ and for him it made the women

1. Veena Ma. umdar, Op.Cit, p.56.

2. See A.T. Hingorani (ed.), M.K. Gandhi, The Role of Women

3. "The Man should look to the maintenance of the family, the woman to the household management, the two thus supplementing and complementing each others labours", Suresht Bald, Op.Cit, p.9.

more capable in participating in his brand of politics.

Gandhi's vision of a women's role had nothing in common with the early reformers. It involved the flouting of those very revered law givers.¹ For him Purdah, child marriage, ban on widow remarriage, denial of education and property were all results of inequalities between men and women in laws and customs.

The important aspect of Gandhi's ideology regarding women was the striking similarity between the ideas propagated then and the similar demands taken up by the women in the course of the national movement for example equality in the family and society, opening up of wider opportunities for women etc. He encouraged women's participation in public life and since many of them came from propertied and commercial families 'the interest in women's inheritance developed'²

SECTION - III

The early social reform activity was carried further by women activists in the founding of several women organisations on both national and provincial levels. The objectives of these organisations were to serve as special interest groups for women for social service. They worked closely with the social reform oriented Indian Social Conference and the

1. Young India, 17 Oct 1929.
2. Address to Prayag Mahila Vidyapith 20 Ja. 1924, Selected Works of Jawahar Lal Nehru, vol.VI, pp.216-20.

more political Indian National Congress. Thus in a way the women's movement as expressed by these women organisations have a parent-child resemblance to the social reform movement that had given it birth and a sibling relationship with the Indian National Congress.¹ This was essentially apparent in the choice of issues and the manner in which these organisations pursued them which I shall discuss.

The most vital demand necessary for the advancement of Indian women was that of Franchise which also complemented the demand for self government expressed by the educated Indian men who constituted the Indian National Congress.

In 1917 the demand for women's suffrage was articulated for the first time when a commission headed by Lords Montagu and Chelmsford was deliberating the possibilities of granting limited franchise to Indian men and an All India Deputation of Women was organised by Ms. Margaret Cousins who was active in the Women's Indian Association. The Deputation, led by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu met with Montagu to ask officially that women be granted franchise along with men.

Not wanting to get involved in a controversial subject, the British Government left the decision on women's franchise to the British Indian Provincial Government which were to be

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1. Suresht Renjen Bald, Op.Cit, p.3.
 2. Formed in 1910

elected on the basis of a limited male suffrage. The leaders of Women's Indian Association and Bharat Stri Mahamandal¹ led by Mrs. Naidu introduced a resolution on women's franchise at 18th session of the Bombay Provincial Conference held at Bijapur, with the recommendation that the resolution be forwarded to Congress through the PCC. On Sept 1, 1918 at Bombay Special Congress, Mrs. Naidu moved a resolution stating that women possessing the same qualifications as are laid down for men shall not be disqualified on account of sex.

Her defense of the resolution is revealing of the way in which women's political rights were perceived at that time. First she argued 'Women makes the Nation; on her worthiness or unworthiness, Cowardice or courage lies folded the destiny of the sons'. Second she assured the men that the vote for women was not the beginning of the end of traditional distribution of power and differentiation of roles between the sexes but the beginning of a new partnership:

I do not think that any male need have any apprehension that to extend the horizon of woman's labours is to break all her power in the home.....we ask for franchise.... for vote

1. Formed in 1910.

not that we might interfere with you in your official functions.... your public place and power¹

Like Education, the role of vote was also to make women efficient mothers and wives and everything was based on a premise that men and women were naturally different but their tasks could be complementary.

The Indian National Congress (1918) adopted a resolution in favor of women's franchise at its Calcutta session.

In 1921 the British Indian Provinces of Madras and Bombay gave women the right to vote. The women of United Provinces won the Franchise in 1923 and those in Central Provinces, the Punjab and Bengal gained the right in 1926. But since the Franchise was based on property qualifications, the number of women enfranchised was very small. This itself tells us the extent to which a women's cause on vote was taken up.²

The granting of franchise to propertied women was followed by a demand for inclusion of women in legislative bodies. In 1928-29 WIA insisted that their policy was to work for reform through the legislative council. They were

1. Suresht Bald, Op.Cit, p.6.
Also see: S. Naidu: Speeches and Writings
2. Veena Mazumdar, Op.Cit., pp.52-53.

not ready to accept civil disobedience for this would have jeopardised the relationship they so carefully worked out with the government to secure women's positions as magistrates and as various members of various councils and committees. At this stage it was only through legislation that they thought they could improve women's status. Two broad reasons can be outlined for this. (A) women because of their sex were better suited to provide input on questions relating to women and children. (B) Since at this time the Central and Provincial legislatures were deliberating on questions that concerned women i.e. legal age of marriage age of consent, and changes in inheritance laws, divorce and custody of children it was considered important that women represented the interests of their groups and those of their children.

But their presence in legislative councils was articulated from a position of their innate difference from men, not because men and women were equal. Such a position was the natural outcome of the continuing emphasis on traditional gender-specific roles.¹

When the civil disobedience movement started in 1930, the WIA was faced with a dilemma. The founder members tried to articulate a position in support of political freedom for India. At the same time, they wanted to preserve harmony among membership which included strong Congress members

1. When Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, the first woman to sit in the Madras Legislative Council (1927) attended the first Council Session, she was welcomed for the 'special' contribution she would make to the Councils Proceedings: 'Now the presence of a lady doctor, of her position, in the Council would help the cause of women and children in their education and physical welfare, Renjen Bald, Op.Cit. pp.7-8.

as well as those opposed to Congress policies. In 1930 the WIA requested that three of their members be appointed delegates to the proposed Round Table Conference. Subsequently the stand was reversed, they followed the Congress and refused to participate. However when the Gandhi-Irvin Pact was signed they again changed their stand and asked to be included in the Round Table Conference.¹

Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi² a founder member of the WIA herself had to change positions vis a vis the Congress and the British. In the 1920's Reddy thought that woman should be kept away from party politics until their status had improved, although she approved of the nomination of women to decision making bodies. Since women were concerned with social issues, she felt that the British government help would be necessary for sometime to come. Yet Reddi as the Vice President of the WIA signed a protest against the all British composition of the Simon Commission. Subsequently Reddi accepted her own nomination and was denounced by the WIA Officers. Reddi explained that she was not acting as a self-seeking individual. She had always taken the stand^{that} the WIA's main concern were social issues and education of women.³

1. WIA report 1930-31.

2. Founder Member of WIA

3. Statement issued by Smt. Maleta Patwardhan, Sec.W.I.A. Anna Thomas (Madurai WIA) to Dr, Reddi, June 1st, 1928, Reddi Papers, File No.8, NMML.

This dichotomy between two apparently contradictory views stemmed from the understanding that the problems of women were social, necessitating social changes and social movements. Mrs. P.K. Roy in her presidential address to the sixth session of AIWC observed "The real root of the question is want of education - the right vision of life.. social disabilities are bound to disappear with educational facilities."¹

The choice for them then was between aligning with the national movement or adopting an apolitical stance. However shifts in these stands kept taking place.

Kamladevi Chattopadhyay observed 'though the Women Conference had originally stated that it would not participate in politics, it realised that it would have to concern itself with politics in its wider term, without alignment to any particular political party. While it accepted as members, women from any party, it took a strong nationalist stand and demanded equal rights for women to enable them to play their full and legitimate role in the national affairs. Otherwise all other rights might become illusory."²

Women who wanted the AIWC to support the nationalist movement did not want the conference to become part of the Congress but at the same time were convinced that the congress

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1. Presidential address, AIWC, Madras, Dec.28, 1931, to Jan 1, 1932.
 2. Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, Indian Women's Battle for Freedom, p.98.

was a true champion for women. They claimed that women could only be released from their chains with true political participation and praised the Congress for its support. However differences with the Congress did crop up in relation to the Hindu Code Bill.

If one analyses the ambiguities with women as to be overtly political or to be associated with political parties we can see that it partly stemmed from the fear that the 'Womans question' itself may get sub-ordinated in course of their political participation.¹ Related to this was the belief that women had been mobilised during the national movement only as an instrument, not for emancipation for women but for political expediency.²

This dichotomy that characterised the organisation's attitude to political action in the freedom struggle also affected their articulation to a clear ideology on the women's issue. Both Rameshwari Nehru and Sarojini Naidu, ardent advocates of participation in the national movement stressed time and again that Indian culture and tradition sanctioned the equality of women and that Indian men, unlike their British counterparts would not resist women's participation in political life. At the same time they insisted that Indian women recognise their goal and destiny as different and separate from men.

1. See S. Natarajan, Social Reform Movement in India

2. Gail Pearson: Op.Cit, p.60.

AIWC too felt the ideological differences. Renu Chakravarti in her memoirs stated 'The Communist women wanted the AIWC to become an organisation of the toiling women of town and country and to transform itself from an elite organisation into one in which millions of struggling women would participate and win their emancipation'.¹ She recounts that "there was tremendous pressure to confine the activities of the AIWC to issues of social reform" and that "the ordinary toiling women in town and country by and large, not brought into the membership of the AIWC, for fear that they led into any movements to achieve their demands for a better life."²

Taking the organisational phase of women in totality one can see a persistent emphasis of women's special attributes to justify promotion of women's rights and the stress on women's difference with men which had made it possible for her to enter politics.

However this emphasis on women's special attributes did not go unchallenged. At the 1929 meeting of All India Women's Conference on Educational Reform, the President Rani Lalita Kumari Saheba of Mandi argued, "Women benefit by the highest education as men and it a narrow view indeed which seeks to fit woman only for the needs of motherhood and domestic life."³ V. Kamalabai Ammal objected to the manner in which women were given the right to vote. She maintained

1. See Renu Chakravarti, Communists in Indian Women's Movement

2. Ibid. 3. For details see, Indian Quarterly Register, 1929, pp.421-22.

that giving the men the right to decide whether or not women were to be enfranchised implied the monopoly of the male sex not only to enjoy the privilege but also to confer it upon others - women as a matter of charity.

These voices of dissent suggested a fundamental ideological difference in the understanding of women's inequality. These women were challenging traditional power relations and societal roles without which a challenge to the question of gender equality could not be adequately addressed.

The questions raised by women like V. Kamalabai Ammal, Mrs. Menon and Rani Lalita Kumari Saheba of Mandi posed a severe threat to the patriarchal Hindu tradition. It is therefore unlikely that those men who led the movement for reform, self-government and independence would recognize, let alone accept the linkage being suggested by these women between gender inequality and traditional Hindu ideals of womanhood. On the other hand references to ideals which glorified woman as mother, wife and in supportive roles were used by protagonists of women's rights to justify the need for female education, female participation in politics and changes in marriage family and inheritance laws.

Thus for an objective discussion on the women's question as to how it was dealt during the social reform movement and how in course the women's organisations took it up, a critical examination of the patriarchal tradition has to be analysed.

CHAPTER - III

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SPACE -

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION:

Working broadly under the feminist perspective in History, in this chapter I will specifically deal with the political participation of women during the civil disobedience movement (1930-32) in Maharashtra.

The issues I shall be broadly considering would be (a) the debate on women's role in the social and political process (b) the issues that the women participants raised in the course of political participation especially that of class exploitation vs gender exploitation (Patriarchy). In this I would also look how in the "sphere of structural elaboration sex differentiation gradually but inevitably evolves in a manner such that societal roles which are linked with production governance and ecclesiastics become more or less the exclusive domain of the male sex."¹ Concurrently how the biological capacity of the female to reproduce the human species and ensure its survival has led her being assigned roles which have tied her down to the home and withdrawn her from the wider economic, political and religious arenas of societal participation. (c) Response of political organisations and men participants to issues articulated by the women's movement. The role of Gandhi

1. Partha N. Mukherjee, "Sex and Social Inequality: A Methodological Approach in Amit Kumar Gupta, Women and Society: The Development Perspective, pp.1

and his philosophy of non-violence has to be given due consideration . The two aspects of non-violence which I find pertinent to the subject shall be discussed (i) concept of power and empowerment¹ (ii) unique ability of non violence to simultaneously accept and reject - to acknowledge and connect us with what is valuable in a person at the same time as it resists and challenges the person's oppressive attitudes or behaviour. (d) Evolution of an ideology of women's movement in the context of the pattern of development and increasing participation of women in the political process.

Specific to Maharashtra. I would give emphasis to how (a) women were getting organised (b) specific areas of activity to which they were confined (c) how far did this participation help them to achieve the causes they were advocating. Here the concept of political participation is very important. Its conventional focus omits entirely from its ambit the 'private' world of women. Their activities at the level of reproduction, the family and sexual division of labour are considered outside the realm of politics. Hence it becomes necessary to redefine political participation, to include all activities which seek to transform the spheres and institutions in which power relations are used to control and regulate the

1. Jane Meyerding, "Reclaiming non-violence" in Pam McAllister (edt.), Feminism and Non-Violence: Reweaving the Web of life, p.22.

production and distribution of sources. The political participation should try and achieve two kinds of power relations (a) those which oppose men and women (b) those which oppress women alone-across class or caste boundaries. (d) Nature of consciousness of women and how it evolved with the changing conditions of society.

Lastly I would also raise the question of spontaneity in the women participants - whether they could throw up their own leaders or leadership was provided by male participants or women of the urban middle class.

This Chapter is arranged under the following sub-heads.

The first part would be a brief over-view of the Civil disobedience movement and the then prevailing political atmosphere. The second part would be the organisations formed and their association with the national movement. The third part would primarily be the activities in which the women participants were involved. And Lastly I would discuss how women were mobilised and what was the nature of their emergent consciousness.

