

**WOMEN'S WELFARE IN ANDHRA - CONTRIBUTIONS OF
DURGABAI DESHMUKH**

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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1991**



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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled "Women's Welfare In Andhra - Contributions of Durgabai Deshmukh", submitted by Miss E. Sudharani, in partial fulfilment of the degree of the Master of Philosophy of this university. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I owe my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. K.N. Panikkar, who helped at all stages of the present work in many ways. Without his valuable guidance and consideration this dissertation would not have attained its final shape.

I greatly acknowledge the assistance rendered by the staff of Andhra Mahila Sabha, Hyderabad and Madras, State Archives of Madras and Hyderabad in providing necessary primary sources. I owe my thanks to Dr. Sarada for acquainting me with valuable information regarding Durgabai Deshmukh's life and the services rendered by her to the welfare of women. I also thank the staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, Nehru Memorial Museum Library, India International Centre Library, and National Archives.

I am very much indebted to the University Grants Commission for providing financial assistance to pursue my research.

I place my deep sense of gratitude to my mother, sister-in-law, brothers and sisters for their everlasting affection and encouragement. I like to express my thanks to Ms. Anandhi for her suggestions during the course of my work. I would like to extend my thanks to all of my friends for their valuable help. Finally I thank Mr K. Muralidharan for his neat typing.

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

The need for women studies which helps in understanding the place of women in the society, the causes for her oppression and subordination and her continuous struggle for equality with men is greatly felt in recent years. The emergence of various voluntary and formal organisations of women has drawn the attention of the researchers about the need to investigate into the aspects of women's history. There are valuable studies on the women issues, and history from an all India point of view, but very few from the angle of any particular region. The historical writings in South India, in general and Andhra in particular have not adequately focussed on women welfare activities which were taken up by the progressive women social workers in the twentieth century. Most of the historians paid much attention on the freedom movement of 19th century.

One of the greatest pioneer of women's welfare in twentieth century Andhra is Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh, who gave a powerful thrust to social work. Particularly in the field of women welfare in Andhra, an elaborative biographical work in Telugu is done by Neti Seeta Devi, and a brief sketch of her life and message is drawn by Chalapatti Rao, Director, Information and Broadcasting. Not many have undertaken to study Andhra Mahila Sabha, an institution established by Smt. Durgabai. However, a critical study of the contribution made

by her for women welfare in Andhra is negligible though abundant valuable original source material in the form of autobiographies, official records, news paper reports, journals, official documents are available. The present study is an attempt to give a critical account of the activities and contributions of Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh towards the women's welfare in Andhra and also accounts the study of various institutions established by her in Madras. The capital of Madras Presidency, as well as in Hyderabad, after the formation of Andhra Pradesh which stand as living monuments of her service to the course of women.

Before going into the topic in detail, a brief sketch of the social reform movement undertaken by the 19th century intellectuals is in order. Their movements immensely contributed to the emancipation of women. The role of various voluntary women's organisations of early 20thC, which worked strenuously for the welfare of women of India in general and in Andhra in particular also needs discussion. Among the significant changes that have been taking place in recent years has been the status of women.¹ The transition of women from a condition of apathy to that of equality is a fascinating chapter in Modern Indian Social History.² Many factors have combined to free women from the grip of

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1. Hannah Sen (ed), Problems of Women Welfare in Encyclopaedia of social work, Delhi, p.135.
 2. Dr. Putli Krishnamurthi, Changing conditions of women in Andhra, 1987, p.2

tradition, prejudice and ignorance which have resulted in the backwardness of their position.³ The impact of western ideas and the synthesis of the liberal ideas of the west with the traditional values of the east, influenced educated intellectuals of the 19th century to launch a nation wide reform movement. Thus the transvaluation of values which resulted in the reform of the society and amelioration of Indian Womanhood.⁴ The articulation of consciousness about women's condition was initially expressed through campaign's against Sati, infanticide, nauch, prostitution and through movement, for female education, widow remarriages, and domestic reform.⁵ In the beginning the response of Indian women was slow and halting and even hesitant to the new cultural changes but as time passed by they want the need for the reform and helped to make efforts of the reforms a great success⁶ It is interesting to note that changes brought about in the life of Indian women are more representative of struggle between the forces of conservatism and liberalism than a conflict between the two sexes resulting in the feminist movement witnessed in many parts of Western countries hence, this aspect of women welfare movement in India was tremendously significant in understanding their position on

3. Hannah Sen, Op. Cit., p.136.

4. Putli Krishnamurthi, Op. Cit., p.136.

5. K.N. Panikkar, Introduction in Studies in History, vol.3, Jan-June 1987, p.6.

6. Op. Cit., p.306.

the contributions they can make towards it.⁷ As the forces of liberation in all its aspects grow in strength, in the passage of time, a women's movement developed adding weight to the progressive forces. Many women's organisations sprang up at local as well national levels. Among the earliest womens organisations was the Women's Indian Association founded in Madras in 1917 under Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins, both were early champions, who fought for women welfare in India. In 1925, the National Council of Women was established, another All India body of repute was Young Women Christian Association. These All India organisations, worthily supported by the local groups, which have provided the training ground for the women to champion their causes.⁸

The social reform movement in India was a tremendous impact on the Andhra region. There were large scale reforms in Andhra in the 19th century to improve the regular deplorable condition of women.

The Andhra women who were steeped in ignorance and illiteracy, coupled with superstition and were dictated by the outmoded customs and traditions of the feudalistic society.⁹ From the middle of the 19th century many

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7. M.M. Desai, ed. Women Welfare - History & Philosophy of Social Work in India, 1967, p.178.
 8. M.M. Desai, Op. Cit, p.180.
 9. Deshmukh, Chintaman And I, Delhi, 1980, p.1.

enlightened intellectuals of Andhra such as Muddu Krishnama Naidu.¹⁰ Kanduberi Veeresalingam, the pioneer of social reform movement in Andhra and the harbinger of enlightenment and emancipation of women in Andhra and his followers Bulusu Sambamurthi, Gurajada Appa Rao¹¹, Ragupati Ventakratnam Naidu,¹² and Rayabam Venkata Sivudu¹³ and others who fought vehemently against child marriages, enforced widowhood, kanyasulkam and Devadasi system advocated greatly for the women's education, widow remarriages, and raise in the age of marriage of girls. Kanduberi Veeresalingam became successful in bringing about revolutionary changes in society especially among the women and achieved remarkable success in conducting many widow remarriages and opening the schools for girls, seeing his tremendous success in this field. Mahadev Gound Ranade called him the Dakshina Buarata Vidyasagar¹⁴. The Christian Association also played a prominent role in women emancipating women establishing various schools, hospitals women.

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10. Muddukrishnama Naidu was the great social reformer predecessor of Veeresalingam Pantulu, in his book Hitabodhini, protested against social evils practices like Kanyasulkam, the system of bride price, compulsory widowhood and child marriage.
 11. Gurajada Appa Rao, famous novelist and social reformer of 19th century. He exposed the glaring social evils of 19th century in his social novel Kanyasulkam which was greatly acclaimed.
 12. Ragupati Venkatratnam Naidu, follower of Veeresalingam carried countrywide campaign against Nautu Paulia in Andhra.
 13. A teacher and social reformer founded monthly journal 'Zenana' in 1895 to promote women's education.
 14. Veeresalingam, Commemoration Volume, Hyderabad, p.226.

During the first decade of the 20th Century, women's organisations, mostly of local level, were started by educated women immensely worked for arousing the consciousness among Andhra women. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, number of caste associations.¹⁵ sprang up in Andhra which were aimed for the upliftment of their caste women, promoting education among them and conducting widow remarriages. The first caste association established in 1910 was the Kamma Association, which followed by Vaisya Association, or Vasavi Association, Padmashali Association etc. They worked only for the internal social reforms. However these caste associations, failed to achieve remarkable success because of their limited scope of activities. Though women position in Andhra was slightly improved from that of highly deplorable situation in the 19th century, many of the social evils continued to exist in the society. Child marriages were in great vogue.¹⁶ This evil custom sometimes resulted in the death of the husband even before the child attained puberty and was subjected to the enforced widowhood. The condition of widow in the society was highly miserable. Learning fine arts was never encouraged as they were considered fit only for Prostitutes and the popular instrument 'Harmonium' was called the 'Sanipette' (the prostitutes box). The system of prostitution (known as Bhogam and kalavantulu

15. For detailed information about the Caste Associations and its formation see, Andhra Patrika, 22 Feb, 1911, 3 January 1912, 12 February, 16 April, 1913, 3 April 1914, 4 July 1917 - Krishna Patrika, 17 November 1917.

16. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman And I, p.1.

in Andhra were also prevalent. The elite section of the society used to maintain the families of kalavantulu and of arranging nautch parties during festivals and Public Parties became the social prestige of the day.¹⁷ The general condition of women in Andhra was alloted in the customs and sanctified by the religion.¹⁸ In the family as well as in society, man was the sole arbitrator in all matters.¹⁹ The percentage of female education in the early years of twentieth century is not high, yet it is heartening to note that the awareness of Andhra women about the need for reforms in the society was very high. Many women's magazines like Grihalakshmi²⁰ and Andhra Mahila²¹ strenuously worked for the propagation of women education and for the women's welfare. The political consciousness in Andhra in the second decade of twentieth century brought political awareness among the Andhra womenhood.²²

Though the Andhra political leaders sidelined the cause of women in the political struggle. Andhra women were greatly

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17. Putli Krishnamurti, Op. Cit., p.10.
 18. Durgabai Deshmukh, Article Published, Andhra Mahila, New dimensions of Women's life in Andhra, Jan, 1954.
 19. Putli Krishnamurti, Op.Cit., p.8.
 20. Grihalakshmi is a journal society dedicated to the cause of women through its pages stronger advocated social reforms.
 21. Andhra Mahila, a monthly magazine of Andhra Mahila Sabha, helped in propagating for the need of women welfare in Andhra.
 22. Putli Krishnamurti, Op. Cit., p.77.

influenced by Gandhiji's ideals and writings and speeches. Gandhiji's attitude towards women was a natural corollary of his ideal ahimsa,²³ and he held a view that women are the apostle of ahimsa and advocated that women should have equal rights of freedom and liberty with men.²⁴ He vehemently opposed the 'child marriage', which in his opinion, is both moral as well as physical evil²⁵ and advocated for widow remarriages. He believed that women should have freedom to participate in the nation building activities and said that women were most competent to carry on the social services because of her natural qualities and gentleness, love and compassion.²⁶ Such appeals and lofty ideas about womanhood and his call for freedom proved irresistible to Andhra women and many of the upper class women came out of purdahs and actively participated in political struggle. While Gandhi was responsible for bringing the Andhra women into political arena, many of the progressive women of India and women's organisations were largely aroused the self consciousness among the Andhra women to fight for their welfare and to agitate for equal rights. 'The significant change in the first quarters of the twentieth century is the emergence of

23. Ibid., p.29.

24. Tendulkar, Gandhiji and his Works, Bombay, 1944, p.168.

25. Hingorani, ed., To the Women-Vol.III, Karachi, 1941, pp.122-3.

26. Tendulkar, Op. Cit., p.140.

various women's organisations.²⁷ One of the social workers was Dr. Annie Besant.²⁸ In the year 1904, she and her associates launched Madras Hindu Association²⁹ to promote education of Hindu girls and widows. She, however, opposed widow remarriage³⁰ and condemned child marriages. She had the honours of becoming the first the President of Indian National Congress in 1917, which was unique. However, for the first time bestowed on a woman.³¹ She had a great respect for Indian womanhood and held a view that India needs nobly trained wives and mothers.³² One of the prominent social workers of the time was Mrs. Margaret Cousins.³³ She profoundly advocated for the equal rights of women and exhorted women to get educated since according to her "ignorance makes one slave, slave mothers produce craven children."³⁴ She strived hard to increase the literacy of women and vehemently opposed child marri-

27. Subramanian, N., Press and Nationalist Movement in South India, Andhra, 1905-1932, p.10.

28. An Irish lady who came to India in 1893 established branch of Theosophical Society at Adayar, Madras and opened the branch of 'daughter of India' to work for social reform.

29. Putli Krishnamurti, Op. Cit., p.26.

30. Indian Social Reformer, Madras, January 10, 1964, p.830.

31. Putli Krishnamurthi, Op. Cit., p.29.

32. Besant Annie, The Birth of New India, Madras, 1917, p.150.

33. Margaret Cousins, a theophysicist came to India in 1915, on the invitation of Dr. Annie Besant and worked tremendously for the equal rights of women.

34. Cousins, Margaret, The awakening of Asian Womenhood., Allahabad, 192, p.23.

ages.³⁵ She established Lady Irwin College of Delhi and founded an orphanage at Madras. She organised All India Women Conference at Lahore in 1931 and successfully led the deputation to E.S. Montague, the then Secretary of State for India to advocate women right to vote.³⁶ The great women activist who dedicated her life entirely for the welfare of women in Madras Presidency was Dr. Muthulaxmi Reddy.³⁷ Andhra women can never forget the yeoman services rendered by Reddy.³⁸ She was the first women legislator of Madras Presidency and enacted bills for the promotion of the women's education and abolition of Devadasi system and laws of suppression of brothels and immoral traffic in women. During this period, many persons from Devadasi came like Yamini Purnatilaka,³⁹ Darisi Chenchaiyah⁴⁰. Organised meetings and pleaded their community people to come out of the sinful profession.⁴¹

35. Ibid., p.20.

36. Putli Krishnamurthi, Op. Cit., p.36.

37. A brilliant medical practitioner of Madras Presidency, started Avvai House, an orphanage for destitute girls and children, responsible for the enactment of many legislative measures for women.

38. Putli Krishnamurthi, Op. Cit., p.40.

39. Yamini Purnatilaka, who belongs to Kalavantula caste, realising the evils of her profession, extricated herself from the social evil and established Hindu Yuvati Sarahalaya, an orphanage at Madras pleaded her community people to lead a pure life.

40. Darisi Chenchaiyah, being launched a crusade against the prostitution.

41. Andhra Patrika, Jan. 10, 1914.

The youngest among the pioneer of women welfare in Andhra was Smt. Durgabai in whose valuable services we see a fulfilment of the work of her predecessors. Like Pendita Rama Bai, Mrs. Annie Besant, Mrs. Margaret Cousins and others.⁴² She gave an organisational form to the ideas regarding women's welfare propounded by the 19th Century intellectuals in Andhra. A born organiser, tireless social worker, valiant freedom fighter, champion of women welfare in Andhra, she started her social service of the very early age of 13 when she started Balika Hindi Pathashala.⁴³ Durgabai emerged as an adventurous social reformer cum social worker and as a crusader for women's emancipation from outdated customs and torturous traditions like child marriage, forced widowhood, Polgamy, and Devadasi system.⁴⁴ Being herself victim of the child marriage⁴⁵ she boldly opposed the primitive system and liberated herself from the bonds of the custom and stressed hard for the liberation and progress of the Andhra women. She established various institutions, to meet the growing needs of the women in Andhra. In all the activities she had undertaken, women welfare became the central point.⁴⁶ She founded Andhra Mahila Sabha in 1938, an association of women,

42. Putli Krishnamurthi, Op.Cit, p.40.

43. Ibid.; p.41.

44. S. Sarada, Andhra Mahila Sabha, A Study in the Social Welfare Organization, Doctoral Thesis, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1982, Op. Cit, p.53.

45. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman And I, Op.Cit, p.1.

46. Neti Seeta Devi, Op. Cit, Jeevita Charitra., p.238.

became an exemplary of women welfare in Andhra⁴⁷ which was viewed as the continuation of the social reform movement of Ninteenth century in Andhra.⁴⁸ Andhra Mahila Sabha was considered as the unique institution which was based on the various social welfare activities of health, medical care, nursing & education from pre-primary to college of education and also the Adult education for women, functional literary and non formal education and condensed courses for rural women.⁴⁹ Prior to Andhra Mahila Sabha there did exist some prominent women welfare organisations which undertook some welfare activities for women starting with Kandukuri Veeresalingam widow remarriage association at Rajahmundry, Hitabodhini Samaj in 1900, later Sarada Niketan, institution of orphanage and widow home at Guntur started by Konda Venkatappayya and Unnava Lakshminarayana⁵⁰, a widows home Sarada Vidyalaya started by sister Subbalakshmi in 1927 at Madras Presidency,⁵¹ and the Seva Sadan started in the year 1923 by Women's Association for the amelioration of Andhra women. The Avvai home was established by Dr. Muthulakshmi

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47. I.V. Chalapathi Rao, Life & message of Smt. Durgabai, p.3.
48. S. Sarada, Op. Cit., p.52.
49. Andhra Mahila Sabha, Golden Jubilee Souvenir, Dec. 1987.
50. Venkatappayya, K. Sweeya Charitra, Hyderabad, 1966, p.160.
51. Sister Subbalakshmi, born in Madras 1898, first woman brahmin matriculate of Madras Presidency victim of cruel childhood, started voluntary organisations for women.

Reddy⁵² for the protection of destitute girls. These voluntary welfare organisations though carried on the work of women's welfare, their activity was limited. The organisation like Andhra Mahila Sabha became very prominent as it undertook all of the women welfare schemes in the fields of health, education, training of women and provided total rehabilitation⁵³ to the needy and achieved remarkable success in carrying out success in the fields of welfare of women in Andhra.⁵⁴

An attempt is made in this dissertation to trace the need for women's welfare in Andhra in twentieth century and also deals in depth, about the contributions made by Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh towards the women welfare in Andhra. The phrase women's welfare in Andhra, is not limited to only the women in the 12 Telugu speaking districts women in 12 telugu speaking districts of Madras Presidency but also to those who belonged to the Madras city, including the Telangana women, after the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956. The study deals about some of the non Andhra women because during the second quarter of the present century, by the efforts made by non Andhra women, Andhra women were either cosponsored or co-beneficiaries. It also aims to study the time in which Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh lived and the progress of the Andhra women during this period. The life of such an illustrious lady, her early childhood, influence of Veeresalingam, Gandhiji-Malaviya

52. Muthulakshmi Reddy, Autobiography, p.81.

53. S. Sarada, Op. Cit., p.40.

54. Silver Jubilee Souvenir of Andhra Mahila Sabha, Dec.1982.

and other women social workers, her active participation in the freedom movement, during which period, the seedlings for her social work was laid are dealt in the second chapter. The level of women's education, which was in its infancy during the early years of this century in Andhra, the efforts of some of the 19th Century intellectuals, philanthropists, and women's organisations with special emphasis on Durgabai Deshmukh's conception of women's education and her efforts in promoting education from the primary to that of higher education and her unique introduction of condensed courses and functional literacy for rural women and vocational education is discussed in detail in the third chapter.