At the Lahore Congress in December 1929 the Indian National Congress declared its aim as complete Independence. The Congress Committee met in Ahmedabad and in the middle of February 1930 gave Gandhi and other believers in non-

violence a free hand to initiate civil disobedience.¹
 It commenced with a march on 12th March 1930 starting from Sabarmati to Dandi, a village on the Gujrat coast. Here Gandhi and his followers made salt in violation of the prevailing salt laws.²

The movement spread encompassing various parts of the country. In Maharashtra the movement was organised by the Maharashtra Civil disobedience Committee which was helped at the district and Provincial level by the District Congress Committee (DCC) and Provincial Congress Committee (PCC). During the first phase of the civil disobedience ranging from April to October of the forms and incidents of political activity were wide ranging, from the manufacture and sale of salt to joining salt marches and raids on salt works to daily processions, hartals, organising picketing of both liquor shops and foreign cloth shops and flag hoisting.³ All these were minor phases of a non violent offensive and an assurance to the mass mind that the authority could be rendered helpless.

In nearly all the districts of Maharashtra the salt - Satyagraha involved activities like manufacture, sale

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1. R.C. Majumdar (ed), Struggle for freedom, pp.464-66. Also see Fortnightly Report, Home Department Special, Bombay Presidency to Home Political Department, Government of India, 1st half Jan 18/2/30, FR 2nd half of Feb 18/3/30, NAI
 2. B.R. Nanda (ed), Mahatma Gandhi: A biography, p.292.
 3. Aparna Basu, 'The Role of Women in the Indian Struggle for Freedom' in B.R. Nanda (ed) Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity, pp.24-28.

and possession of contraband salt.

In Bombay small groups of women responded to the movement to break salt laws, Chowpatty being the important centre of the city. The Bombay Chronicle reported that in response to an appeal made by Bombay Provincial Congress Committee about 50,000 people assembled at Chowpatty to break the salt laws.¹ The following day police raided the Congress house and broke all the salt pans (8th April) and arrested some of the leaders.²

On 5th May 1930 Gandhi was arrested and consequently a spectacular coup took place at Wadala on 1st June. Gandhi's arrest as well as the Peshawar shootings provoked protests and huge demonstrations.³ Nearly 15,000 volunteers including women invaded the three mile front of the salt pans under the leadership of Lilavati Munshi and Mrs. Harnam Kaur.⁴ Batches marched upto the Bombay Port trust railway level crossing. The police raised a cordon, ran over the pans and detained the Satyagrahis in Wadala detention camps.

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1. BC, April 4, 1930.
 2. Mr. Abid Ali Jafferbhai, Mr. Sadik and Mr. Meherally were arrested. The first was sentenced for six months, Sadik for 2 months and Meherally for 4 months, BC, April 11, 1930.
 3. BC, May 5, 1930.
 4. The Bombay Chronicle estimated the demonstration to comprise of 2 lakh of people including several thousand of ladies led by several hundred of Desh Sevikas, BC, May 6, 1930.

The coastal districts gave an excellent account during salt satyagraha. The politically backward district of Ratnagiri was galvanised and satyagraha camps were opened up at Shiroda, Vengula, Ratnagiri, Mawan, Mithbhav and Aravali.

The most successful Salt satyagraha took place at Shiroda. Salt ~~pays~~ were plundered and National Flag hoisted. Leaders like Appasaheb, Deogirikar and Ranade frequently entered the Portugese territory of Goa and brought considerable quantities of salt to Shiroda to be sold in violation of the laws. The Satyagraha troops at Shiroda were fortified by volunteers from Jalgaon, Pune, Satara, Ratnagiri, Nasik and Thane districts.¹

Salt satyagraha served as an important activity in mobilising large sections of people. Wide layers of peasantry were aroused into participating by the volunteers who conducted civil disobedience jathas from village to village. The defiance of laws and courting arrest on the salt marches levelled down artificial geographical boundaries by their political impact. Thousands of peasants were aroused and drawn in the campaign. Thus, as each section of Indian society grieved over its own condition, the people were certainly not fighting to make salt but salt was the issue around which they asserted

1. K.K. Chaudhari, Maharashtra and Indian Freedom Struggle, p.56.

their existence as political beings.

The satyagraha also helped in forging unity among the religious communities. The start had been made after the Peshawar Day firing and the observance of 'Peshawar Day'.¹ To illustrate with an example, on 4th May morning a procession of Hindu and Muslim volunteers went to Chowpatty and fetched sea water, then returned to Mandir and manufactured salt.

After the salt satyagraha the provinces were free to adopt whatever form of satyagraha suited them. The Maharashtra Civil disobedience Committee opted for satyagraha against oppressive forest laws which hampered the interests of the peasantry.² Protest was manifested by non-payment of grazing fees and cutting of grass timber etc. in reserved forests. Women who played a very active role would generally take their cattle to feed on the grass and standing crops in the reserved forests so that it would not fall in the police wards. Women leaders also toured in the Taluka and districts and gave lectures on the repressive policies of the government.³

Forest satyagraha was confined to the districts of Nagar East and West Khandesh Nasik and to a small extent

1. Bombay Chronicle, May 4, 1930

:The Peshawar Day firing had produced a Hindu Muslim Unity in Bombay. Upto now the Muslim community had kept aloof from the Congress movement," Bombay Chronicle, May 5, 1930.

2. K.K. Chaudhari, op. cit, p.57.

3. 'Forest satyagraha will begin in Bangalan Taluk in first

Poona. Sanganeer was the chief point of the movement.¹

In Baglan Taluka in Nasik district the agitation for the payment of Land revenue took a stronghold and the land-holders, Khatedars prepared themselves for the movement. In Bassein Taluk (Dist. Thana) the agitation came to a certain crisis when the government threatened to declare fortified the whole landed properties of the satyagrahis who had withheld even a rupee of the enhanced land revenue.

The government in defence passed the Forest Act and arrested both men and women but that did not deter them. Once the leaders were arrested, new leaders were immediately nominated to carry on the activities. In fact the more the repression took place the more was the awakening and enthusiasm.

In middle of May the Congress bulletin had been banned. At the beginning of June an ordinance was promulgated by the Viceroy prohibiting the picketing of foreign cloth & liquor shops. At the end of June the working committee of the Congress was declared illegal. Motilal Nehru was arrested and Vallabhai Patel became the new President of

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week of August. Mrs. Parwatibai and Mrs. Ramabai Madare are touring in the Taluk and have delivered lectures satane, Nampur, Antapur, Mulher and other places, Weekly Report, BC, May 10, 1930.

1. AICC, Report of the Civil disobedience Movement in Maharashtra, 1930.

the Congress.¹

On October 15, following the government's inability to prevent the merchants from supporting civil disobedience by keeping their shops closed, it declared the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee and associations associated with the Congress illegal.

Meanwhile the British government summoned in London in 1930 the first Round Table Conference to discuss the constitutional future of India when the Working Committee reiterated its rejection of such negotiations the Committee members and Gandhi were released.² Earlier the Gujrati Stree Mandal and Women's India Association had sent a telegram to the Viceroy demanding Gandhi's release and a repeal of the ordinances.

The government again made attempts to negotiate an agreement with the Congress so that it could attend the Round Table Conference. Finally Lord Irwin and Gandhi negotiated a settlement in March 1931, and civil disobedience was suspended.

The Congress and the government continued their negotiations which turned largely on breaches of the Pact. Eventually in September 1931 Gandhi went to England to

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1. CID Police to Government, 2273/11/3717/May 16, 1930; F.R. 1st half of June 18/7/30; CID Police to Govt. 3249/3717/July 1, 1930; Bombay Chronicle, July 6, 1930.
 2. Judith Brown, Gandhi's Rise to Power, p.283. Also see :B.R. Nanda, op. Cit, pp.301-307

attend the Second Round Table Conference. But inspite of his powerful advocacy the British Government refused to concede the basic Nationalist demand for freedom on the basis of the immediate grant of Dominion status. On his return, the Congress resumed the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM).

The government was fully determined and prepared to crush the Congress. Government repression succeeded in the end. The CDM gradually waned and political enthusiasm gave way to frustration. The Congress officially suspended the movement in May 1933 and withdrew it in 1934.¹

The above was a brief resume of the Civil Disobedience in Maharashtra. In the following pages I shall deal specifically with the women's participation in the above mentioned period focussing particularly on their activities.

I would start with a brief resume of the women's organisations that came into being and their assistance both to the national movement and in mobilising women for the movement.

The important of them were the Hind Mahila Samaj², Gujrati Hindu Stree Mandal, Bhagini Samaj (Gujrati dominated) and Saraswat Mahila Samaj.

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1. R.C. Majumdar, Op. Cit, pp.489-92.
Judith Brown, "The role of a national leader: Gandhi, Congress and Civil disobedience", 1929-34 in D.A.Low (ed.) Congress and the Raj: Facets of Indian Struggle 1917-47, pp.158-59.
 2. It was started by Avantikabai Gokhale.

These organisations were the most important mobilisers and it is through the mediation of their network that the Civil Disobedience received an enormous response. The earlier organisational skills that were learned in social work activities were put to use for political purposes. More significantly it helped in the creation of a viewpoint wider than that of the household.

A common point amongst all these organisations was their stress on vernacular education which was successfully carried on in the National Girls Schools.

A good example of a social institution taking a political form was the

RASTRIYA STREE SABHA: As Gail Pearson puts it "It was an organisation of those committed to the national cause. Its members were not new to work for the nation in one form or another and came as individuals to work together in the organisation".¹ Its chief activities was the sale of Khadi. Other broader issues were: Swadeshi, Hindu Muslim Unity, national work and contribution of women.

The RSS worked in close quarters with the Congress and as the movement intensified formed separate groups of women clubbed as the 'Desh Sevika Sangh' to assist in

1. Gail O. Pearson, Women in Public life in Bombay City with special reference to the Civil Disobedience (Ph.D. thesis), p.160.

its nationalist activities.

Another important organisation affiliated to the Congress was the HINDUSTANI SEVA DAL: One of its main tasks was recruiting volunteers for political purposes and instilling discipline in them.

The Dal consisted of six constituent parts

- a) All India Board: Considered the executive of the DAL
- b) Provincial Board: It was responsible to All India Board in all matters concerning the Dal in the province.¹
- c) District Boards: Worked on similar lines as those of the provinces.
- d) Annual or special conference of the Dal constituted the fourth part of the Dal.
- e) The Reception Committee of annual or special conference of the Dal.
- f) Units of the Dal: Dasta the Company, Battalion, Regiment, Dal.

YOUTH LEAGUES: They were formed primarily to stem the growing restlessness of the youth. Nehru along with Subhas Bose,² both felt this and in all his speeches to the youth Nehru stressed two things (a) a cultural

1. AICC, File No.48/1929 (Manuscript Section), NMML.

2. S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography, vol.I, p.110.
 ? : Michael Brecher, Nehru: A Political Biography, pp.165-67.

revolution against all divisive and fragmented consciousness had to be waged (b) to strive for a nation built on socialist ideas.¹

The principal objective of the league was self-education through discussions, study circles, and developing contact with the masses.

VOLUNTEER CORPS: It was an autonomous body but subordinate to the Congress.

An interpenetration existed between the youth leagues, Seva Dals and Volunteer Corps. With the backbone of female participation being provided by volunteers.

Besides inculcating non-violence and discipline in young men and women these organisations also prepared them to participate in the coming national struggle. They devised programmes which involved mass participation. For example activities like picketing, boycott not only involved mass participation but also helped in creating anti-imperialist feelings.

Activities like Flag salutations aimed at cementing the bonds between the nationalists and the masses. Freedom being common factor the masses flocked under the fold of the tricolour.

The organisation of swadeshi Bazaars was a regular

1. Jawahar Lal Nehru, Selected Works, vol.III, p.203.

feature. These Bazaars provided an (a) opportunity for the masses to congregate (b) sold swadeshi products. Spinning was taught to women to draw them in the nationalist movement.

These organisations contributed greatly. Once Congress gave a call to the nation, at the same time engaging themselves in the constructive programme of Gandhi once the movement was withdrawn.

Credit should also to be given to these organisations for their mobilisational skills. In the totally women's organisation like the RSS, the celebration of a Jayanti or anniversary was a regular feature of calling women together to propagandise on nationalist issues. The birthdays of Dadabhai Naoroji, Gandhi, death/^{anniversary} of Tilak were made.¹ Secondly these organisations encouraged male speakers to address women on the themes of nationalism and attainment of swaraj.²

On a broader framework such province had its own Congress Committee. These Provincial Congress Committee (PCC) appointed the provincial

1. Bombay Chronicle, Aug.3, 1921.

2. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya addressed the ladies of Hind Mahila Samaj, Bombay Chronicle, Aug.29, 1920, p.7

:Tilak on Women's Part in National Week: Bombay Chronicle, March 22, 1920, p.7.

Volunteer Boards (PVB). The same held for the District Congress Committee (DCC) and ^{District Volunteer Board} (DVB). The primary business of the PVB was to carry out Congress Propoganda in the province in co-operation with the provincial committees.¹

The PCC had smaller departments of 'War Councils' headed usually by lady dictators.

This was a brief outline of the Organisations which either were female concentrated or had both male and female volunteers.

These organisations besides creating a nationalist consciousness also helped or led women considering themselves as a political being. "The acceptance of woman as a political being resulted, in setting up of institutions within the extended female space which integrated the social reform aim of this space with nationalist politics. These included both educational bodies and women's associations":² We can mark a distinct politicisation of women taking place (as opposed to political participation and political socialisation)³. I feel a few reasons could

1. AICC, File No. G8/1929, NMML.

2. Gail Pearson, Op. Cit, p.174.

3. Political participation: understood as voluntary rather than co-erced activities of persons in political affairs such as voting membership and activities connected with political groups.