The fourth chapter deals about the multi faceted dimensions of the women welfare activities undertaken by Durgabai Deshmukh at Madras and in Andhra Pradesh, the chapter also assesses the work of complex welfare institutions established to fulfill the social needs.

However, this dissertation is a preliminary attempt to study the life and contributions of Durgabai Deshmukh to women's welfare, hence do not intend to provide a complete history of women's life or Women's Associates in Andhra, during the period under study. Due to the 'vastness' of the welfare activities undertaken by Durgabai during her life period which covers nearly 7 decades of 20th Century and the complexity of the various welfare institutions established by the by her need a separate analysis. However, the present study broadly deals with the major fields of women's welfare

activities such as education, health and training programmes and Durgabai's role in leading them.

CHAPTER II

DURGABAI-EARLY LIFE AND INFLUENCES (POLITICAL LIFE & HIGHER EDUCATION)

Early Life and Influences:

Durgabai was born in a middle class family on July 15th, 1909 at Rajahmundry, a historic town in the coastal district of East Godavari in Andhra.¹ In one of her articles entitled "the New dimensions of women's life in India", she has given a general picture of the condition of a middle class women during the early years of the 20th Century.²

"To be born into a middle class family in India at this period of national development was to be born into a secured little world where woman had her place allotted by custom and sanctified by religion. The stresses of modern life hardly touched the child born as a girl, and therefore destined to be, if lucky, taught to read and write and beyond that to serve. The men members of the family, fathers and brothers, help with household tasks, and prepare herself for the day, too soon to come.³ When the Parental nest has to be deserted and long journey to husband's home undertaken to serve the husband as his charana dasi;⁴ In such a society, only the girl born in a very affluent family could hope for university education, a still reared girl could expect to be allowed to earn her living in a profession on her own choice. To take the earnings of unmarried daughter would have been considered a sin; the idea of young wife earning

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1. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman And I, p.1.
 2. Durgabai Deshmukh, "New Dimensions of Woman's life in India" Paper presented at Duke of Edinborough's study conference in Oxford, 1956, Andhra Pradesh Archives, p.1.
 3. The Child marriage was very much in vogue in the society in those days.
 4. Charana Dasi - the humble slave of the husband.

would have been considered a slur on the earning capacity of the husband or the financial solvency of the Joint family of which they have born".

In Andhra, women remained tradition-bound and conservative and lived in a spirit of contended resignation and refrained from questioning the authority and superiority of men in the family and in society.⁵ For girls who were born in an ordinary family the higher education and active participation in public life were far off things, but with the virtues of dedication towards women's welfare in Andhra and strong determination she achieved in her life what she aspired for and also contributed to the emancipation of the women from the various ills to which they have been victims for ages in our society.

Durgabai's parents Krishnavenamma & B.V.N. Rama Rao were a great source of inspiration in her life. Durgabai, in the dedication of her book, The Stone that Speaketh⁶, to her parents wrote that "My mother was a source of inspiration to me in whatever project I had undertaken and she was largely responsible for the initial working and growth of Andhra Mahila Sabha, as its guide, philosopher, and friend. My father inculcated in me a spirit of universal love and service

5. N. Putli Krishnamurthi, Op. Cit., pp.46-48.

6. The stone that speaketh was written by Durgabai is an interesting blend of her autobiography, history of the pioneer women welfare institution such as Andhra Mahila Sabha established by her and also the diary of Cultural and social events of her life time.

by taking me to the temple, church and mosque very often and making me feed the destitutes whom he rescued".⁷

Early influences on Durgabai's life could be traced back to her early years which she spent in her maternal grandfather's home at Rajahmundry.⁸ Her Grandfather was Manohar Rao Pantulu, the first Indian to become the Superintendent of Police, and was a great friend of Veeresalingam Pantulu, the pioneer of women's emancipation movement in Andhra. When the conservative forces confronted Veeresalingam Pantulu in the persecution of the reform activities like conducting widow remarriages, propagating women's education, advocating abolition of the Davadasi System, child marriages, Manohar Rao Pantulu stood by him and helped him in the successful implementation of his reform measures, for which Veeresalingam Pantulu showed his gratitude to him in his Sweeya Charitra by mentioning that without Manohar Rao Pantulu's help most of the reform activities would not have been conducted successfully.⁹ He himself used to rehabilitate many poor women and his house was for years utilised as a free hostel for poor students, where they could complete their studies and make something of their life. One of them was Andhra's great social leader Shri B. Subramanyam¹⁰. Durgabai was greatly influenced by her

7. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.1.

8. Tara Aki Baig, "Durgabai Deshmukh", in B.N. Ganguli ed., Social Development, 1977, p.6.

9. Neti Seeta Devi, Op. Cit., pp.6-7.

10. Tara Ali Baig, Op. Cit., p.6.

grandfather's compassion, care for the helpless and she also acquired cultural vitality by studying Amarkosh and Kavyas, and learning music.

Apart from these traditional influences, somewhat common to the refined homes of South, the burning desire to become a woman activist, the courage and independence to carry on her activities came partly from her mother and partly from her father,¹¹ while her mother introduced her to Ramayana and Mahabharata, the great epics and stood by her guiding her in her women's welfare activities in later years.¹² Her father B.V.N. Rama Rao of Kakinada, a Centre of Social and educational reforms in Andhra, was a great liberal and social worker, who inculcated in her universal love and took her along with him in his social work activities and made her to feed the poor destitutes whom he rescued.¹³

At her very young age, Durgabai specialised in the fine arts like songs and instrumental music like Veena & Harmonium.¹⁴ She was an expert in floral decorations and used to take active part in the social and cultural shows

11. Ibid, p.6.

12. I.V. Chalapathi Rao, Op. Cit., p.1.

13. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.1.

14. A particular type of music instrument (Harmonium) which was called in those days as Sanipette, prostitute's box in the first half of nineteenth century but was learned by all upper caste in the later years due to the reform activities in the period.

organised by her father.¹⁵ Thus the zeal for reform and social revolution emigrated from her forefathers' time and reflected in her parents' life which was followed and fulfilled in her life time.¹⁶ She gave organisational form to the reform ideals set by the Nineteenth century intellectuals. But Durgabai became the victim of the primitive custom of child marriage and wrote in her Autobiography that the only mistake committed by her liberal father was to marry her off at the age of 8 to a Zamindar's adopted son Sri. Subba Rao.¹⁷ The fact that, her father an enlightened social worker, marrying her at a very young age was always incomprehensible to her. It shows the strong existence of conservatives in the society to which even Liberal people also had to bow down and practise it.¹⁸ When she realised the meaning of marriage at her fifteenth year, she refused to accept her child marriage and the concept of confining her mental vision and activities to the very narrow field offered by the marriage and feudal conventions.¹⁹ She successfully came out of the bond of

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15. B.V.N. Rama Rao, 'Durga Chinnanati Mutchatlu' (Childhood musings of Durga) Vijayadurga, n.d. Andhra Pradesh Archives.
16. Neti Seeta Devi, Op.cit, p.7.
17. Durgabhai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, Op.cit, p.1.
18. Tara Ali Baig, ed. 'Durgabai Deshmukh', in Social Development, Op. Cit, p.5.
19. S. Sarada, Op. Cit., p.53.

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marriage and carried out a new kind of life and career not only for herself but also for the other socially oppressed women who were prepared to come out into the wider area and utilize their potentialities, to play a vital role in India's social and political struggle for Independence. She, with the cooperation of the fellow social workers fought against the prevailing social evil and advocated the cause of women's liberation.²⁰ Durgabai's public life started very early, i.e. at the age of nine in the year 1918, she used to gather children from the neighbourhood and teach them songs and some crafts. Durgabai's urge for education started very early. She studied in the Girl's Municipal School in Kakinada upto 5th standard ²¹ and when Gandhi visited Rajahmundry in the year 1921, she was greatly inspired by his speech and the course of action suggested by him. Profoundly influenced by him, she boycotted the school where English was taught and burnt the foreign clothes and took to wearing khadi and started an institution named Balika Hindi Pathashala²² with the knowledge of Hindi, she started teaching Hindi to women besides giving them training in crafts, stitching, embroidery, spinning and teaching patriotic songs.²³

20. Ibid., p.54.

21. Baig, Op. Cit., p.5.

22. Durgabai Deshmukh, The stone that speaketh, vol.1, 1979, p.2.

23. The songs like Charka Chala Chala karlenge, Swaraj lenge, Khaddhar Ham na chodenge and many patriotic songs were sung by the inmates of Balika Hindi Pathashala. For further details see Neti Seeta Devi, Op. Cit., p.44.