: Political socialisation: a process by which a person acquires her views of the political world, its processes, events and phenomenon through the process of learning or knowing, Sumana Pandey: Women in Politics, p.13 & 51.

be cited for this. Primarily it was the consciousness or awareness created in women during the social reform period of the ^{19th Century} that helped women to later on develop a nationalist consciousness and participate in the national movement. This consciousness could be attributed to the girl's education imparted which increased rapidly after the 1920's and the women of 'extended female space'¹ were open to new ideas on social reform and nationalist consciousness. And from this extended space provided the main body of female participants in civil disobedience. The women from this space did not hesitate to accept leadership positions. They also became members of the War Council, addressed large meetings and served as Congress Volunteers or Desh Sevikas. The leaders and activities were backed by a wide ranging support system of women who were involved in the constructive programme and strongly backed the idea of Swadeshi.²

The women of the ladies associations, the female intelligentsia, the Gujrati Hindu Stree Mandal, the Women's Indian Association, Saraswat Mahila Samaj and Hind Mahila Samaj came largely from comfortable circumstances,

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1. Gail Pearson, "The Extended Female Space", p.182 and Gail Minault "The Extend Family as Metaphor", p.8 in Gail Minault (ed), Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan.
 2. Gail Pearson, Op. Cit, p.182.

either from professional or business families. The predominant group was connected with business at many levels ranging from the wives of clerks to those of rich shetias. They were from a number of communities, Muslim, Maharashtrian, Marwari, but the major groups were Gujrati. What distinguished these women from their compatriots was then level of education, although simply to sixth standard in the vernacular.¹

Thus the social composition at different levels of participation was not very different. The women who were most active were still drawn from a narrow social base.²

THE ACTIVITIES:

Salt was the issue around which Gandhi focussed both an anti-imperialist struggle and women's participation. According to Gail Omvedt³ Gandhi recruited women to channel the energies of an emerging women's movement into the political movement he controlled. Maria Mies⁴ develops this idea further. Gandhi, she claims, created a new myth of Indian womanhood. As a consequence he attracted women from well to do classes. Some opine that his message

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1. Gail Pearson, Women in Public life in Bombay city with special reference to the civil disobedience movement, pp.295-304.
 2. Gail Minault, Op.cit, p.14.
 3. Gail Omvedt, "Caste, Class and Women's Liberation in India", Bulletin of concerned Asian Scholars, VII, Jan-March, 1975, pp.58-59.
 4. Maria Mies, "Indian Women and Leadership," BCAS VI, 1 Jan-March 1975, pp.58-59.

"offered the women of India an opportunity to break with the past".¹ Vina Mazumdar stresses that Gandhi was concerned with women's personal dignity.²

Reasons may vary as to their participation but the reality existed that they participated. The first woman to break the salt laws were Congress leaders who ceremoniously lighted segrees on the sands.³ Kasturba Gandhi initiated the women's participation by leading thirty seven women volunteers from the ashram at sabarmati to offer civil disobedience in connection with the salt tax.⁴

They were followed by the Congress volunteers, among whom were women who carefully carried salt water to the pans at Congress House. In an instance (8 April) when the police raided the Congress House and broke salt pans the volunteers led by Kamladevi Chattopadhyay offered a heroic resistance.⁵ Later K. Chattopadhyay gave a daring speech enlogising the law breakers and criticising the government.⁶

The Congress also adopted the tactic of auctioning salt in the city as a method of both propaganda and fund raising. The women leaders K. Chattopadhyay, Lilavati Munshi and Perin Captain were most active in selling salt to

1. Lakshmi K. Menon, "Women and the National movement in D. Jain, ed. Indian Women, p.23.
2. Vina Mazumdar "Social Reform movement from Ranade to Nehru," p.66.
3. Bombay Chronicle, April 12, 14 & 21, 1930
4. Bombay Chronicle, March 24, 1930, p.1.
5. Bombay D.CC Satyagraha Samittee, G-102, 1930, NMML.
6. Report of Desh Sevika Sangh, 1931-34, A volunteer Branch of the Rashtriya stree Sabha

bussinessmen and lawyers even invading the stock exchange.¹

The movement intensified with the arrest of Gandhi before he could lead his announced raid on the Dharasra salt works on South Gujarat coast.

Sarojini Naidu led the assault finally. Describing the scene in a letter to daughter Padmaja she said "as after prayer and songs and a benedict from Ba, I led my army across a mile of muddy lanes to the vicinity of the salt depots and now the fun began. Lorry loads of armed police with guns and lathis and all sorts of lethal weapons in charge of the Collector and District Superintendent of Police blocked the way making a cordon and very cleverly, the collector said 'we are going to do satyagraha also and stay here as long as Mrs. Naidu chooses to stay" So I promptly sent for a chair ordered my volunteers to sit.... so I am rooted here for the present'.²

The participation in the salt satyagraha served main purposes both for the women and the nationalists. Firstly it involved the participation of the women from the 'extended female space'³ without hindering the links these women maintained with the traditional power of women in the segregated household. They participated in the 'intermediate

1. Bombay Chronicle, April 18, 1930, p.5.

2. Bombay Chronicle, 26 May 1930; Also see Bombay Chronicle 22 May, 1930

3. Gail Pearson, Op. Cit, p.177

social space' created between the household and public affairs and which was facilitated by Gandhi who addressed to these women in the terms they could understand.¹ Secondly the support of women participants indicated the viability² of civil disobedience and helped in recruitment of other volunteers. Thirdly it helped in the universalisation of the movement. The transformation of the nationalist movement in the 20th century / into a mass movement required the support of diverse categories of individuals classes and social institutions.³ Women was the present sole universal category which cut through social divisions, the use of such a universal category by male nationalists to describe the national movement could defuse any argument that the movement in its mass-agitationist phase was the preserve of any particular group. Women as a category distinct from that of caste or class, hence could be symbolic of a united social universe.

From middle of April until second week of May the Chief public civil disobedience activity of women was to participate in processions. They would dress in symbolic national uniform of orange sari and would sing nationalist songs or carry pots of water. This was one off the ways of direct confrontation with the police. By parading through

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1. I shall discuss this point in detail later on.
 2. Widespread popular indignation was aroused against the British.
 3. For details see Gyanendra Pandey, Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, 1926-34.

the residential areas it was hoped that women would be attracted by the sight of other women already participating. Participation in a procession could be immediately followed up with a meeting.

In one such instance salt satyagrahis marched from Esplanade Maidan in the heart of Gothic British Bombay chanting 'swaraj is my birthright'¹ In another instance a procession led by Kamladevi Chattopadhyay was led with women wearing red badges and carrying red banners and placards with inscriptions 'Inquilab Zindabad' marched through main streets of Bombay.²

These processions served as great mobilisers for other women who were not participating.³ Moreover their participation helped to publicly demonstrate the true nature of the British rule. Through putting women in the forefront in processions, giving as wide possible coverage to their arrest, it was easy for nationalists to arouse the anger of the people against imperial rule and their sympathy for those who opposed it. Outraged Indian womanhood was the theme of numerous articles, pamphlets and speeches.⁴

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1. Bombay Chronicle, April 28, 1930, p.8
 2. AICC, Bombay DCC Satyagraha Samittee, G-102-1930, NMML,
 3. I shall discuss this point later
 4. Purshotamdas Thakurdas Papers, File No.101, 1930, NMML

A distinct ideology of nationalism was reflected by women when they wore the flag sari (stated above). The women identified with the national movement not in terms of what they could achieve for themselves but for 'Purna Swaraj'. This aspect was clearly demonstrated in a Rashtriya Stree Sabha appeal which appealed "to our sisters to come to the aid of their motherland in this hour of supreme need. There is none so poor but she can do some service, however humble she may be and however small the service."¹ Such was the extent of this identity that in a procession the Desh Sevika Sangh chanted, "Free India means Free Womanhood".

With the arrest of Gandhi the lady volunteers were prompted to begin their appointed task of cloth picketing.² The reason Gandhiji gave for women being enrolled as volunteers comes out clearly in his article in 'Young India' where he said that though picketing of foreign cloth shops by men, though it succeeded beyond expectation upto a point of time failed because violence crept in. Picketing must never be a matter of coercion but conversion, moral persuasion; who can make a more effective appeal to the hear than women.³ The wisdom of allowing women to guide and conduct the movement was sufficiently justified.

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1. R.S.S. appeal, Bombay Chronicle, March 28, 1990, p.6, NMML
 2. It approximately commenced on May 7. I involved picketing of foreign cloth shops.
 3. "They were more effective than male volunteers, for what cloth merchant would keep his shop open if he felt he would not be responsible for the outraged modesty of India womanhood," Gail Pearson, op.cit, p.177.

Just as the issue of foreign cloth had long been important as the symbol of all foreign domination so the maintenance of cloth boycott was the symbol of all resistance.

Their picketing managed to stop the sale of foreign cloth altogether.¹ The importance of women to the boycott in Bombay particularly cannot be over-emphasised. At many stages they were the only ones picketing in the cloth markets.

The picketeers would often sit outside the shop and undergo an indefinite hunger strike thus forcing the owner to relent.² At the height of movement 250 women picketed, either by sitting inside or outside to dissuade purchasers. A great deal of co-ercion and threat also went with their actions. In one such instance a foreign cloth merchant Rawchand Mangalji who had signed the pledge by Sjt. Manilal Kothari refused to get his foreign cloth sealed. The volunteers including five ladies went on a hunger strike near his shop.³

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1. Wardha Desh Sevikas: "Since Diwali the Desh Sevikas under the captainship of Miss Shantabai Gharpure began to picket with a result they have succeeded in totally stopping the sale of foreign cloth. Most of the cloth dealers have agreed not to open the congress seals". Hitavada, Oct. 30, 1930, p.4.
 2. Picketers of Mahuya went on a hunger strike and along with them four thousand men, women and children whereupon the foreign cloth dealers agreed to seal their stocks of foreign cloth, Mahratta, Jan4, 1931.
 3. Bombay Chronicle, March 29, 1931, p.4.

"The efforts of the fair pickets was so successful that a number of Indian customers who were inside the shop purchasing goods left it without making a single purchase. The pickets ignored the European customers and only persuaded the Indian clientele not to buy British goods."¹

The police and officials on the other hand were conspicuous by their absence and decided not to arrest the lady pickets. Otherwise it would have been a "direct attempt to complicate the situation by bringing in the possibility of a clash between women and the police. Every nation is justly jealous of its woman kind and no Indian could regard complacently the rough handling of his mother, sister or wife by the representatives of law and order."²

Picketing of liquor shops did not begin until the end of May. The first such picketing was done in the suburbs by ladies from Vile Parle Camp.³ On certain occasions about 25000 women volunteers were recruited to

1. Bombay Chronicle, Sep. 5, 1930.

2. Press cuttings, Jayakar Papers, File No.82, April 9, 1930 in Vijay Agnew, Elite Women in Politics, p.72.

3. Bombay Chronicle, May 23, 1930, p.5.

picket approximately 500 shops. The volunteers worked in shifts.¹

Greater number of women were prepared to do the less hazardous work of picketing auctions of toddy shops. Sometimes the number ranged from 60 to 200.² In one instance about sixty women picketed an auction of toddy licences and reduced the number of bidders. A cordon of police surrounded the women but after an hour they were allowed to go free.³

In the next auction in July the women picketed toddy shop auctions at the Town Hall so effectively that the auction was postponed. On this occasion batch after batch of fourteen offered themselves for arrest until forty six were arrested taken to Esplanade lock up and then released.⁴

That picketing of liquor shops was a success cannot be challenged. A letter written by Government of Bombay to the Home Department expressed similar feelings about the success of the movement - It read 'All officers agree that the force of this movement is strongest owing to social pressure. Pressure is put on drinkers through the

1. A notice of RSS read 'required at the rate of 4 women in two shifts of 2 hours each, 200 women for regular picketing and 500 more are wanted by way of reserve. Send your names at once-signed on behalf of the provincial committee for prevention of liquor consumption, Bombay Chronicle, March 28, 1930.
2. Bombay Chronicle, June 17, 1930
3. Ibid.
4. Bombay Chronicle, July 22, 1930

caste organisations and through employers. Without this backing picketing would not be of any avail."¹

Indignation on the part of authorities was very apparent in the letter from the Commissioner of Excise in Bombay to the Collector and District Magistrate of Ahmedabad stating the damage picketing had done to business activity and thus something concrete should be done to protect their interests.² Another reason was that the British authorities derived a quarter of its revenue from the sale of liquor.³

One should not miss the point that a causal factor for the success of picketing liquor shops lay in the organisational drive of women.

Spinning and weaving of Khaddar was another important activity indulged in. Gandhi's contribution to this cause was the greatest which came under his constructive Programme'. It was through spinning that Gandhi politicised women most readily, imbuing them with ideas of a unified nation and opposition to foreign rule and providing them with tangible evidence of their own participation in a political process.

Secondly this activity helped Gandhi to closely link the ideas of social reform with social work, suited to a

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1. Home Department, Special Branch, Govt. of Bombay, File No.168-L-1930.
 2. Home Department, Special Branch, Govt. of Bombay, File No.750/26/A
 3. Ibid.

woman of the segregated household.

Thirdly it was an activity which linked women with other sections of the nation and brought the swadeshi right (spinning and weaving khaddar) in the household. "Through the issue of foreign cloth, the necessity of self government and self determination in economic matters became a reality for these women. Economic nationalism was an activity in which they participated!"¹

The Constructive Programme helped in the task of 'universalising' the movement. The use of Indian-made goods had universal appeal.

Along with the swadeshi programme the 'self sacrificing' and 'self effacement' qualities of Indian womanhood were stressed. The traditional role of the woman was re-interpreted for a new end. The nurturing function of the mother, the role of sacrificing wife was extended from the family to encompass the nation. The fate of the woman was linked with that of the nation when it was said that "the success of the whole movement lies centred in what is known as the woman question. It is not you but we who are the true nation-builders."² Gandhi reiterated the same feeling when he said 'In Khaddar alone lies your salvation and in your salvation lies the salvation of your country.'³

1. Gail Pearson, Op.cit, p.179.

2. Sarojini Naidu, Speeches and Writings, p.10.

3. Bombay Chronicle, June 27, 1931, p.1.

In the course of stressing on the ideology of self sacrifice personified in the Hindu wife, her devotion to her 'dharma' was stressed as was done by ideal women like Sita, Draupadi, Savitri etc. or the valour of the heroines of the past like Rani of Jhansi.¹ In a statement Mrs. Ramabai Kamdar opined that since the coming four months were very sacred according to Hindu shashtras and that as Hindu women were used to doing penance in these months, they should take a vow to spin at least 108 yards of yarn each day. Ratan Mehta pointed out that it was up to the Indian women to do penance by taking to swadeshi.² Thus religious overtones accompanying swadeshi was explicit.

The swadeshi was successfully carried on by the collective efforts of female nationalists and their respective organisations. To cite an example Avantikabai Gokhale made it clear that the greatest contribution women could make to the national struggle was to continue the work of constructive programme, enrolling Congress members and popularising the gospel of swadeshi and khaddar.³

Some Bombay women concerned with the female nationalists on the ideal 'I want to sacrifice my self

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1. For details see Manmohan Kaur, Role of Women in the Freedom Movement: 1857-1947.
 2. Bombay Chronicle, July 3, 1930, p.1.
 3. Bombay Chronicle, March 10, 1930, p.5; March 11, 1930, p.6; March 12, 1930, p.7.

in it (the Nation Building idea) like a moth in the camp flame, with a song of hope on my lips as the funeral pyre was a step upward towards the perfection of a widow's soul in old times - so is this nation building idea to a modern Indian woman.¹

The ladies associations like Hind Mahila Samaj, Shri Sarada Samaj², Saraswat Mahila samaj and Rashtriya stree Sabha and a girls spinning school at Pydhonie ran classes in spinning and embroidery on Khaddar.

Apart from drawing women force in the national movement through the constructive programme on a wider national level another purpose was being served. This has been well placed by Partha Chatterjee. He argues that along with drawing links with the social reform tradition in the 19th century, the nationalist ideology by stressing on spiritual qualities (as opposed to the material sphere of western technology, science) of self sacrifice, benevolence, devotion religiosity facilitated in making it possible for the women to go out into the world under conditions that would not threaten her femininity.³

In the course of time new agitational tactics developed which stood somewhere between the risk of jail going and attending an occasional meeting were the prabhat pheris

1. Bombay Chronicle, Jan 20, 1922.
2. It was set up specifically for spinning.
3. Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's question in Sudesh Vaid & Kum Kum Bangari (ed.), Recasting Women, p.243.

and Kum Kum ceremonies. Prabhat Pheri was one way in which women who did not picket could participate. It was basically small bands of women who went around in the morning singing songs to encourage the movement. Often when the prabhat pheri was taken out the women were either arrested or fined and let off,¹ were

As Kum Kum meetings nationalists issues were discussed and speeches were made by women on the effectiveness of boycott and use of Indian Goods (Swadeshi).²

During the civil disobedience two events were observed ritually. The celebration of the fourth of every month as Gandhi Day³ and the last Sunday of every month

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1. Poona: "A Prabhat pheri of women was taken out yesterday. It was stopped by the police and four leaders were arrested: Bombay Chronicle, Feb. 14, 1931, p.28.
:A Prabhat Pheri was organised by Kashibai Kothare under the name of Rashtra Premi Mandal", Bombay Chronicle, July 27, 1930. "Six ladies were arrested for taking out a prabhat pheri under Sec.68(c) of the District Police Act, City Magistrate found them guilty and sentenced all of them Rs.30. Fine of Durgabai Bhide was paid. But the other ladies refused to pay fine and courted jail". Mahratta, Feb. 14, 1932.
 2. Mahad: "Kum Kum meeting was arranged by Kankawali for ladies and speeches were made against tea drinking. Swadeshi was also preached there. Many ladies resolved to use Swadeshi things only and to spin. AICC, Weekly Report, Maharashtra, 1932.
 3. During this day foreign cloth shops were picketed and bonfire of foreign cloth all over the country. 34 persons were arrested in connection with bonfires of foreign cloth and lighted throughout the city. On 12 August, 21 volunteers were arrested in the high court and various police courts of the city", AICC, File No. P-35/1932, pp.95-103.

as flag hoisting day. On these and other occasions like celebrating the Birthdays of nationalist figures attempts were made to hoist and salute the national flag designed by the Congress.

On 26th October the War Council attempted to hold a flag salutation at Esplanade Maidan, at which the day before the Commissioner of Police had prohibited any meeting or procession. Early in the morning a few batches of Hindustani Seva Dal volunteers approached the Maidan carrying Congress flags. They were immediately arrested and flags seized. They were then followed by 50 women volunteers of HSD and Desh Sevikas led by Avantikabai Gokhale. Some were arrested and some released on the road near Bhandup about fifteen miles from Bombay.¹ The Bombay Chronicle described the enthusiasm as "They celebrated the occasion like a marriage festival. From the early afternoon, groups of them wended their way towards Chowpatty with lotas and pots in their hands. Moving the National Flag amidst joyous shouts of "Vande Mataram".³

1. Bombay Chronicle, Oct. 27, 1930

2. Bombay Chronicle, Apr.14, 1930, p.1.

: "Miss Devkaber of Ghatkopar, the eight year old leader of Prabhat Pheris was detained in Bandra lock-up for 12 hours for the offence of hoisting the 'Tri Colour' on a Flag salutation morning" Also ,

: Welcome accorded... to Mrs. Perin Captain, Rajabali Patel and Mr. Sombji. Forming themselves into a procession they proceeded to Azad Maidan holding the National Flag", Bombay Chronicle, 1931, May 16.

Sometimes the activities were chalked out week-wise observing a week either as a Flag Week or as a national week.¹

As far as setting the example of nationalist leaders was concerned, the observance of 'Jawahar Day' and 'Tilak Day' was very common. In one such instance forty five women gathered together to celebrate Tilak Day - led by Pandit Malaviya and Hansa Mehta they contravened police orders and marched into the Fort, where they squatted on the road all the night and were arrested in the morning. This event, when women stayed out all night with men in defiance of the Raj stuck in the minds of many.²

Similarly at an observance of Jawahar Day at Wardha men and women from all classes caste and creeds took part. They ate cosmopolitan dinners of the jail diet consisting of cakes of Jawar and Bhaji and committed

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1. Panwel: "National Week was observed from 21st to 27th. Shrimati Saraswati Deshpande, Acharya Daval, Hatin Kkrani held lectures 24th instant was resumed for Flag Salutation", AICC, DCC Report, G-148/1930.
: "With a view to intensify the Congress activities in city of Bombay it has been decided that the Week beginning from today should be observed as Flag week under the auspices of BPCC. All Desh Sevikas dressed in Kesaria have to go to Congress house for salutation". Mahratta, April 28, 1931.
 2. Bombay Chronicle, July 22, 1930.

the same offence as Pandit Nehru (reading out Extracts from his speech).¹ At another instance seventeen men and women were convicted when they sang 'Bhartaka danka Alam Men Baj vaja veer Jawahar me.'²

These activities of hoisting nationalist flags, celebrating the birthdays of nationalist figures, observing weeks broadly served or assisted three purposes.

It helped women of the household to be acknowledged as a political being and secondly these activities were a means of linking with the nationalist ideology. Thirdly it brought women in contact with other sections of society to reach whom this was the easiest and uncomplicated method. To cite an example in course of the observance of labour week by the BPCC many workers were enrolled, as Congress members. "From early morning prabhat pheris of workers were active in the labour area selling national flags and singing labour songs. A huge meeting of the workers numbering 10,000 was held at Madanpura. It was organised as a part of the labour week programme. 8000 audience were muslims. Slogans like 'Hindi- Muslim ki jai' Inquilab Zindabad, Vande Mataram, Mazdoor ki Jai were echoed."³

1. Hitavada, Sept.25, 1930, p.10

2. Mahratta, Jan.4, p.18.

3. Bombay Chronicle, Aug. 22, 1930

This was a brief account of the women's activities in Maharashtra. The point to be made is that their participation was not regular. Initially after the salt satyagraha not much activities could be seen. However with the arrest of Gandhi in May that intensification of picketing took place. During August 1930 the enthusiasm for civil disobedience waned and few women picketed.¹

After the truce March 1931 or during the interregnum women continued picketing and set about reorganising their activities.² An attempt was made to expand the organisations and establish branches especially of the Hindustani Seva Dal.³

In Sept. 1932 as a result of communal award which gave depressed classes separate electorates, women got a chance to campaign for constitutional questions. However they continued with their constructive work till the civil disobedience was withdrawn in May 1934.

These activities thus were both the substance of civil disobedience itself as also the means of mobilising women further through demonstrating the efficacy of participation.

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1. It was stated that there had been a sharp drop in women's participation, Bombay Chronicle, Sep. 30, p.6.
 2. Here I mean Constructive Programme.
 3. For this purpose Lilavati Munshi toured Maharashtra and Kamladevi Chattopadhyay and Sofia Soniji made an All India Tour. Lilavati Munshi was appointed President of the Women's Sub-Committee of the Maharashtra Seval Dal, Bombay Chronicle, Oct 3, 1931, p.14 & Bombay Chronicle, Oct. 21, 1931.

MOBILISATION:- The Chief mobilisers were the created class of 'female intelligentsia' and their organisations. Organisational skills that were learned in social work activities were put to use for political purposes. It was this very 'female intelligentsia' who helped in creating a viewpoint wider than that of the household and served as intermediaries to carry political programmes to the household. Thus the most active women in the Civil Disobedience interpreted their activities as natural extensions of their household roles, or to put it simply the woman's nurturing role in the household it was felt, could be extended from the family to the country. In the demand of women workers reading as 'India's need for women workers' it was said.

'Women cannot stop at being noble wives, trained mothers and skilled managers of the household.'¹

Sarojini Naidu one of the best known women activists during Salt satyagraha 1930 emphasised traditional feminine models in a speech championing swadeshi before a gathering of women. "They were the custodians of Indian culture, supreme in everyday affairs of life. Only they could bring about a renewed pride in India."²

1. Bombay Chronicle, Jan. 30, 1930

2. Bombay Chronicle, April 11 and 25, 1921

The women organisations like Rashtriya Stree Sabha while stating the political emancipation of women to be of one of the objects interpreted it solely in terms of 'service and self sacrifice'.¹ Public life was identified with an extension of care for males in the household to an aid for men in public.²

Nationalism was there by linked by the creation of this new ideology of womanhood and served as a motivation as well as a mobilising factor for women to participate.

Some specific mobilising tactics took the form of processions, holding ladies meetings, Appeals in the Press; bringing out Congress bulletins.

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 APPEALS IN THE PRESS: - During the salt satyagraha Gandhi was reluctant to have women proceeding on a salt march. But as soon as he relented the Rashtriya stree sabha published an emotional appeal to women. The appeal asked all women who were prepared to help in any way from offering active satyagraha to service in their own homes, to come forward and register their names at the RSS office. A major factor in the efforts to persuade women to participate was to motivate a widespread loyalty among women to Gandhi. When the RSS issued these appeals, women's participation was described as 'a prayer offered

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1. 'History of Rashtriya stree Sabha and Desh Sevika Sanah,' Bombay Chronicle, July 23, 1930, p.4.
 :Also A message of Bhartiya stree Sabha, Bombay Chronicle, July 8, 1930.
 2. Bombay Chronicle, March 2, 1930.
 3. Bombay Chronicle, March 28, 1930, p.6.

by Mahatmaji and our India for all humanity.'

Similarly when the movement picked up, involving cloth and liquor picketing, a group of women calling themselves the Provisional Committee of Prevention of liquor consumption issued an appeal for women volunteers. The appeal was signed by Hansa Mehta, Jaishree Rajje, Lilavati Banker and Bachuben Lotewala. Others were Goshiben Captain and Avantikabai Gokhale, both old nationalists of the Rashtriya stree Sabha.¹

With the arrest of Gandhi when the movement intensified and mass participation was required, Laxmibai Jugmohandas, Mrs. Kalawanti Motiwalla and Mrs. Urmilla Parekh published appeals:

"It has fallen to the lot of men to do more difficult and strenuous work and it behoves Indian women that they should contribute their share in this National Struggle for Freedom"²

Besides women giving their appeals in the press, the Press on its own played an important role.

The press by making women activities its 'front page' news captured the imagination of the public and created an overwhelming impression of female support and participation. It mattered little that the majority of participants were middle class. It reached the public

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1. Bombay Chronicle, April 12, 1930.
 2. Bombay Chronicle, May 14, 1930, p.5.
 3. Bombay Chronicle, May 10, p.7.

consciousness simply as women.

During the salt satyagraha the press emphasised the fact that Bombay women spontaneously and without hesitation broke the salt law.

"They celebrated the occasion like a marriage festival. Filling their pots with sea water, they returned to their homes to manufacture salt"¹

Giving as wide a coverage possible, reporting the maltreatment of women by the police, it was easy for nationalists to arouse the anger of the people against imperial rule.

Even the Congress Working Committee paid tributes to them (women) through the press in which they were thanked for "the noble part they are progressively playing in the present struggle for national freedom and the readiness they have increasingly shown to brave assaults, lathi charges and imprisonment while carrying on the Congress work." In particular the Committee thanked Mrs. Perin Captain, Mrs. Lilavati Munshi, Mrs. Lukmani and Mrs. Hansan Inam²

The another important tactic of mobilising was

LADIES MEETING: They were addressed by women leaders.