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In the year 1922 prior to the commencement of Annual session of Indian National Congress, Gandhiji deputed Dakshina Bharata Hindi Prachara Sabha under Pandit Hrishikesh Sharma and his wife Smt Sarada Devi to spread Hindi in South particularly in Kakinada and the Congress Session as well as the first session of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan were to be held. Durgabhai Deshmukh showed remarkable qualities in teaching & training as many as 400 women volunteers in Hindi from Balika. Though she herself could not become a volunteer for the Congress Session, because of her underage, she actively participated in the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. The Balika Hindi Pathashala took concrete shape and became an established Institution where not only teaching of Hindi but the spinning and weaving were also undertaken. The Andhra leaders found that there were only two National Institutions in Kakinada. One is Jateeya Kalashala and the other is Balika Hindi Pathashala, which were entirely based on Gandhian principles. So they arranged for the visit of various important national leaders like Chittaranjan Das, Kasturba Gandhi, Maulana Shoukat Ali, Jamanlal Bajaj and C.F. Andrews to these institutions. They greatly appreciated the remarkable services of Durgabai who at the young age of 13, worked as the principal, teacher and the servant of the School.²⁴ Thus the school started by her at Kakinada inspired hundreds of women in Kakinada who joined her school. In later years it

24. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol. I, p.3.

conducted various examinations in Hindi like Prathamik, Madhyamik and Rashtrabhasha & Visharad and trained annually 40 to 50 women to appear in various examinations.²⁵ This famous school became the forerunner of Andhra Mahila Sabha Institutions started by her.

Since her childhood Durgabai condemned the social evils like child marriage and devadashi system²⁶ and considered Devadashi system as a reprehensible custom and when Gandhiji visited Kakinada in 1926, for the fund raising campaign, she wanted to arrange a meeting of the Devadasi women and the Muslim women who were observing the feudal Custom of 'Burqua',²⁷ with Gandhiji. She strongly believed that any change in their life & social custom can be brought in with Gandhiji's influence. With great difficulty she secured permission from the local leaders like Shri Bulusu Sambamurthy and Konda Venkatappayya²⁸. On the condition of submitting Rs.5000/- to Gandhiji, Durgabai collected the fund from the Devadasi women by propagating the ideals and greatness of Gandhiji and arranged the meeting²⁹ at a local school.

25. Ibid., p.4.

26. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.3.

27. Burqua is a veil worn by Muslim women.

28. Bulusu sambamurthi is the one of the selfless freedom fighter of Andhra, whom Durgabai held at highest esteem. Konda Venkatappayya famous Congress Leader from Kakinada.

29. It is to be noted that the Congress leaders objected to the meeting since the 'women's question' became secondary to the nationalist struggle. For details see Muthulakshmi Reddy, Autobiography, 1964.

Gandhiji was impressed by the organisation of that meeting and addressed them advocating the abolition of devadasi system and reform among Muslim women and propagated the constructive programmes for the emancipation of women. Durgabai translated the speech of Gandhiji into Telugu, which led her to become the official interpreter of Gandhiji in his later tours to Andhra.³⁰

Following Gandhiji's visit a change had come about among the Devadashi's who started reforming their way of living in Kakinada and married their daughters to the boys who are bold enough to face the social censure.³¹ She organised processions in the streets of Kakinada against wife beating and the oppressive attitude of menfolk towards their wives. She also raised her voice against the enforced widowhood and the cruel & barbarious custom of tonsure of women on the death of their husbands. Even the young women were subjected to this brutal custom. She first opposed this practice at home when her mother attained widowhood on her father's death and that inspired several women in the neighbourhood.³²

Durgabhai's Political Life

Though Durgabai's contribution to the National Movement in Andhra started much earlier by implementing the

30. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.5.

31. Ibid., p.5.

32. Ibid., p.6.

constructive programmes propagated by Gandhiji, her active participation in the National Movement started in 1930, during the Salt Satyagraha Movement.³³ She has never been a member of any political party, but as an individual, she was profoundly moved by the National Movement, inspired by Gandhiji. Among the Andhra leaders, Durgabai held Tanguturi Prakasham and Bulusu Sambamoorthi in higher esteem.³⁴ The former was called as Andhra Kesari, i.e. Lion of Andhra, a selfless national leader, sacrificed his career and wealth to the cause of National Movement.

When Gandhiji called for Salt Satyagraha against the Salt tax imposed by the Britishers, though no women had been included in Gandhi's chosen volunteers at Sabarmati, Sarojini Naidu joined the Salt March becoming the first women to participate in Civil disobedience Movement.³⁵ Many provincial Congress Committees resolved to launch Satyagraha. The movement was headed in South India by C. Rajagopala Chari, who launched Satyagraha at Vedaranyam.³⁶

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33. Durgabai Deshmukh's letter to Prof. Caldwell, Australia National University, dated 23rd February 1974, State Archives, Andhra Pradesh.
34. Oral History Transcript of Smt Durgabai Deshmukh, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, Teen Murthy, pp.13-14.
35. Vijay Agnew, Elite Women in Indian Politics, 1979, p.40. It is to be noted that Gandhi's Dandi March included only men volunteers and he explained to women that they are not needed for this March because they are to be protected and not to be put to hardships.
36. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman & I, p.10.

Andhra leaders like Tanguturi Prakasham and Kasinadhuni Nageshwara Rao chose Chiralo in Andhra as venue for Satyagraha activities. Durgabai thought Madras would be the right place to launch a mass movement. So she met Prakasham and persuaded him to do Satyagraha at Madras, and thus became responsible for the historic decision of selecting madras for Satyagraha.³⁷ She wrote a letter to Gandhi asking for the permission to do Satyagraha, and indicated that, even if the permission is refused, she would go ahead to take part in the Satyagraha, he was compelled to give permission to her. After Tanguturi Prakasham and K. Nageshwara Rao were arrested, Durgabai became the leader and instructor of Salt Satyagraha in Madras Presidency.³⁸ She spearheaded the movement by organising public meetings, processions all over the presidency facing lathi charges. She also toured many cities like Arani, Chittoor, Arcot inspiring many people to participate in the campaign.³⁹ Wherever she addressed the public meetings, people listened to her spell bound and followed her in the processions. Lord Canningham the then Police Commissioner of Madras, after seeing her indomitable courage called her "Lioness Durgabai".⁴⁰ Later she was arrested and imprisoned at Vellore Jail. During her

37. I.V. Chalapathi Rao, Op. Cit., p.8.

38. Oral History transcript of Durgabai Deshmukh, Op. Cit., p.14.

39. I.V. Chalapathi Rao, op. cit., p.8.

40. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.11.

imprisonment she came in contact with other women political prisoners of the jail and listened to their life histories. Thus she realised the need for and the importance of education for women and the handicap of illiteracy.⁴¹ She decided to take up laws as her profession in her future life in order to, do justice for women in legal matters⁴² and resolved to devote her life to help women in overcoming their handicaps. She revolted within the Congress Committee against allowing the British to adopt a divide and rule policy through the differential treatment of political prisoners by categorising them as A,B,C class prisoners, when she herself was allowed to be a 'A' Class Prisoner, she voluntarily chose 'C' class in prison and in this regard she passed a resolution in the Congress Committee meeting at Guntur. She was arrested again in the year 1933 and was kept under Solitary Confinement at Madura Jail, in a Cell next to the gallows. She suffered with bouts of hysteria due to bad food and the agonising cries of the criminals to be hanged. She revolted against the Jail authorities about the worst treatment meted out to women prisoners. Her health was badly affected after a term of imprisonment and was advised by doctors to retire from active politics and asked her to follow some occupational therapy.

41. Durgabai Deshmukh's Acceptance Speech on the occasion of the presentation of Nehru Literary Award, New Delhi, March 14, 1973, p.2., Andhra Pradesh Archives.

42. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.11.

Then she decided to pursue her studies. The life in jail inspired her to educate herself and emancipate the womenhood in Andhra.

During her imprisonment and political participation, she came into contact with many women leaders like Smt. Ashar of Gujarat, Shri Nityananda Banugo of Orissa, Sister Sardadevi, Kutti Amma of Malabar and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya of Karnataka, Vedantam Kamala Devi, Rukmini Lakshmi pathi and others.⁴³ She worked for sometime as the volunteer in the Hindustan Sevadai run by Smt. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and Dr. N.S. Hardika at Bombay.⁴⁴ Durgabai worked in the Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust and became the trustee and organised the collectionn of funds in Andhra.

Higher Education:

Durgabhai decided to educate herself at the age of twenty four, after a long gap caused by her public work and her participation in the national movement. After her release from Madurai Jail, she resumed her studies which had stopped after 5th Standard. She realised that with the elementary education she could never achieve self fulfilment. She felt that unless a woman is educated and self reliant, she would become the subject of oppression. She also realised that unless she could equip herself completely she cannot be able

43. Neti Seeta Devi, Op. Cit., p.140.

44. Ibid., p.103.

to do anything worthwhile for the socio--economic development of the nation and for emancipation of the womenhood. While she was in jail, she learnt English alphabets from her fellow prisoner Rukmini Lakshmipathy; with great enthusiasm & zeal for knowledge she withstood all the hurdles, economic and social, especially the discouragement of the political leaders who asked Durgabai to resume her political work. However she decided to persue her studies with the help of Shri Goparaju Ramachandra Rao,⁴⁵ better known as Gora. Under his able guidance she appeared for the written examination conducted by the Banaras Hindu University. During her studentship under Shri. Gora, she also devoted some of her time to Social reform activities, with the help of Shri. P. Satyamurthi & Gora she successfully conducted some widow remarriages at Kakinada.⁴⁶ In the year 1934, she appeared for the Banaras Hindu University entrance examination for matriculation studies as a private candidate. This paved the way of her higher studies in Banaras Hindu University which was headed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, a famous educationalist. After passing the entrance examination, she joined the University to study matriculation as a regular student with the financial help in the form of studentship given by Malviyaji.⁴⁷ She successfully passed the matriculation. During her stay in the

45. Gora was a great Atheist and Social worker, worked for the upliftment of the untouchables and a teacher by profession. He was the first guru of Durgabai and guided her in her early educational ventures.