1. Bombay Chronicle, April 14, 1930

2. Mahratta, Aug. 10, 1930

: The AICC session passed a special resolution acknowledging the contribution of women to the success of the 1930 satyagraha, Bombay Chronicle, June 14, 1930.

Women spoke on a variety of topics. The Desh Sevikas went about holding meetings in chawls and forming committees of residents of lanes to promote swadeshi and spinning. "Let each chawl be a sangh, let each street be a sabha" they declared.¹

Sometimes the arrest of a lady leader would serve as a cause for holding a meeting Sarojini Naidu used the arrest of Jamnalal Bajaj to address Marwari women saying "I am not asking you to give up your motor cars nor your jewels. I am only asking you to give up foreign cloth which is the symbol of your slavery."²

At meetings to celebrate the arrest of Lilavati Munshi and Perin Captain, Ratanben Mehta and Ramabai Kamdar urged women to spin and support swadeshi.³

These meetings were used to mobilise women to organise further meetings, as did Gangaben Patel when she spoke to a meeting of women at Village Farle to appoint a committee of fifty to organise further meetings in the sub-urban areas.⁴

A muslim ladies meeting at Bhuddar Baug addressed by Sarojini Naidu was the outcome of a smaller informal meeting where a no. of women from the RSS had met with Muslim ladies who evinced an interest in swadeshi.⁵

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1. Bombay Chronicle, May 8, 1930, p.3.
 2. Bombay Chronicle, July 3, 1930, p.1.
 3. Bombay Chronicle, April 22, 1930, p.8.
 4. Bombay Chronicle, April 14, 1930, p.5
 5. Bombay Chronicle, May 9, 1930, p.5.

Muslim ladies on their own efforts formed Anjumans when it was reiterated that, "the time of leading an isolated life has passed. The condition of Muslim women has deteriorated in comparison with that of Muslims and now the time has come for us to come forward and use our rights properly."¹

To involve sufficient women for picketing the RSS and district Congress Committee co-operated to hold meetings at Dadar. In first half of May the RSS held another ladies meetings at Dadar. In first half of May the RSS held another ladies meetings at Dadar chaired by Avantikabai Gokhale.

As stated before the topics of discussion during the meetings could vary. Related to the meetings were also the conferences which took place occasionally. In nearly all the Asian Women's Conference that were held women's issues especially their sub-ordination arising from patriarchal hold was mentioned. The feminist movements in the oriental countries were discussed for example the feminist movements of Japan, China, Egypt and Turkey were mentioned. The Egyptian feminist leaders Hoda Shirouci Pasha, Syrian leader, Miss Nasid Aber and Sun Yat Sen's wife in China were acclaimed. A conscious effort to establish a link between their movement and the movement in other Oriental countries was made. In

1. Hitavada, Jan 11, p.13.

one of the meetings it was said "the new spirit of internationalism which is coming to birth in the souls of women of the world is more potent for the good of mankind than any other phase of feminist movement. The feminist consciousness is beginning to break through national boundaries. Oriental feminists are very keen in attendance at these international conferences. They begin to see themselves and rest of womankind alike, then aspirations and problems, the common aspirations of the women of the whole earth."¹

The presence of women delegates was so immense that even Lord Reading remarked "I am more and more astonished at the rapidly, almost dazzling swiftness with which the East seems to outdistance the West." He said it was a "distinct historical advance - we have our minds enlarged and our area of vision extended."²

A distinct social consciousness emerging regarding the socio-political situation in the country as well as towards the institutions and certain features of the society can be discerned. And a political consciousness linked with social consciousness can be seen as far as these women, through the national movement (by their participation) tried to advocate their issues. However though an emergent consciousness regarding a change in

1. The New Women of the Orient, Hitavada, April 5, 1932, p.2

2. Hitavada, Dec 18, 1930, p.13.

their social roles was there, there was no attempt to challenge the very fabric of social structure on which the oppressive institutions were based. No mention was made of the segregated, nature of society. As Gail Pearson puts it "in the espousal of the woman's cause they did so not from a position of weakness articulating the consciousness of the oppressed but from position of strength articulating the consciousness of the segregated women aware of her powerfulness predicated on the potency of her sexuality."¹

Another pertinent question brought up at these meetings was the question of Franchise. Franchise as an issue had its continuation from the social reform movement when the women's right to vote was taken up seriously and articulated later in a stronger way by the women's associations. The initial arguments as to (a) adult Franchise being applicable to both the sexes and (b) Would Franchise be based on property qualification? was carried further during the civil disobedience movement on the argument that since the political movement had made such a rapid advance due to the willing co-operation of women, not to put them in a footing of equality with men would mean betrayal of their own interest and of the country.²

1. Gail Pearson in Chp. 'Nationalism and Feminism' (Op.Cit.)

2. India's women's bold stand for Truly Democratic Constitution: (Arc) Bombay Chronicle, Feb 28, 1932, p.15.

As a course of these meetings and continuous reiteration in 1931-36 the female intelligentsia lobbied for votes for the urban educated and rejected government proposals of property and wifehood qualifications. As far as securing seats in the legislative council was concerned the women demanded no reservation of seats and argued that they would fight elections on equal terms.¹

Their consciousness was reflected in their putting forth the point that woman as a class and its representation had to sink into national representation and once this class representation would merge into national interests, class consciousness would be extinguished and nationalist consciousness would remain.²

Another issue that figured in most of the discussions and meetings was the Education of Women. Resolutions such as compulsory primary education training of teachers and adult education were made and a resolution called for caste abolition in all educational institutions. Co-

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1. A ladies meeting in Nagpur: "A largely attended meeting of ladies was held in Town Hall, Nagpur under the auspices of AIWC with Mrs. Nanabai Tarube chairing, Women were sure to be returned to the legislature through general electorate if they were capable of occupying the seats and did not want reservation of seats. The AIWC had after thorough consideration come to the conclusion that adult franchise was the only solution of many problems facing them", Hitavada July 21, 1932, p.6.
 2. "Problems of the Franchise Committee: Representation of Women Depressed classes and labour". Hitavada Feb 4, 1932, p.8.

education was stressed.¹ However in continuation of the social reform tradition education highlighted or re-inforced the importance of woman in the household as well as to her husband. Education would assist them not in what women wanted to achieve but what had to be achieved for the nation.²

Lastly in sphere of mobilisation were Congress Bulletins: It was a regular feature and it appeared daily in English, Gujrati, and Marathi. A boycott supplement to the Bulletin had also appeared every Sunday.³ On one occasion Mrs. Hansa Mehta, Mrs. P.R. Lele were arrested and sentenced to undergo three simple imprisonments under

1. First All Asia Educational Conference Hindu University:

"It is particularly necessary that women teachers and public spirited women of all classes should attend this conference so that they give their distinctive views on the questions of the education of their boys and girls". Hitavada, Nov.27, 1930.

2. Education of Women in India: "Her condition influences the morals, manner and character of the people in all countries. Where she is debased society is debased. Hence to instruct woman is to instruct man, to elevate her character is to raise his own, to enlarge her mental freedom is to extend and secure that of the whole community", Mahratta, April 17, 1932.

3. AICC, File No. P-35/1935, pp.95-103.

IPC¹ for publication of the Congress Bulletin.²

The Mobilising tactics were successful in bringing women on the streets and engaging the nationalist sentiment of a wide range of people. But although the process of mobilisation drew on the social reform tradition through its organisational form it did not extend the arena of social concern nor open any new area of social relations to question. She could have questioned the role of woman in the family, marital arrangements, man-woman relationships etc.

The only area in which a limited demand was made by woman was in the question of Franchise as a universal category. It entailed a rejection of any notion of the contradiction in man-woman social situation as implied in the rejection of woman as special category for special representation. But as stated earlier in the previous chapter issues like Franchise equality would be of no use to the classes eking out a daily existence for themselves. This would help to put an added meaning to Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay's statement that the movement percolated to the lower middle class not in the organizational sense but in propaganda.³

To conclude I would discuss a pertinent question

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1. Indian Penal Code
 2. Mahratta, Sep 17, 1930
 3. Transcript of Interview with Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, NMML

that is often raised in feminist discourse is whether the women's movement was elitist or not? It is true to say that most of the woman leaders belonged to the upper middle class but it would be more true to say that leadership roles were not always taken up by women of the middle class. In fact when these very leaders were arrested women from other sections of society took up the task.

Some of the demands put forth by women were 'elitist' like equal voting rights, seats in the councils and legislature which would hardly (mentioned above) interest lower class of women. Even the gender oppression at this level of society was not exposed properly. But while gender cannot be treated as a sufficient explanatory category for all forms of oppression, an insensitivity to it would lead to a partial and distorted analysis of society.

CHAPTER - IV

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SPACE

- QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

This Chapter focusses on the Quit India Movement with a brief over-view of the intervening decade.

A decade full of events have to be analysed to make an objective study as to the causal factors in the precipitation of the Quit India Movement.

The most important political development was the 1935 Government of India Act. The Act was in two parts (a) All India Federation (b) Provincial autonomy. The Act either way served the British interests. Firstly, the question of entering the Federation was left entirely in the hands of colonial authorities. Secondly the legislative power was entirely vested in the Governor-General. Thirdly besides appropriating the legislature and executive powers the British ruling circles took care to deprive the legislative of the least possibility of expressing the will of the Indian people.¹

The other half of the act i.e. of the provincial autonomy though envisaged an enlargement of the electorates, it represented a definite concession to the propertied classes of India.²

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1. Francis. G. Hutchins, Spontaneous Revolution: Quit India Movement, p.20
: Y.B. Mathur, Quit India Movement, p.4.
: Sumit Sarkar, Modern India, pp.336-42
 2. Francis Hutchins, Op. Cit, p. 195

The Federal part of the Act was never introduced but provincial part was soon put into operation. The Congress contested the elections under the New Act. The Congress formed ministries in July 1937 in seven out of 11 provinces with non-Congress ministries in Bengal and Punjab.¹

Along with this with the provisions of the Communal Award twelve electorates were established. Though there were 1,585 seats in the provincial legislatures of which 657 were general seats, 482 were assigned only to the Muslims, 34 to Sikhs and 38 to labour. Special privileges were accorded to the European electorate. In Bengal for example there were more than 16,000 Europeans. Yet they were given 25 seats which enabled them to influence the composition of the ministry. Muslims were given more seats than they could demand in proportion to their population.²

These moves by the British authorities assisted in the formation of communal parties and organisations and made it much easy for them to stem the tide of the national movement. But the nationalist leaders did not turn a blind eye to the manoeuvres of the authorities. All this eventually would lead to British being forced to 'QUIT' India.

The event which provoked the greatest controversy was India's involvement in the **Second World War**. The war formed an artificial interval between the Act of 1935 and

1. Sumit Sarkar, Op. Cit, pp.350-52

2. Francis Hutchins, Op.Cit, pp.198-200. Also see B.R. Tomlinson, Indian National Congress & the Raj, 1929-42.

the achievement of Indian Independence.

In 1939 the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and in a resolution decided that the issue of War and Peace for India must be decided by the people of India, and no outside authority can impose this decision on them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for imperialist ends. India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her. The Working Committee wish to declare that the Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or Japanese people. But they have a deep rooted quarrel with systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression.¹

In a similar meeting of the Working Committee from 18-22 Sept, 1939 presided by Rajender Prasad in the presence of members like Sarojini Naidu, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel, Jairandam Daulat Ram, Bhulabhai Desai, J.B. Kriplani it was clearly stated that the British government had failed to define their war aims especially with regard to India's freedom.²

The British made their last effort to settle with the Congress on the War issue in the wake of Japanese

1. D.N. Panigrahi, Quit India and Struggle for Freedom, pp.50-61

2. Ibid.

sweep towards Indian borders. The mission of Sir Stafford Cripps, a rerun in double time of the Montagu Mission in 1917 proved fruitless.¹

And finally in 1942 the Quit India Resolution drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru was passed on 7th to 8th August in Bombay. The resolution read 'The peril of today necessitates the Independence of India and the ending of British domination. No future promises or guarantees can affect the present situation or meet that peril. They cannot produce the needed psychological effect on the mind of the masses. Only the glow of freedom can release that energy.'²

The AICC reiterated the demand for the withdrawal of British power in India stating that on "the declaration of India's Independence, a Provisional Government will be formed and Free India will become an ally of the United States, sharing with them the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise of the struggle for freedom..... the provisional government will be a composite government representative of all important sections of the people of India.... the AICC would yet again, at this last moment, in the interest of world freedom, renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations. But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an

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1. Bipan Chandra, 'Modern India', p.298: Also see :Sumit Sarkar, Modern India, p.386
 2. Ibid, p.299 and pp. 389-392

imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates over it. The Committee resolves to sanction for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and Independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines.... such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhi."¹

These were some of the issues which attracted immediate attention. But other political changes which were consolidating the anti-imperialist forces were taking place.

The most significant change within the Congress was the emergence of a fairly strong left calling themselves socialists of whom the more revolutionary turned towards communism.

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1. Source Material of the Freedom Movement, Congress Activities, 1942-46, vol.IV (Collected from Maharashtra state records, Gazetters Deptt.)
"Moulana Abul Kalam Azad pointed out that what really prevented the Congress from co-operation was the attitude of the British Government towards India's demand for freedom. The Congress was left with two alternatives (a) either to obey slavishly the behests of the British government (b) to resist its efforts to drag India into the war. The latter course was preferred.
 2. J. Nehru urged the Congress to adopt a radical programme for democratising and invigorating the work of the Congress: All India Congress Socialist Party, Constitution Programme and Resolution of the first Conference of the Party and the Organising Secretary, 1934.
Also see, Sumit Sarkar, Communists and 1942, Social Scientist, March 1985.

The Communist ideology sowed its first seeds in the minds of the students whose participation in the Quit India Movement was remarkable. One of their official songs read as

We're marching towards the morning
 We're struggling, comrades all;
 Our aims are set on Victory,
 Our enemies must Fall
 With ordered step Red Flag unfurled
 We'll build a new, better world
 We are the youthful guardians of the proletariat¹

What I mean by remarkable is that after the 1937 elections they were in the fore-front of mass demonstrations and membership of All India Student Federation increased from 40,000 in December 1938 to 100,000 on the eve of the war.

In Bengal they were associated with the "sons of Bankim and Tagore. Your fathers and grandfathers started the renaissance. The heavenly images of Bankim, Tagore and Deshbandu are with you. In 1942 you are called upon to guard the entire coast line."²

The students took the lead in some important activities associated with the movement. With the implicit purpose ~~of causing as much damage as possible~~ to the British

1. Student: Journal of All India Students Federation, August 1942, pp.12-15.

2. Ibid.

Empire.

Their participation in the sabotage activities was an entirely new phenomenon in the forties. These activities were closely associated with the Extremist politics of the time.¹

Since the resolution was passed in Bombay it was assumed that the city would take a leading part in the movement. The Bombay students Union got drawn to the job of forming two students patriotic propaganda squads (SPPS) one to do propaganda in Gujrati, the other in Marathi.² Their mode or organisation was generally called the 'People's War'.³

A major student target was clothing. Numerous cases were reported of 'rowdy urchins' molesting pedestrians clad in European dress. In Dadar some boys and girls accosted pedestrians and relieved them of their hats and ties and burnt them. At Chinchani some policemen's uniform was taken off them and burnt. Sometimes they would break

1. I shall discuss it later on.
2. Student, Op. Cit, August, 1942, p.16.
3. Ibid, p.34, "Next Sunday we planned a propaganda procession combined with mass scales of 'Peoples War'. After we had sold our first consignment we went to the office of the people's war and staged a demonstration.... we want Marathi 'Loka Yudh'.

into the Examination Halls and tear up the papers of the candidates.¹

The other form of student activity took the form of dislocation of all means of communications. They would board trains, break windows, pull alarm chains, rip open cushions in first class apartments. At Dadar station on August 10th "Benches, Iron bars and sleepers were thrown across the permanent way.... At Marine Lines some students lay across the railway track disorganising train services for some line."² On the Satara,³ Dharwad and Karnafaka regions of Bombay as many as 1,600 cases of cutting of wires of telegraph lines was noticed, 26 railway stations were damaged and eleven trains derailed. At least records of 220 villages were damaged and 257 village offices captured. The no. of people arrested were more than 7000 and more than Rs.3,36,000 were collected as fines.¹

Student activities was also dominant in Madras, Assam Bengal, Orissa, Delhi and the Central Provinces though

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1. Ibid., p.17
 2. NAI, File No.3/52/43 Poll(I) Statistics corrected with Congress disturbances for the period ending 31st December 1943.
 3. In the Satara District meeting of about 150 persons was addressed at Kural on Aug 22 by B.A. Sulunkhe and Kashinath Tambavekar as which people were asked to sabotage Railway Lines and means of communication by cutting wires; Maharashtra State Records, Gazetters Dept.
 4. D.N. Panigrahi, Quit India and Struggle for Freedom, pp.101-09.

moderate as compared to Bihar and the United Provinces.¹

Another important development was that the students were instrumental in mobilising the rural masses which was sufficiently distinctive to be eventually dubbed in underground circles as the 'Karnatak Pattern'.² They would initiate a rural mass action in which organised bands of unarmed or crudely armed³ villagers would sabotage railway lines. Unarmed crowds overpowered troops and took control of trains. The prisons were attacked and guards by prisoners.

While the goals of the movement remained the same the tempo varied from region to region.⁴

The students in their tasks of mobilising the rural masses carried the Congress propaganda inclusive of the Congress constructive Programme to them.

The Congress Constructive Programme as envisaged by Gandhi involved promotion of Khadi and indigenous

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1. See S.R. Bakshi, Congress and the Quit India Movement, Op. Cit,
 2. Francis Hutchins, Op.Cit, p.186
 3. Spears and other weapons were manufactured by village blacksmiths from fish plates and other pieces of metal taken from Railway Bines.
 4. In Bihar on Aug 10, 1942 a partial Hartal was observed in Patna and demonstrations occurred throughout the province.

products,¹ thus making every economy a self sufficient one, a flood of underground leaflets and radio broadcasts emerging from local headquarters across tried to spell out a programme of Gandhian instructions. One set of instructions read (a) Declare yourself free men and your village a free village (b) Establish a panchayat in your village. The Panchayat will be your government (c) Wherever you are well organised, take peaceful possession of the Thanas, Courts and other government buildings in your area (d) Disorganise the communications (e) Do not allow the military or Government officials to use your carts and beasts of burden.²

Or the villagers would be warned by circulars against letting 'grains fall into the hands of police'. They were urged to 'pay the landlord just enough rent to maintain himself and his family' and pay 'nothing to the landlord' who was 'an ally of the government'.³

That the support of the rural masses was taken, served the purpose of making the 'Quit India' Movement a struggle

.. 'On August 11, crowds raided the secretariat and Assembly buildings in Patna and the sabotage of communication was in full swing. Dacoities took place all over the province. In several cases the dacoits shouted political war cries such as 'Swaraj Ho Gaya' 'Independence has come' or 'Gandhi ki jai (victory to Gandhi)': NAI, Home Files No.18/8/42 Poll (I); 18/11/42(1), Fortnightly Reports from the Government of Bihar, August-November, 1942.

1. Hitavada, Jan.27, 1940, p.4.
2. NAI, Home File No.3/19/43 Poll(1), All India Congress Committee Instruction No.1: To peasants Multiplied by the Council of Action, Bengal PCC, 13/9/42.
3. Ibid, AICC, Instruction No.12; To the Peasant of India.

of all anti-imperialist forces.¹

The working class was equally well mobilised. Their mobilisation was helped partly by the exigencies of the situation and part by the spread of Communist Ideas, which wanted the working class to be in the vanguard for national and social emancipation.

The first signs of agitation was seen in the Textiles. The Textile Workers of several Industrial centres, Bombay, in particular, following a 25-30% wage cut, demanded a general strike and the convocation of All India Textile Workers Conference.² The strike which began in Bombay spread to Kanpur, Delhi and Sholapur.

Though the strike failed³ it yielded results. In 1936 as many as 157 strikes took place involving 169,000 workers and 2,400,000 work days. In Bengal, the jute workers downed tools several times. Workers militancy also rose appreciably in Madras, Bihar and the United Provinces.⁴

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1. Y.B. Mathur, Quit India Movement, pp.46-47
 2. The Conference was attended by representatives of Red Trade Union Congress, All India Trade Union Congress and National Trade Union Federation, Bombay Labour Gazette, June 10, 1937.
 3. Due to police repression and attitude of Right Wing Reformist leaders as opined by Francis. Hutchins, op. cit, p.196.
 4. Bombay Labour Gazette, June 10, 1937.

The strikes initially connected with wage cuts slowly demanded higher pay, better working conditions, recognition of their unions and by 1937-39 more than half of the strikes ended in full or partial victory for the workers.¹

It should be pointed out that greater class consciousness of the working class influenced the development of the peasant movement as mentioned above against isolated cases of arbitrariness on part of land lords, money lenders or colonial authorities.

Summarily as the activities in the 'Quit India' phase went, the students, workers and rural masses were sufficiently involved. The section of the population whose participation was very crucial was that of women. Though a decade passed in their active involvement in the civil disobedience and the Quit India movement one cannot say that a drastic change was noticeable in their participation but certainly an increase in intensity and radicalisation can be seen.

1. Ibid.

SECTION - IITHEIR ACTIVITIES

As in the civil disobedience movement the task of picketing was taken further from picketing of foreign cloth shops and liquors shops to the picketing of mills. As mentioned in the previous section agitations in the mills especially the Textile Mills had increased considerably.

The most intense was the Bombay Textile strike followed by picketing in March 1940. Some of the workers who came to work were driven from looms and spindles by pickets. The whole of the mill areas along De Lisle Road & Fergusson Road was lined with pickets. At the Apollo Women pickets squatted at the mill gates.¹

The strike spread slowly till only a few mills held out. The closing of the Spring Mill, almost the largest in the range of whole textile mills in the city was a matter about which the workers showed commendable tact and calmness. 'Before lunch time the mill which was working with a 'partial complement' of workers, closed as even those who had gone into the mills came out. 'The throwing

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Bombay Chronicle, March 5, 1940; Bombay Chronicle, March 6, 1940, p.4

{A large number of women squatted along the entrance of the textile mills of the Wadia group', BC, March 6, 1940, p.4

of bobbins by women pickets it was stated, did the trick.¹

On March 7 the Silk workers also joined the clerical strike which gained momentum with over 10,000 workers in 22 silk mills participating.² Simultaneously a women's rally was held at Girni Kamgar Maidan, the first rally of its kind ever held in the city. Over 20,000 women workers attended, presided by Godavari Gokhale who with congratulating the women on their notable participation said 'it was the initiative taken by them which was responsible for the success of the strike.'³

Directions were given by the Girni Kamgar Union that no worker would receive his wages for the last month unless the war council permitted them so. The strike which was launched on March 4 continued in April and there was a decline in attendance in Bombay Mills. Picketing of mill gates in Bombay mills entrusted to women strikers continued along with an undiminished zeal in keeping a strict vigilance in the workers chawls.⁴ Besides the general trend of picketing in which women workers squatted outside the millgates and refused to let workers in some untoward incidents also took place. To cite an example at Kurla mills five women workers allegedly dragged two

1. Ibid

2. BC, March 7 , 1940, p.8

3. BC, March 7 , 1940, p.11

4. Times of India, April 3, 1940, p .2

loyal women into a private compound and threw chilly powder in their eyes.¹

The government usually retaliated by arresting the labour leaders.² Miss Godavari Gokhale, a member of the servants of India society was arrested and taken to Poona³. At another instance it was alleged that a woman picket at Apollo Mill was beaten and removed to the hospital and a procession of 100 women at Bhoiwada was held up.⁴

Sometimes when the pickets were arrested for disorderly behaviour, a group of women followed the police van, urging them to take them also in custody.⁵

Police repression did not deter the enthusiasm. In July again scenes reminiscent of civil disobedience were witnessed at the Chitnis Park, where thousands of mill workers had assembled to hear the announcement to the Satyagraha programme. It was presided by Mrs. Indira Bai Ruikar.⁶ The Satyagraha was restricted to some places namely like the residence of Sir Manekji Dadabhoy and

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1. Times of India, April 2, 1940, p.7.
 2. Times of India, April 8, 1940, p.14
 3. Bombay Chronicle, March 5, 1940, p.1
 4. Ibid.
 5. Bombay Chronicle, March 10, 1940, p.9.
 6. Hitavada, July 28, 1940, p.2.

Seth Bansi Abirchand. Mrs. Ruikar added that 'since the Viceroy was passing through Nagpur tomorrow a demonstration of mill workers was to be staged to bring to His Excellency's notice the demand of Nagpur workers.¹

Picketing was not confined to the mill areas only. Colleges were picketed with the help of students who remained in the forefront of the movement. For several months school and college attendance remained no more than 10% to 20%. Students over 16 were urged to leave school and colleges and participate in this climatic struggle² and students as an expression of their sympathy towards students who were arrested abstained from attending their classes.³ Some girls would offer their bangles to those who refused to comply with their request.

Picketing of local post offices was also on the agenda. In one instance 14 girls and 8 boys were arrested at Ghatkopar for picketing. They were then taken to the Kurla Court where they were fined.⁴

Sometimes the girls squatted in front of Assembly Chambers and stopped the entry of assembly members while others went and stood outside the gate of the houses of

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1. Ibid.
 2. Home Department Poll (1), 1942, F.No.3/34/42
 3. Bombay Chronicle, Sept 2, 1942, p.2.
 4. Bombay Chronicle, Aug 13, 1942, p.8.

of members of the Viceroy's Council. To cite an example they (girls) stood outside the houses of Mr. M.S. Aney and Mr. N.R. Sarkar (Members of the Council) and prevented visitors from entering the house. Henceforth they entered into an argument with Mr. Aney asking him either to obtain the release of imprisoned leaders or resign himself.¹

Sometimes a certain amount of militancy was shown. In one instance at Chikhodra, when police made lathi charges on some male demonstrators, drums were beaten and some 200 Patidar women, armed with 'Dharias' (Seythes) vansis (bamboo poles) and sticks came out.²

Other forms of agitations or activity remained quite similar to the civil disobedience phase.

Women dressed in Kesaria saris would march in the streets and take out processions.³ The procession/demonstrations usually culminated in a meeting.⁴ The processions carried out in the streets attracted the attention of women who were not participating. It also helped women bound with the rigidity of the purdah to come out and participate. This was noticeable in the case of Muslim

1. Bombay Chronicle, Sep. 7, 1942, p.2.

2. Ibid.

3. Home Department Political (I), File No.3/31/42

4. The issues taken up under the meetings I shall discuss later under the subheading of Mobilisation.

women.¹

At several meetings proscribed literature was read out. A lot of communist literature was circulated freely amongst the activists.²

Hoisting of National Flags, celebration of Independence Day and birthdays of Nationalist figures carried down the tradition from the Civil disobedience Days.³

The activity which was a development of the 40's was women's involvement in terrorism. This was mainly due to the discontentment which had set in within the Congress due to earlier policies in the civil disobedience phase. They took Gandhi's statement for propagation that 'Anarchy is better than slavery' and said 'Alright then we will have anarchy'.⁴

The most prominent women terrorist activists were Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta, Sucheta Kriplani and

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1. At Lahore for the first time since the Khaksar agitation started a batch of nine veiled women, three of whom were carrying belchas held a demonstration. They were reported to have emerged from the Ucchi Mosque: Bombay Chronicle, April 24, 1940, p.8.
 2. In a search of the Girls Boarding House the Police arrested Miss Kamala Das Gupta and seized communist literature, Bombay Chronicle, July 3, 1940.
 3. Bombay Chronicle, Aug 18, 1942, p.2; Hitavada, Jan. 27, 1940 p.11; Bombay Chronicle, Sep.15, p.9, 1942.
 4. D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma, p.151, 166, 168

Sushilabai Bal.¹ They operated from the Bombay Office which called itself the 'AICC Office'. Their tasks included issuing bulletins on behalf of the Congress, delivering messages and advising families of political prisoners.² The bulletins were issued on behalf of the Congress under the signature of Aruna Asaf Ali.³

In course of time it was realised that the Congress bulletin issued by the shadow AICC was cautious and conservative in its reporting. Thus the idea of having a secret Radio was found very plausible.