46. Neti Seeta Devi, Op. Cit., p.141.

47. Oral history transcript of Durgabai Deshmukh, Op. Cit., p.6.

hostel of the University she participated in many cultural activities and also raised her voice against the severe social security measures taken by the hostel authorities. Durgabai had great admiration for the personality of Pandi Malaviya and his great educational building activities.

In her great tributes to Malaviya in later years,⁴⁸ she stated that she owes whatever she became in her life to the Banaras Hindu University. She wrote in her Autobiography that "If Gandhiji inspired her in starting the Balika Hindi Pathashala in early twenties in Kakinada, it was the inspiration, I got from Madan Mohan Malviya in Banaras Hindu University that formed the basis of launching upon the construction programmes for Andhra Mahila Sabha's buildings in Madras in forties".⁴⁹ Eventhough she held highest esteem for them, she never hesitated to differ with them on various issues. She even embarked upon her own course of actions, when situation arose,⁵⁰ contrary to her council. For instance, when she passed her higher education contrary to Gandhiji's appeal to continue her political activities. Later when Gandhi visited Banaras Hindu University to give prizes for the Inter Varsity Hindi elocution competition she won the praise of Gandhiji for her determination in continuing her studies.⁵¹

48. Durgabai Deshmukh, "Homage to a great soul" in Prajana (Telugu), n.d. Andhra Pradesh Archives.

49. Durgabai Deshmukh, Op. Cit, p.13.

50. I.V. Chalapathi Rao, Op. Cit, p.18.

51. Neti Seeta Devi, Op. Cit., p.

In another incident, she refuted Malaviya's decision too. After she finished her intermediate, she decided to do her B.A. in Political Science, Malaviyaji did not allow her to take that subject as it was taught only in men's colleges and he was totally against women being taught Political Science. So Durgabai, decided to leave the University and however kept her admiration and adoration for Malaviya.⁵² She recalled once that "It is wonderful thing even to fight with a big man".⁵³ Durgabai held Malaviyaji as her ideal in building the various educational institutions at Madras and Hyderabad and she was greatly inspired by Malaviya's constructive ability and the raising of funds for building various institutions.⁵⁴ Durgabai left Banaras Hindu University and went to Waltair in Andhra to join the Andhra University. The Andhra University when gave her the doctorate in the year 1960 mentioned in the Award citation that "Durgabai was one of the great women studied in our University, and she is the sincere practical idealist. The Educational Institutions and the training centres established by her were not only imparting education to them but also inculcating in them the great feeling of self confident".⁵⁵ At Andhra University she met the principal of the University Dr. C.R. reddy to seek the admission in B.A. honours in Political Science. C.R. Reddy hesitated to give

52. Oral history transcript of Durgabai Deshmukh, Op. Cit, p.10.

53. Ibid., p.10.

54. Ibid., p.10.

55. For details, see, Neti Seeta Devi, Op. Cit, p.157.

the admission to her because of her Political background and expressed his inability to enroll her in the University since there was no hostel accommodation for women. Durgabai took the initiative of the construction of hostel for women and gave advertisement in the local newspapers inviting the girl students to join the hostel, which received good response and ten girls applied for admission. As she started arranging for girl's hostels,⁵⁶ her prompt, pragmatic approach forced the authorities to open a women's hostels.⁵⁷ Thus she became responsible for the opening of the Women's hostel in the Andhra University just as Ragupati Venkatarathnam Naidu was responsible for the formation of the Andhra University. During the formation of the Andhra University, she divided her time for studies, active participation in the extra curricular activities and fund raising campaign for local Mahila Sabha. When elections to provincial Assembly were held in 1937, Andhra Leaders including Prakasham wanted Durgabai to contest but she preferred to continue her studies,⁵⁹ in the year 1939, she passed her B.A. (Hons) Examination in Political Science and Constitutional History⁶⁰ with first division. When she faced financial difficulties, she welcomed the help rendered by her teachers Shri.Gora & Prof. Mamidipudi

56. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.14.

57. I.V. Chalapathi Rao, Op. Cit., p.19.

58. Neti Seeta Devi, Op. Cit., p.160.

59. I.V. Chalapathi Rao, Op. Cit., p.19.

60. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.14.

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Rangaiah, Shri Bulusu Sambamurthi.⁶¹ Thus in such a short period, to achieve educational honours without proper financial assistance was an achievement in itself. But in addition she got Tara Scholarship to pursue her studies at the London School of economics and also a seat in the Inner Temple to study law. But she could not avail these opportunities since the second world war broke out by that time. She therefore joined Law College in Madras and took the degree of Bachelor of Laws in 1941. She was called to the bar in December 1942.⁶³ She took up Criminal Laws as her specialisation and successfully dealt with many criminal cases. Gandhiji in 1944, honoured Durgabai, with goldmedal at a function of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha for her remarkable service to the Sabha.⁶⁴ The public life of Madras especially her struggle for the cause of women was not lost much due to the 'study leave' she had taken. While she was a student of Law college, she started a Women's Association which by her constant efforts developed itself as a premier Women's service Institution not only in the City of Madras but in the whole presidency. This institution had started as a Children's club, "named the Little Ladies of Brindavan" at Madras in 1937. by 1938, it merged in Chennapuri Andhra Maha Sabha, started by Andhra residents of Madras, like M.V. Subba

61. Ramalakshmi Arudra, Durgabai Deshmukh, p.15.

62. Tara Ali Baig, Op. Cit., p.14.

63. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.14.

64. Tara Ali Baig, Op. Cit., p.15.

Rao, Kashinathuni Nageshwara Rao, Tangaturi Prakasham, and Bulusu Sambamurthi.⁶⁵ The women section of the Andhra Maha Sabha under the leadership of Smt. Durgabai felt that they should function as an independent body and thus started the Andhra Mahila Sabha.⁶⁶ This catered to the interest of women in the fields of Social, educational, economical and cultural needs of women.⁶⁷ The Sabha also provided, instruction and training to women in order to harness their services in building the nation and the womanhood.⁶⁸

65. S. Sarada, Op. Cit., p.5.

66. Karen I, Leonard and John G. Leonard, 'Social Reform, and Women's Participation in Political Culture, Andhra and Madras -In Extended Family, Ed., Gail Minault, Delhi, 1981, p.22.
Freda Bedi 'Voluntary Social Service- In Tara Ali Baig, Women of India, Delhi, 1958, p.227.

67. Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, Op. Cit., p.13.

68. Ibid., p.49.

CHAPTER - III
WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN ANDHRA -
CONTRIBUTIONS OF SMT DURGABAI DESHMUKH

Education is the crucial and basic factor for the development of Society. No progress in Society will be possible unless women, who constitute half of the population are also educated. The concept and progress of women's education has undergone various changes in the past years. During the eighteenth century and in the early years of the nineteenth century, women's education was totally neglected. The development of women's education is linked with the perception of their status and role within the Indian Society.¹ Woman occupied a very low status in the early modern Society in Andhra. Lack of educational facilities, child marriages, prohibition of widow remarriages, prevalence of Devadasi system, polygamy and various other social evils that existed in the society were responsible for her low status. For a long time, life of the girls was simple and unsophisticated, and rudimentary knowledge acquired from her mother or village school was considered enough to manage her home, rear children and cooperate with her husband in the household.² The plight of Andhra women during that period was clearly depicted by a contemporary writer "deprived of all

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1. Neera Desai and Maitreyi Krishnaraj, Women and Society in India, 1987, p.148.
 2. Putli Krishnamurthy, Changing Conditions of Women in Andhra, 1987, p.46.

education, confined within the four walls of house, seeing little of the world and knowing little of it, immersed in superstition and opposed by custom, our women, to our shame be it said, are no better than slaves".³ Thus their state of glorified slavery was the result of their ignorance directly resulting from the lack of education. When general education was very scarce in Andhra, the female education was more so⁴ strong opposition by the orthodox section existed in the society against the female education. The chief obstacles in the way of women's education were child marriages, fear of 'sex unbecoming', general reluctance of parents, lack of need for their earnings from public services, co-education, male oriented curriculum, ignorance of women, old customs, the superstition that an educated girl would become a widow and social prejudice.⁵

The serious efforts for raising the status of women in Society and various other measures for the promotion of women's education took their roots in the nineteenth century. Various activities of social and religious reform associations, missionaries, western educated intelligentsia, and the government were aimed at the progress and emancipation of women. They attributed the backwardness of women to lack of education, and found it as the main stumbling block in carrying out the social reform activities. In Andhra, the

3. V. Ramakrishna, Social Reforms in Andhra, Delhi, 1983, p.89.

4. Ibid., p.90.

5. Y. Vaikuntham, Education and Social Change in India: 1880-1920, Madras, 1980, p.122.

two agents, the christian missionaries and the local educated intelligentsia took up the lead in promoting women's education. Colonial Government took little interest in promoting women's education. The conservative attitude of the Government was in tune with the general attitude of the officials who considered women's education a forbidden area to enter. Christian missionaries became the pioneers of women's education in Madras Presidency, Westleyan Mission, the American Mission and other Missionaries opened various schools in the presidency. They started boarding and 'zenana' schools.⁶ Girls schools were established in various parts of Andhra by Roman Catholic Mission, Baptist Mission, Free Church/Mission, Luthern Mission, Evangelical Luthern Mission etc., to teach girls secular, religious and vocational courses. In addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, they were taught subjects like geography, English Grammar, fancy plain needle work and in some schools, subjects like knitting, sewing, house work, gardening, lace work, embroidery, etc. were taught.⁷ In these early missionary schools, only children of Hindu converts sought admission. Upper caste Hindu women upto the end of first quarter 20th century kept away from them, due to fear of proselytizing activities of the christian missionaries.