The initiative to organise a secret broadcasting station and of purchasing a transmitter was undertaken by Usha Mehta⁴ She began by announcing 'This is the Congress Radio on 42:34 metres somewhere in India'.⁵ Later Ram Manohar Lohia helped them with funds to secure a larger transmitter which would carry their defiant messages as far as Calcutta and Madras. She later remarked, 'I have no words to express my feelings. I really feel it was the

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1. In Bengal the prominent were Kalpana Dutt, Kalyani Bhattacharya, Kamla Das Gupta & Latika Ghose, Vijay Agnew, Elite Women in Indian Politics, pp.96-100.
 2. Ibid, p.99.
 3. Transcript of Interview with Sucheta Kriplani, 27 September 1973, NMML
 4. Transcript of Interview with Usha Mehta, NMML
 5. Ibid.

golden period of my life. I just cannot express as to how I really felt. But that was a desire which I had cherished for a long time. It was something worth living for and worth dying for..... so I can realise the exact meaning or exact feeling of what Mahatma must have entertained when he gave us the slogan Do or Die.'¹

The other significant figure who helped and co-ordinated terrorist activities from abroad was Madam Bhicaji Rustom Cama² who was described as 'on her lips were the slogan of liberty,

In her heart was instilled the love for India.'³

She lived only for revolution and carried far the mission of the terrorists. In America she said 'Its a shame for young people to be afraid of terrorism.'⁴ It was through her mediation that some revolutionists and terrorists taught young men and women bomb making. In fact it is interesting to note that in Bombay the number of bomb explosions was the highest.⁵

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1. Ibid,
 2. She was the wife of a Barrister in Bombay
 3. 'Intimate Revelations of Madam Cama's activities in France, India's Joan of Arc, 'Mahratta, Aug. 22, 1941, p.2.
 4. Ibid
 5. Home Political (I), F.No.35/1/43 - Poll, Statistics connected with Congress disturbances for the period ending 31st Dec 1943.

In the terrorist activity the strict Gandhians like Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Sushila Nayyar, Vijaylaxmi Pandit allowed themselves to be arrested but others like Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta escaped police and went into hiding.

That terrorist activity was of immense importance in the Quit India Movement can be seen from extracts of a speech delivered by Subhas Chandra Bose instructing the Forward Bloc who distinctly advised the recruitment of women and especially girl students to do underground work especially as secret messengers.¹

This was a brief account of the activities women contributed as well as participated in the Quit India Movement. The main source from which these activists were drawn were middle class women. Under the broad umbrella of middle class women we had women closely associated with the Congress, students, members of social welfare institutions and terrorists. Significant contribution by women workers especially to make mill strikes successful cannot be missed. Since the efforts of the movement was to make it an all anti-imperialist front, an attempt to mobilise every sector and section of the population was made. Women in the village also joined in the anti-

1. Speech delivered from a North German station in Azad Hind Service on 1st September 1942, Home Deptt. Poll(I), 1942, F.No.3/107/42.

feudal movement launched in the country side.

Quit India Movement thus saw the merging of the consciousness of the working class and the peasants into an anti-imperialist consciousness.

The analysis however remains incomplete without looking into the factors of mobilisation or how women from such diverse sections were mobilised and what issues made such a convergence possible.

MOBILISATION:

The tactics of mobilisation of women from different sections remained the same as in the civil disobedience movement discussed in the earlier chapter.

Processions were taken out to initiate women into further participation. It could be to celebrate the birthday of a nationalist figure, to protest against the arrest of their leaders or could be just an expression of their indignation against the prevailing situation and the associated government policies.

Sometimes the procession were led by women wearing flag borders or would culminate in a mass flocking under a tricolour. This served two purposes (a) it was a symbolic assertion of nationalism (b) it acted as a binding form between the masses, giving nationalism the top priority.

A significant change seen from the civil disobedience period was that in the first phase women's traditionality, her role of sacrifice in the house extended to the nation ^{and} /her capacity for non violence was stressed. Those qualities that a woman should embody was continuously reiterated by Gandhi.

In the Quit India Movement one does not come across such images of a self sacrificing wife and mother to the nation. The reason I find obvious was (a) with the coming of Jawaharlal Nehru and a strong Left, the nationalist ideology tended to radicalise¹ ; (b) with the growth in terrorist activities logically women's non-violent and suffering image could not be projected. Thus though the propaganda by terrorist was replete with religious and traditional symbols it emphasised the characteristics of aggression, violence and destruction in the feminine dieties² as opposed to the ideal woman evoked in the civil disobedience, in devotion to their dharma, self abnegating and self sacrificing.³

1. S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru, a biography, vol.I, p.10. See also: Michael Brecher, Nehru - a political biography, p.122. :Jawaharlal Nehru, selected works, vol.III, p.8.

2. Vijay Agnew, Elite Women in Indian Politics, p.86. Also see Bombay Chronicle, March 12, 1941, p.8.

3. I have discussed this in the previous chapter.

Mobilisation also took place by issuing out Appeals. Through Appeals one could envisage to carry the message very far as well as try to forge unity amongst the diverse ideologies. Since at this time organisations like the Hindu Maha Sabha and Rashtra Swayam Sevak Sangh had come up which lay too much emphasis on the purity of Hindu religion, it was required to forge communal unity as well as an anti-imperialist stand. Appeals served the best way.

During this movement due to the exigencies of the situation maximum number of appeals were issued to women of India as well as abroad to abstain from encouraging the war efforts.

Special appeals were issued to women in all warring countries and asked them to appeal to their governments to end the war both in the East as well as West. In one appeal it was stated that so long as any nation remained a subject people there could be no world peace. The women then asked for freedom for their own country and other oppressed countries.¹

All the appeals stuck to the demand for complete independence.² Though some appeals from London to women

1. Hitavada, Feb. 1, 1940, p.4.

2. Sarojini Naidu in Madras in an appeal regarding the Indian situation vis-a-vis war she said 'I cannot understand why in this hour of agony the allies refuse to understand that India is in earnest need for freedom, Bombay Chronicles, June 15, 1940, p.13.

of India urged that "without victory for democracies there could be no Indian freedom" the Indian response would generally be argued on the grounds that since "It was a war between the British Empire and the Fascists for world domination in effect meaning exploitation of non European races; though one could not be in love with Nazism and Fascism, one could also be not expected to be in love with British imperialism."¹

The women in demanding complete independence also envisaged an emergent New World Order, in which social tyranny would be done away with along with political tyranny. In fact in their appeals they stressed that to achieve Independence (A) politically divisive forces should be done away with (B) social institutions which deprived the women of social and economic equality should be done away with. Thus on the New Social Order based on Equality and Justice they hoped for a betterment in their social position in society.²

These anti-war appeals had a great impact clearly visible from the way women set about organising themselves (discussed in the last section)

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1. 'Make India Free and the War is as good as won say Indian Women'; Signatures obtained were of Sarojini Naidu, Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru, Vijay Laxmi Pandit, Rani Laxmibai Rajwade, Raj Kumar Amrit Kaur, Mahratta, 4 July, 1941, p.2.
 2. Bombay Chronicle, May 6, 1942, p.2.

Appeals were also couched for communal harmony and for the participation of Muslim men and women in the national movement. They were asked to do away with the feeling of hatred against 'unbelievers'.¹ They were asked not to be ignorant about people who appealed to them in the name of their prophet. And the final note ended with that they 'did not want to see another specimen of the Khilafat Raj (British Raj)'.²

Thus through appeals women were made aware of the possibility of communal tensions as well as the political happenings on the world scale likely to affect them. It served its purpose for initiating women into political participation and at the same time contributing to the political and social consciousness.

In MEETINGS addressed usually by woman leaders a variety of topics were discussed. Besides the anti-imperialist thrust of the meetings, social topics concerning the position of women were brought out. During the Quit India Movement period the issues often discussed in the meetings were inheritance and Hindu Laws.³ This was primarily because in the 1940's a bill was introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly to confer on the women, especially the Hindu Widows, certain rights of inheritance

1. Bombay Chronicle, June 29, 1942, p.5.

2. Mahratta, July 26, 1940, p.8.

3. Bombay Conference on Hindu Law Revision: Hitavada, Feb. 9, 1940, p.15.

which though essential for them, the existing laws of the land did not provide with.¹ Finally the Rau Committee² was established to look into the matter.

The women demanded an absolute right to inheritance without any distinction being made to different types of 'stridhan'. Though the stridhan derived from the husband goes back to his heirs first, in case of a woman dying intestate i.e. without a valid will, it was argued that if in regard to property inherited from the husband, his heirs come in first before all others if the wife dies without a will, then how can the same order of succession hold to the property derived from her father? Why should the husband come in before her own mother, sister or brothers.³

In the course of another meeting the All India Hindu Mahila Sabha criticized the Rau Committee Bill. The Sabha opposed the abolition of the Hindu Women's limited Estate.⁴ They argued that at the most she should be given an absolute right after the series of Enumerated heirs upto paternal grand fathers line is exhausted and not before that. If all the widows rights are recognised as

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1. Mahratta, Jan 12 1941, p.2.
 2. 'The Parliamentary sub-committee welcomed the appointment of the Rau Committee', Bombay Chronicle, May 15, 1942, p.5.
 3. Stridhana, Mahratta, Aug. 14, 1942.
 4. Mahratta, Dec. 25, 1942, p.2.

as being the surviving half of her husband then there is no reason why half of the property of the husband should go outside the family.¹

The Hindu Law Revision on the persistence of women for their inheritance rights reflected an emergent social consciousness on the part of women. An equal place as the husband with regard to the inheritance rights was demanded. But no attempt to understand the entrenched system of patriarchy and hence unfair inheritance laws to perpetuate it was made. Neither was there an effort to question the very social fabric perpetuating institutions which essentially disallowed a female to participate beyond the precincts of the household.

The issues taken up in the meetings certainly attracted women who tried to forge a link with the broader-anti-imperialist movement by bringing up their demands but they were essentially fought on a superficial theoretical plane. Secondly these issues seemed relevant for middle class women who could claim to have a right on something they could 'inherit', not for women of rural background who found it difficult to eke a daily existence.

Another issue which was taken up widely both to have communal harmony as well ensure participation of women

1. Mahratta, May 2, 1941^{p.1}; Mahratta, July 25, 1941, p.3.

from diverse religions was the increasing tendencies towards communal tensions.

Communal and divisive tendencies were not only with organisations like Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, Hindu Maha Sabha, Muslim League but also with women organisations like Hindu Mahila Mahasabha¹ who stressed on problems concerning only Hindu women and in one reference of a specially Hindu Women's Rescue Home.²

The Muslim women overstressed the importance of Muslim league as the only organisation to have created consciousness among the women.³ At a meeting in Bombay it was said that 'India was not a nation but a country of many nations', and that 'if peace and harmony had to be established between two major communities there was no other alternative than to adopt the partition.'⁴

Though the fear was expressed there was no hope lost and a continuous effort was made to bring Hindu-Muslim women to work in a collective spirit. At a largely attended meeting of Hindu Muslim ladies it was decided to form an organisation of Hindu Muslim ladies to bring communal

1. Mahratta, Oct. 4 1940, p.5.

2. A Hindu Mahila Ashram, Poona was founded in 1935, Mahratta, Aug.2, 1940, p.5.

3. Bombay Chronicle, April 20, 1940, p.9

4. Ibid,

unity.¹ Similar meetings were held in other parts of the country.²

These were some of the policies employed by the middle class women to bring out women to participate on a common platform i.e. an anti-imperialist movement. But women participating in a mass movement required some form of co-ordination in their activities. Organization of the woman force was an important task for recruiting the woman force.

ORGANISATION:

Though the organisational efforts of organisations like Rashtriya Stree Sabha, Hindustani Seva Dal, Volunteer Corps, and Youth leagues continued on the same plane as the Civil disobedience period, the 1940's saw organisation and mobilisation taking place in accordance to the demanding situation.

The situation was the impending threat of war. Women who were actively involved chose to organise themselves and shoulder some responsibility at the time of stress.³

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1. Bombay Chronicle, June 29, 1942, p.5.
 2. At Allahabad Mrs. Uma Nehru moved a resolution on community unity appealing to all sections of the people to sink their differences, Hitavada, Jan.31, 1940, p.2.
At Calcutta an appeal to women to line up behind the demand for national unity was made, Bombay Chronicle, Sept. 17, 1942, p.1.
 3. Bombay Chronicle, May 14, 1942, p.2.

In upcountry areas women organised themselves to collect money for Red Cross, to make knitted goods and other articles for the Men at the Front. In the big parts they prepared themselves to deal with casualties from the Front, assist officers, soldiers and their families passing through the port.¹

AUXILIARY CORPS: In Bombay they (women) formed Women's Auxiliary Corps and the National War Front. They seem to have been inspired by similar organisations being formed in other countries engaged in war whose activities were heavily reported in the newspapers.²

TRAINING CAMPS: were opened up in which women were given War Time Education. This incorporated Nurse's training,³ physical training to prevent themselves, general education regarding women's position at home and society, social environment and development of culture. In short the scheme

1. Times of India, April 9, 1940, p.9.

2. The Nazis and Russians had employed their woman power. They believed that in civil defence women should play her legitimate role. Though women had not been designed for combatment duties, but her role in the scheme of creation equipped her with qualities that were displayed in rare heroism under abnormal conditions of national or racial danger, Bombay Chronicle, July 31, 1942, pp.4-9.

In England women went to 10 Downing Street and demanded for a second war front.

In America, President Roosevelt signed a bill creating a women's Auxiliary Army Corps and a large number of women were assigned to aircraft warning service of the interceptor command, Bombay Chronicle, Feb.16, 1940, p.6.

3. Mahratta, Jan 30, 1942, p.6.

included training in all aspects of national life as well as social work in villages.

In March of 1940, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur inaugurated the training camps in the presence of Mrs. Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay, Mrs. Urmila and Miss Mridula Sarabhai.¹

By end of March the All India Women's Association started a training camp at Abrana Village, Surat under the direction of Miss Slade (Miraben), Ms. Mridula Ambalal and Mrs. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay. The inmates of the camp numbering 50, were mostly delegates of women's conference or other social welfare organisation.² Resolutions were passed on the subjects of molestation of women and hardships suffered by the evacuees from Burma.³

People's Volunteer Brigade and Peace Brigades: Organisation also took the form of People's Volunteer Brigade and Peace Brigades (Shanti Sevak Sangh). At a meeting of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, a resolution was passed organising a separate Women's Brigade led by Miss. Mridula Sarabhai.⁴ The Peace Brigades conducted tours in the

1. Bombay Chronicle, March 4, 1940, p.2.

2. Bombay Chronicle, May 22, 1942, p.5; Bombay Chronicle, Feb. 27, 1942, p.5.

3. Source material of the Freedom Movement, Maharashtra State Records, Gazetters Department, p.40.

4. Ibid, p.28.

villages to prevent people from panicking and concentrating on Gandhi's constructive programme.¹

Rashtra Seva and Civil Defence Dals - They assisted in the work of People's volunteer and Peace Brigades. Of the fifteen resolutions passed at the Executive Committee of the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee presided by N.V. Gadgil two resolutions were for the formation of Civil Defence Dals and Rashtra Seva Dals.

For activities concerned with picketing the Mills during textile strikes women had formed separate Women Worker's association.² These associations had their own conferences³ in which the course of action for the following weeks was decided. These associations paid off, when women participated in various strikes in Maharashtra.

The sabotaging and underground activities were established through a network of contacts behind a screen of pseudonyms, falsified addresses and midnight movements. Thus Sucheta Kriplani was known as Dadi or Behan Ji, Aruna Asaf Ali as Kadam and Achyut Patwardhan as Kusum.⁴

1. Ibid, p.8.

2. Bombay Chronicle, Feb. 16, 1940, p.6.

3. 'Smt. Vijaylaxmi Pandit and Smt. Mridula Sarabhai have issued an appeal to women workers to call a Worker's Conference', Bombay Chronicle, March 6, 1940, p.9.

4. Mrs. Naorji, Police Commissioner's Office, File No. 3217/4/1.

The activity was co-ordinated by the AICC office which channelled communications from underground workers seeking to contact one another, and collected news of the movement's progress for cyclostyled distribution.¹ The basic office staff consisted of a co-ordinator, an accountant, a typist, a peon.

In this section I have dealt with the organisations which were new developments from the civil disobedience phase. It is not to obliterate the fact that the organisations existing in the civil disobedience period has no role to play. They very much existed to carry out their tasks. The changing political situation demanded the formation of above mentioned associations to meet the exigencies of the time.

GROWTH OF CONSCIOUSNESS FROM THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE TO QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

The emergent consciousness in 1930-32 and 1940-42 phases came down from the social reform tradition wherein the social reform activities dealt primarily with women as objects of agitation.² Two broad deductions were derived in the second chapter (a) Social reform activity

1. Ibid

2. Kumari Jayawardena, 'Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World in the 19th and early 20th centuries', p.13

was class determined and mainly confined to the middle class (b) Though progressive trends (like Education) and reformist demands for abolishing social evils could be located, it perpetuated the existing family structure (patriarchy) and society based on segregation.¹

This is not to deny that a certain social awareness developed amongst women towards the oppressive institutionalised system. It was clearly discernible when a steady shift from objects of agitation to subjects of agitation took place in which it was argued for a position at par with men on the platform as 'women'. This period of the early ^{20th Century} / ~~saw~~ women legislating for a more protected position² and getting organised into women's organisations.³

However no conscious effort was made to reconstruct the social and institutional framework and eradicate the oppressive attitudes towards women.⁴ The concepts of gender inequality and contradictory roles of men and women were pushed to the background. Thus how can one assign a term like feminist consciousness when it itself is based on the perception that contradictions exist between the social roles of men and women and that women can resolve this contradiction to win their rights equal to men.

1. See Chapter II, p.10.

2. See Chapter II, p.18.

3. For details see Chapter II, p.22

4. Neera Desai, Women in Modern India, p.259.

The participation of women in the national movement during the phases mentioned above carried the belief that their (women) participation in the political movement would assist in their own struggle for liberation.¹ This stemmed from the logic that political upheavals tend to bring about social change.

The development of consciousness of women as women was related to their participation in activities outside their homes.²

Women undertook activities ranging from picketing, processions/demonstrations, hoisting of flags, Spinning-weaving Khaddar. Consciousness was reflected in the process of women asserting as a political being and linking their activities with the nationalist ideology and opposition to the imperialist rule.

However nationalism in creating a new ideology of womanhood, stressed on values like self sacrifice, self abnegation or qualities of an ideal woman personified in Sita, Draupadi, Savitri etc. A social structure based on segregation of sexes and a patriarchal ideology was perpetuated. While women could participate in the 'extended space', their links with the household were re-affirmed at the same time. Public life was identified

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1. Aparna Basu, The Role of Women in Indian Struggle for Freedom in B.R. Nanda (ed.) Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity, pp.39-40.
 2. K.N. Panikar, Introduction, Studies in History, vol.III, no.1, Jan-June, 1987, p.8.

with an extension of care for males in the household to an aid for men in public. Thus consciousness towards challenging the social fabric which was perpetuating the oppressive institutions never came up. And even if the oppressive institutions were challenged it would have certainly led to amelioration of a section of middle class women, not one incorporating the broader base of lower class women.

In the 1942 movement, a radical ideology developed with the emergence of the left and the circulation of communist literature among women. Consciousness was envisaged on the plane of not only political emancipation but economic freedom. Thus the efforts of women contributed to the Mill strikes, demand for higher wages, better working conditions, maternity leave. The new ideology of socialism meant freedom not only from exploitation but from all types of social hardships, disabilities and sufferings.¹

Though the 'extended female space' was maintained women in this movement stepped into bolder activities like sabotaging and underground works. As contrasted to the civil disobedience period where concept of ideal womanhood was evoked, in this period stress was laid more on the aggressiveness, boldness of females.² At a

1. Neera Desai, Op. Cit, p.146.

2. Refer to Chapter IV

certain level it reflected the consciousness of women towards their changing role but how far it challenged the patriarchal society is questionable.

The 'Quit India' phase definitely saw an awakening in women in different sections of society. I have cited the case of the Women Worker. Even the anti-feudal movement launched in the villages agitated the women to participate in the national movement. One reason being that the national movement offered a 'peasant solution'. Thus there was a merging of working class consciousness and peasant consciousness into a nationalist consciousness.

But this consciousness could not challenge the social structure though efforts were made by women through demand of inheritance laws/^{and} Hindu code Bill to cite a few. Still this did not question the different roles in society assigned to them (men and woman) and the prevailing patriarchal ideologies.

To conclude I would say that a definite political consciousness amongst women existed towards their contribution to the national movement but it was not 'extended' into the social space thus leaving the whole fabric of entrenched institutions unchallenged.

C O N C L U S I O N

C O N C L U S I O N

Movements for women's liberation and women's participation in political struggles have arisen in the Third World. India witnessed women's involvement in such a political struggle against the backdrop of the British Rule.

To the prevailing view that a women's rights movement does not fit with the nationalist movement, India seemed an exception. A connection between the women's rights and nationalism can be traced back to the social reform movement. Of the many issues ranging from widow remarriage, child marriage to sati, Education was given utmost importance.

But women's education and the type of education provided was not extended to promote women's emancipation or independence but to reinforce patriarchy. The continuous reiteration of womanly virtues of orderliness, thrift, cleanliness, to be acquired through education, was an effort to preserve and strengthen the basic family structure.

Women reformers contribution was creditable and one cannot deny that their efforts certainly helped in ameliorating the existing women's situation. But though their activities symbolised the path of de-segregation their function was dependent on the very structure of segregation. They

did not exist in contradiction with the household.

Agitations against institutions like child marriage and widowhood, two elements of the patriarchal ideology taking the form of an institution, affected primarily the urban middle class, not the masses of women.

A new role of the women was projected which suited the social reformers and later the nationalists but which offered no radical change to the social structure.

But though the gender inequality in the household was not challenged, the social reform tradition helped in creation of a viewpoint wider than the household. Social institutions like the Hind Mahila Samaj, Gujrati Hindu Stree Mandal, Bhagini Samaj and Saraswat Mahila Samaj used the earlier social work activities for political purposes. An example of a social institution taking a political form was the Rashtriya stree Sabha. The RSS in close association with Hindustani Seva Dal, Youth leagues and Volunteer Corps helped women both in mobilising as well as organising women for the anti-imperialist struggle. Besides this they helped in creating a nationalist consciousness as well as women considering themselves as a political being.

During the civil disobedience movement they participated in various activities ranging from breaking the salt laws, boycott of foreign cloth and liquor shops, spinning Khaddar

to taking out processions, holding demonstrations and meetings. The intensity of these activities varied with the general temper of the movement. It helped to serve some main purposes both for the nationalist and women participants. (A) It helped to draw a linkage with the nationalist ideology. This was reflected clearly when women while taking out probhat pheris wore flag bordered sarees, flocking under a tricolour and celebrating the birthdays of nationalist figures. (B) The women participated from the 'extended female space' without threatening the links these women maintained with the household. Gandhi's contribution to this was immense. By stressing on spinning and weaving : Khaddar he brought the swadeshi right into the household as well as the necessity of self determination and self government in economic matters. Along with the swadeshi programme the 'salvation' of the women was linked to the 'salvation' of the country (C) It helped in the universalisation of the movement. Women provided the sole universal category cutting through social divisions. Women was a category distinct from that of caste or class, hence could be symbolic of a united social universe.

The national movement and women's participation in it reflected a distinct political consciousness but it also stressed the traditional/^{role}of the woman, though for a new end. The role of the woman was extended from the

family to encompass the nation. However no contradiction between the social roles of men and women was perceived, thus perpetuating patriarchal ideology.

The women participants accepted this newly created ideology of womanhood, and used it as a motivation as well as a mobilising factor for women to participate. Thus in their appeals, demonstrations and bulletins the women's 'service' and 'self sacrifice' to the nation was stressed.

Their consciousness was reflected in their putting forth that woman as a class and its representation had to sink into the national representation. Thus a nationalist consciousness would take place of a class consciousness. This particular nationalist consciousness was articulated in the issues women brought out in their addresses and meetings ranging from inheritance rights, demand for equal representation in the councils to franchise. But hereagain issues regarding the family structure, man-woman relationships were not discussed. Moreover, the very issues they took up did not touch the lives of lower class women or in other words the issues taken up by woman nationalists were not adequate to motivate the lower class women into participation.

The civil disobedience movement, though a mass movement attracting women to come and participate on the streets remained primarily confined to the middle class women.

The Quit India Movement and the intervening period from 1932-1942 observed no drastic changes in women's participation, though certainly an increase in intensity and radicalisation could be seen.

From picketing of foreign and liquor shops, this period observed the picketing of mills, colleges and post offices. Hoisting of national flag, celebration of independence day and birthdays of Nationalist figures carried down the tradition of the civil disobedience Days. The purpose being to make the movement an all anti-imperialist front, women workers in the textile mills and women from the village were mobilised. The issues ranging from higher wages, maternity leave, oppressive condition of women in the factories to feudal tyranny were brought under the umbrella of an anti-imperialist movement. Thus, though issues affecting various sections of society varied, they were fought from a common nationalist platform.

This period witnessed organisation in the form of Auxillary Corps. Training Camps, Peoples Volunteer, Peace Brigades, Rashtra Seva and Defence Dals. They were primarily formed to gear and mobilise women for the impending war threat and subsequently India's involvement in the war.

The 1940's saw women's involvement in terrorist and sabotage activities. This was primarily the influence of a radical ideology of the left. The new ideology of socialism meant freedom not only from exploitation but

from all types of social hardships, disabilities and suffering.

In this period women continued to participate from the 'extended female space' though they stepped into bolder activities cited above. But in this phase stress was laid more on the aggressive qualities of the female as opposed to the image of a docile feminine image evoked in the civil disobedience phase.

At a certain level the activities reflected the consciousness of women but how far it could challenge patriarchy is questionable.

Here again, agitation and discontentment was shown towards the Hindu Code Bill, Marriage Laws and Unequal Inheritance Laws. But the agitation did not go beyond this. The patriarchal ideology remained entrenched.

However the Civil disobedience and Quit India movements stand as distinct historic phases witnessing the participation of women for the first time in the public space.

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