In spite of the serious handicap, due to hostile public opinion, the missionaries continued their educational activities till the early years of the 20th century. Another

6. Ibid., p.123.

7. Ibid.

section which contributed to the women's education in Andhra in late 19th century was the 'elite' group of local people from northern Circars of Andhra.⁸ A school for the education of Hindu girls in 1861, established by Smt Janakiamma, a school at Vizagapatnam for Rajput and Brahmin girls by Maharaja Vijayaram Gajapati in 1868, a girls school started by Rajah of Pithapur in the same year at Kakinada,⁹ clearly shows the efforts of the local people to promote women education in Andhra. The Western educated intellectuals of 19th century in Andhra took up the propagation of women's education as part of their social reform activity. They wanted to educate women so that she can perform her role as good wife and mother and inculcate in her the ideals of 'chastity' and 'morality', two 'noble virtues' which are prescribed only for women in the society. Strong opposition to the education of women was voiced by the orthodox sections led by Kakkonda Venkataratnam. Veeresalingam, who was the pioneer of the cause of women's uplift in Andhra, countered the attack of the orthodox people and 'established a girls school at Dhowlesharam in 1874'.¹⁰ He campaigned vigorously for women's education, through the columns of Vivekavardhini, and Satihitabodhini, the journals started by him. Veeresalingam started lower secondary school¹¹ appendage to widows home at

8. V. Ramakrishna, Op.Cit., p.92.

9. Ibid., pp.92-93.

10. Ibid., p.93.

11. Dantu Padmavati, "Telugulo Streela Patrikalu - Samskartala Dhripadam" in Proceedings of XII Andhra Pradesh History Congress, 1987, p.182.

Rajahmundry. Though he provided separate schools for girls, he encouraged coeducation of girls and boys. Veeresalingam also founded day schools for adult woman and provided vocational education at widow's home at Rajahmundry. His wife Rajyalakshmi served as teacher in widow's Home.

The period also witnessed the emergence of various women journals like Hindoosundari started by Balantrapu Seshamma, Telugu Zenana Patrika edited by Rayasam Venkatasivudu, Anasuya edited by Vinjamuri Venkataram, which were for the propagation of women's education. Apart from the journals, some useful tracts¹² published in the early period advocated female education. They are P. Lakshminarasamamba's Mahila Kalabodhini, M. Venkaiah's two tracts Stri Dharmabodhini, and Stri Vidya Pancharatna vishayamu, M. Balakrishnamurthy's Balika Hitabodhini, R. Venkatasivudu's Elements of Domestic Economy and Veeresalingam's Collected Works, Deharogyabodhini (1889), Patni Hitabodhini. Though these books no doubt emphasised the need of women's education and propagated the relevance of education for women they voiced the same opinion that the purpose of this education was to reinforce the ideal role of Hindu women as a mother and nurturer in serving her husband and family.

12. V. Ramakrishna, Bibliographical Survey of Women and Social Reform in Andhra, Proceedings of XI Andhra Pradesh History Congress, 1986, p.181.

By the end of the 19th century, Government started functioning of the 'Zenana' schemes of education. Mixed Schools were common in Andhra, the Government took effort to bring the female educational institutions under the supervision of Inspectresses gave stimulus to the progress of female education.¹³ Normal schools were established at various parts of Andhra.

Thus as a result the philanthropic work of early Christian missionaries and local educated intellectuals' reform efforts, women's education in Andhra, rapidly developed.

By the end of 19th century, as many as 17,913 girls were studying in primary schools over several districts in Andhra. Except in Anantapur district all other Telugu districts had one or more middle schools. The total number of middle schools in Andhra were 51 with a strength of 545 pupils. There were no women's colleges in Andhra till the end of 19th century and the Higher education was mostly confined to Eurasians and 'native' christians due to the social prejudice of Hindus and Muslims in Andhra.¹⁴

In the early years of the 20th century, religious fervour gave way to rationalistic principles. The attitude in the minds of people had changed. For the sake of employment,

13. Y. Vaikuntham, Op.Cit., p.54.

14. Ibid.

parents were getting their daughters educated. Voluntary action got a big boost in the early 20th century. Organisations for women had began and justified in terms of providing an environment in which women raised in a sex segregated society could speak and act with some degree of autonomy.¹⁵ The early organisations were mainly local 'native' bodies. In 1899, a meeting was held under the auspicious of the local reform association at Vijayawada discussed women's education and passed a resolution urging the Government to take extreme steps to promote female education.¹⁶ In the year 1901, A. Kaleeswara Rao, a Congressman of repute, established a 'Balika Pathashala' at Bezawada with the assistance of Bandaru Atchamamba, a prominent social worker and he started one more school. 'Victoria Memorial Balika Pathashala' in the year 1903 at Nandigama.¹⁷ As mentioned earlier Veeresalingam started Victoria Pathashala and established separate schools for girls in the year 1907. The efforts of the male reformer were supported by the work of the progressive women in the early years of 20th century Andhra.

A number of women's Associations¹⁸ emerged in the early decade of the present century. The earlier women's

15. Geraldine Fable, "Indian Women Movement", in Gail Minault, ed., The Extended Family, 1981, pp.344-50.

16. V. Ramakrishna, Op.Cit., p.97.

17. Putli Krishnamurthy, Op.Cit, p.67.

18. For detailed information about the women's Associations in Andhra, See V. Ramakrishna, Op.Cit, pp.97-100.

in Andhra, See V. Ramakrishna, Op.Cit, pp.97-100.

associations are local in nature. They discussed the issue of women's education and other issues relating to women. Such organizations are Local Reform Association of Vijayawada (1899). The Arya Bala Samajam at Endagandi (1904) Brindavanapura Stree Samajam, established by Bandaru Atchamamba and Oruganti Ratnasundari at Machilipatnam (1902). Stree Bharati Samajam of Vishakapatnam (1905). These associations gave importance to women's education in their meetings and stressed the need for it. The women's association, which were exclusively meant to spread women's education like Hindu Girls Education at Bellary Stree Vidyabivardhinee Samajam (1907), propagated women's education. The first All Andhra Women's Conference organised at Guntur in 1910 by P. Lakshminarasamamba,¹⁹ laid emphasis on female education, and pleaded for the inclusion of vocational education alongwith general education in the curriculum and suggested the starting of at least one school in each district. The newspapers and the journals gave much needed propaganda through their columns to these associations. Thus in the early years of 20th century itself a new kind of awareness developed among women in Andhra leading them to the path of women's moment in consecutive periods. The efforts of the private enterprise in promoting women's education was encouraged by the Government indirectly by giving grants and assistance to them. In the year 1904 it took a number of measures for the spread of women's education like the establi-

shment of model primary schools for girls at important centres increasing of staff inspectresses.²⁰ The grants in aid system was revised in 1905-06. The Government also encouraged 'Zenana System', the home education for women in Purdah.²¹ These schools were recognised as the feasible alternative to education in a school. The Zenana Schools were conducted only at few places like Rajahmundry and Vizakhapatnam and were meant for particular section of women in Society. This could not bring any remarkable success, hence they helped in slowly breaking the social stigma attached to the female education.²² Progress in the rate of female literacy is the significant development of women's education in the first decade of the 20th Century Andhra. The percentage of female literacy had increased from .48% in 1901 to 2.91% in 1911.²³ In 1911-12 there were 432 schools for girls with 27822 pupils. Krishna district topped the list of Andhra districts with 92 schools and 5979 pupils followed by Godavari, Guntur, Ganjam and Vizakhapatnam.²⁴ Kurnool district comes last in female literacy level. Out of the total school for girls in Andhra, 108 with 11,301 pupils were under Government, 2 schools with

20. Y. Vaikuntham, Op.Cit, p.94.

21. Ibid., p.97.

22. Ibid.

23. Census Report of India, Madras Part I, 1911.

24. Y. Vaikuntham, Op.Cit., p.98.

224 pupils were under municipal boards, 54 schools with 2,778 pupils were under local boards. 202 schools with 10,935 pupils were unaided.²⁵ These figures clearly show the tremendous transformation of the women education in Andhra from a state of stagnation to that of great development. The increasing number of the enrolment of girls in the 'mixed schools' or co-educational institutions was another remarkable feature of the first decade. But female education was mostly confined to elementary education during this period.

Further progress in women's education took place in the second decade of twentieth century. The Government's grants were liberally released to the aid of local boards.²⁶ Some efforts were made to promote the secondary education among girls. As a result of the grants, scholarships, and the stipends released by the government of India and the Madras Government, new schools were opened in Andhra areas and the number of teachers were also increased.²⁷ Even though the private efforts were continued during this period. The private institutions were decreased.²⁸ There was an increasing growth of the public demand of more facilities for women's education continued to express their demand for education by forming associations and voicing their views through journals. The Women's India Association was

25. Ibid

26. Ibid., p.94

27. bid., p.95

28. Census of India, Madras 1931, Vol XIV, Part I, p.121.

established in 1917 by Mrs. Annie Besant with its branches in Andhra at Rajahmundry and Vijayawada gave further impetus to the women's education in Andhra. Several districts and local conferences held during this period had taken up the issue of women's education in their meeting and conferences.²⁹ The question of female education received special attention in the Godavari District conference in 1914.

The various caste associations, like the Vishwa Brahmin Association (1905) Kamma Association (1910) Arya Vaishya Association propagated spread of women's education among their caste girls in their conferences. The plea for greater facilities for women's education was also made by several journals in Andhra during this period.³⁰ The journals like New India, Hindu Sundari, Manava Seva, Grihalakshmi, Balika, Savitri, Haindava Vanita Patrika, Vivekavati etc. published articles on women's education and provided considerable scope for women's upliftment.³¹ An article published in Hindu Sundari stressed the need for taking as much interest in the education of girls as is done in the case of education of boys and Manava Seva in one issue expressed the view that the female education should be conducive to the

29. V. Ramakrishna, Op. Cit., p.99

30. N. Subramanyan, ress And Nationalism in South India Andhra, 1905-1932 Madras, 1982, p.132.

31. Y. Vaikuntham, p.Cit., p.124

progress of both men and women and of entire country.³² Thus popular view was raised for the need of women's education in Andhra and the demand for establishment of more schools in Andhra districts. Various schemes of Central and Provincial Governments to improve the level of women's education did not meet with good results due to the lack of encouragement from the people. The 'natives' were not in favour of imparting English education for women in Andhra.³³ The lack of female teachers, was another reason for this slow progress. By 1921, there were 1,111 elementary schools in Andhra with 63,201 pupils, then there was an increase of 377 schools and 18574 pupils over the preceding decade.³⁴ Krishna district which had 148 schools with 11,628 pupils continued to top the list, followed by Guntur, Godavari and Nellore.³⁵ The Government had 921 Schools with 12,767 pupils, Municipal Board Schools 75, with 4355 pupils and the Local Boards which took up the lead during 2nd decade of this century had 646 schools with 30,109 pupils. There were 242 aided schools with 14156 pupils, 17 unaided school with 601 pupils. The member of secondary school rose to 11 and pupil to 1171 in Andhra.³⁶ This shows that the secondary education is still in its inceptional stage in Andhra. During the second decade of the

32. N. Subramanyan, Op.Cit., p.132

33. Y. Vaikuntham, Op.Cit., p.104

34. Ibid., p.95

35. Ibid., p.99

present century, there was more of consolidation of secondary education than of quantitative progress. No college for girls existed till 1920 in Andhra districts,³⁷ but few girls attended boy's college. However due to the prejudice of the Hindus against sending girls for higher education, the higher education was mostly confined to Christians and Anglo Indians. The curricula taught in Secondary schools consisted of domestic science, child care, health, house management, plain needle work.³⁸ The education, which was mainly home oriented aimed at making women as competent housewives, widened its scope and extended to the social and political arena in later years. A number of radical intellectuals argued for the type of education which would develop women's personality. Access to various scientific theories from the west served to reinforce the belief in women's uniqueness, if not their inferiority.³⁹ The intellectuals wanted to liberate women from various social evils and train them through education not only as competent wives but also as intelligent companions in the struggle for independence. They felt that the women, the 'mother deity'

36. ibid.

37. ibid.

38. The report on Public Institution in Madras Presidency for the year 1911-12. Vol I. March 1913, p.118

39. Neera Desai and Maitreyi Krishnaraj, Women and Society in India, Op.Cit, p.150.

should be liberated and educated to the extent that she moulds her son as a great patriotic soul and yet confine herself within the contours of oppressive role and basically perform the traditional domestic role in subordinate position.⁴⁰ The people's attitude towards women's education also changed during this period. The upper and middle class parents to meet the demands of western educated men, started sending their daughters to schools and train them as prospective brides. The poor girls were attracted by the scholarship afforded by the Government and joined schools to substitute their family income.

As the national movement under the leadership of Gandhi intensified and spread to Andhra many nationalist educational Institutions came to be established. Women actively participated in the non-cooperation movement in Andhra. Many women from Andhra Pradesh established organisations and Mahila Samajams to carry on the constructive programme advocated by Gandhi.⁴¹ National educational Institution were started in Andhra both by men & women. Many such educational institutions established by progressive women were started on

40. Atluri Murali, Social Change and nature of Social Participation in National Movement in Andhra, 1905-1934, Unpublished thesis, no.1985, p.534.

41. Putli Krishnamurthy, Op. Cit., p.307.

this nationalist basis. The Balika Hindi Pathashala established by Durgabai at Kakinada, Karaguri Seetamma's middle school at Babatha, Ponaka Kanakamma's Kasturba School at Nellore in 1923, the Sarada Niketan started by Unnava Lakshmibayamma at Guntur, were examples of such schools.⁴² Though the higher education was very low, as many as 385 girls enrolled in various colleges⁴³ of Madras Presidency. Attention was also paid in the fields of Teacher Training and Medical profession, for women in Andhra. Government provided many incentives, By 1927, 31 women studied medicine and 1523 women were trained in teaching profession.⁴⁴

Womens education showed remarkable development in the last two decades of colonial Andhra. social prejudices in Society were slowly withering away giving way to the increasing evolvment of the girls in the schools - The awakening caused during the nationalist struggle, and the rise in the age of marriage of girls brought by Child Marriage Restraint Act of

42. Ibid., p.44.

43. The Colleges	No. of Students enrolled
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1. Madras Christian College, Madras	193
2. Queens Mary's College, Madras	123
3. Presidency College, Madras	55
4. Noble College, Masulipatnam	2
5. P.R. College, Kakinada	4
6. U.R. College, Nellore	6
7. Arts and Science College, Rajahmundry	2

(Source: The Report of Education in Madras Presidency, 1924-25, Madras, 1926, p.45.

44. Putli Krishnamurthy, Op. Cit, p.

1929, enabled girls to remain longer in schools and opened up the prospects of higher education for them in Andhra. The period also witnessed the phenomenal increase in the awakening of the Indian womanhood. The All India Women Conference of 1926, began as a crusader of more and better education for women. Education enabled women to champion their rights and bring about an all sided upliftment of their fellow women.⁴⁵ The new awakening had its repercussion in Andhra also. Educated women in Andhra desa were Duvvuri Subbamma, Mangali Annapurnamma, Unnava Lakshmi Bayamma, Achanta Laxmipathi Dronamraju Laxmi bai, Durgabai who actively participated in the national movement in Andhra. Stalwarts like Muthu Lakshmi Reddy, Kanuparti Varalakshamma, Ammana Raja, Dauri Subhadra and Yamini Purnatilaka raised their voice in support of the suffrage for women and the reform in the customs and practice of marriages.⁴⁶ The progressive women in Andhra also established various voluntary organisations during this period. The noteworthy among them are Kasturi Vidyalaya established by Ponaka Kanakamma, to provide education and employment opportunities to the economically distressed women in Andhra. The Guild of service established by Mrs. Walker in Madras in 1923, had its branch in Andhra at Nellore, Vizakhapatnam and Nandigama provided adult education to women. The Seva Sadan established in 1923 at Madras extended its services to Andhra areas and established home for the aged and

45. S.D. Maurya, Women in India, 1988, p.64.

46. Putli Krishnamurthy, Op. Cit, p.305.

children of Andhra, and Andhra Mahila Sabha, established by Durgabai Deshmukh in the year 1939 to promote the education of women in Andhra.

Through these Associations and their social work brought out revolutionary attitude among the people by expressing the need of women's education and the total development of her personality. No doubt the education developed in women a new sense of freedom and new values of life and created increasing opportunities for constructive work and old prejudices yielded place to new enthusiasm in society, but the nature and content of the education were mostly irrelevant to the needs of women. The increasing number of the enrolment of women in Andhra in the educational Institutions merely shows the quantitative increase in the education than the qualitative improvement. "Without quality mere quantitative expansion is not only the waste of meagre economic and social resources but constitutes almost illiteracy unemployment and other undesirable outcomes."⁴⁷ The voluntary organisations have been playing a significant role in improving the quality of the education and taking various educational programmes to keep pace with the magnitude and diversity of problems facing the women's education. Many of the voluntary organisations especially the womens organisations had done yeoman service in the field of women's education in organised or unorganised ways in the pre

47. M.V. Rajagopal, Perspectives in Education, Hyderabad, 1972, p.VI.

and post colonial Andhra. Many organisations have vanished in course of time due to the lack of funds and other reasons. Very few organisations had still continuing their services in this field. Prominent among them is Andhra Mahila Sabha established by Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh. Durgabai, felt the need for imparting a type of education which stimulate women's imagination, develop their intellectual artistic and practical talents and lead them to a lasting sense of service. 'The institutions established by her are sensitively geared to serve the pressing needs of women to functionally improve their abilities so that they can serve the society better.'⁴⁸ Durgabai's clear vision of needs of women, especially the downtrodden women, and her clear perception of the education of women resulted in the formulations of various educational schemes and building up of multiple educational institutions for women in Andhra. Hence the contributions of Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh towards women's education for Andhra women through the Andhra Mahila Sabha, are so vast and magnitude, needs a detailed analysis.

Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh's Contribution towards Women's Education

"Every one must be aware of the valuable services rendered by Durgabai as the Chairman of the National Committee on Women's Education, which she herself organised having realised that true education and knowledge is the

48. Pradipto Roy, 'The Humane Institutionalising of Social needs' in B.N. Ganguli ed. Social Development - Essays in Honour of Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh, New Delhi, 1977, p.38.

foundation for all progress in every sphere of human activity. Hers is a life of devotion to a noble cause representing 'Sakti' the power and energy in women for doing good to the country".⁴⁹

Dr. Muthu Lakshmi Reddy.

Shri. Durgabai Deshmukh was a greater crusader of women's education. As a Chairman of National Council for Girl's and Women's Education in the year 1959, she made practical recommendations which would meet the real needs of women and girls, particularly those belonging to the poorer sections of the society.⁵⁰ She helped in the establishment of the State Council's for women's education in the Central and state budgets and managed to have women's education in the country and persuaded the government to start more and more vocational and technical courses for women in proportion to the demands of the society for their employment. She also fought for greater allocation funds for women's education taken up as a special programme. Durgabai perceived a changed, dynamic role for women as demanded by the changing needs of the society and advocated "A fuller development of her personality". She holds the view that a nation cannot progress if women remain backward and in moulding the society of the future girls and women have special responsibility. She adds that women must play a major part in ensuring the stability which is essential in periods of rapid social and economic change. While

49. Andhra Mahila Sabha, Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1962, p.157.

50. Chitra Naik, "Planning for Women's Education and Development", Durgabai Deshmukh Memorial Lecture, 1989 - Andhra Mahila Sabha, Hyderabad, 1989.

emphasizing the continuation of traditional values, Durgabai tells that "besides upholding traditions, women have also to play their part in the economic, social and spiritual development and thus be made conscious of national and international situation, for all this they require an education which stimulates their imagination, develops their intellectual, artistic and practical talents and leads them to a lasting sense of service".⁵¹ Durgabai firmly believes that the contribution of a woman to her family, to her country, and to human society as a society as a whole is as important as that of a man. Besides it is the right of every girl that she should have the opportunity to express her individuality and aspirations by taking up whatever career her aptitude and interests lead her to. It is therefore of utmost importance that women should also have as good, varied and comprehensive a general education as boys and men together with a suitable professional or vocational education which would enable them to develop their faculties and lead a full life.⁵² In order to increase the participation of women in trade, commerce, and social services, Durgabai stressed the alterations in the content of education to enable the increasing participation of women in trade, commerce and social service. In this regard she feels that "education, training and employment should be as closely linked as possible".⁵³ While suggesting the

51. Durgabai Deshmukh, "Women as Full Partners", Social Welfare, September 1974, p.10.

52. Ibid., p.10.

53. Ibid., p.11.

change in the curricula for girls education. Durgabai said that "in view of the extreme backwardness of women education, we must expand the women's education and it should be suitably modified."⁵⁴ Her conception of curricula is somewhat innovative. She felt that at primary stages, the need of the boys and girls are alike and hence curriculum should be identical. When a girl comes to middle stage, which is the terminal change for most of them it is necessary to give them useful grounding to take up some suitable vocation.⁵⁵ She advocated the introduction of diversified courses suitable to girls like fine arts and home science, so that girls can get gainful employment easily after the completion of the secondary school.⁵⁶ A number of welfare Institutions established by Durgabai at Madras and Andhra Pradesh functions on these lines. Durgabai's name is indissolubly connected with the Andhra Mahila Sabha, which was founded in Madras, duplicated in Hyderabad and multiplied in various other districts of Andhra Pradesh, which made outstanding contributions to the progress of women's education. Among its various activities for the welfare of women and children, it is education that came to occupy a place of priority.⁵⁷

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., p.10.

56. Ibid., p.11.

57. Mr. Venkatarangayya, Andhra Mahila Sabha - A Profile, Monograph, August 15th 1970, Andhra Pradesh State Archives, Hyderabad.

The genesis of "Andhra Mahila Sabha" can be traced back to 'Makinada' where, Durgabai started an institution, "Balika Hindi Pathashala" in the year 1922, which helped women to write, understand and speak Hindi and trained them in Khadi and other handicrafts. This probably was the first crash programme in functional literacy⁵⁸ for women:⁵⁹ Thus at the very young age of twelve, Durgabai started her career in social reconstruction.

This "Pathashala" became the forerunner of the "little ladies of Brindavan" a club for women and children, which Durgabai started in Madras city in the year 1937. It was mainly a cultural association of girls and women. Later on the advice of Sri Bulusu Sambamurthi, the then President of "Channapuri Andhra Mahasabha". The club became the women's and children section of the 'Sabha'. As Durgabai felt that most of the activities of Sabha were tailored to suit the needs of men, she established separate Association for women, called "Andhra Mahila Sabha" in the year 1939.⁶⁰ Since Durgabai established various educational institutions at Madras, Hyderabad and other Telengana districts, which imparted education for girls of Primary, Secondary and Higher

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58. The literacy which imparts training for work, later introduced by Durgabai in various parts of Andhra Pradesh.
59. Pradipto Roy, The humane Institutionalising of social needs in B.N. Ganguli (ed.), Social Development-Essays in Honour of Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh.
60. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.28, Delhi 1987, p.17.

levels. In later years, she widened her scope of educational activities. As she firmly believe that women resource should be thoroughly utilised in the human resource development and education should enable women to participate actively in the process of economic development, Durgabai felt that non formal education is an effective way to bring the 80 per cent illiterate rural women into the purview of literacy, who were either ignorant of the literacy programme or deprived of education throughout their life, due to various reasons like economic, social etc. Thus besides establishing various formal educational institutions for girls, Durgabai formulated various adult non formal and functional literacy policies and successfully implemented them. In this chapter, I discuss in detail the services rendered by Durgabai to promote the formal educational institutions situated at Madras and in Andhra Pradesh.

MAHILA VIDYALAYA AT MADRAS

'Mahila Vidyalaya' which Durgabai used to refer as the Mother Institution⁶¹ - came into existence in the year 1939. Initially Durgabai started short term courses for adult women, who were socially and economically handicapped, destitute or deserted, women who left the school at early stages.⁶² Durgabai's life in jail awakened in her the need and

61. Andhra Mahila Sabha Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

62. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, Op. Cit., p.18.

importance of education for women⁶³ from free life stories of her fellow prisoners. She realised the handicap of lack of education and since she resolved to devote her life to help women overcome this grave handicap. The Mahila Vidyalaya prepared the adult neo-literates, privately for the matriculation examination conducted by Banaras Hindu University. The Banaras Hindu University, was perhaps the only University in India at that time which permitted the Matriculation and other examinations which offered home science, mathematics and science.⁶⁴ The 'Vidyalaya' sent its first batch of students in the year 1942, and achieved good results. This course continued till 1980. The Vidyalaya coaches private women candidates for the Matriculation examinations of Andhra University and Pre-University Course of University of Punjab.⁶⁵ Very recently in the year 1987, the coaching for Degree courses under Open University system was started. The Vidyalaya successfully sending one hundred girls for Public examinations every year. Nearly two thousand students passed out of Institution since its inception and many of them in jobs.⁶⁶ The Vidyalaya also started a regular

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63. Durgabai Deshmukh, "The Mission of Literacy, Monograph, State Archives, Hyderabad; Also see the text of Dr. Durgabai's acceptance speech on the occasion of Indian Adult Education Associations 1971s, Nehru Literacy Award on March 4, 1974, State Archives, Hyderabad.
64. Andhra Mahila Sabha, Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.
65. S. Sarada, Andhra Mahila Sabha - A Study in Welfare Administration, Unpublished Thesis submitted to Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1982, pp.141.
66. Andhra Mahila Sabha Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

school for boys and girls upto 8th standard, recognised and aided by the Government of Tamil Nadu. The school imparts education both in Tamil and Telugu. Durgabai started one Primary School called 'Nageswar Sisuvihar', with the land donated by Shri Nageshwara Rao,⁶⁷ in the year 1956. The school opened for the children of working class parents of economically backward families living in the slums, it served as a 'Balwadi' a day care centre for children below five years and as a primary school upto V standard for children below five years. Durgabai constructed one hostel called 'Mallamma Devi Mahila Mandiram', for the benefit of the women coming from outside of the city to join Mahila Vidyalaya. The library called 'Chinnamamba Vidya' Mandiram was also constructed in the Andhra Mahila Vidyalaya premises, at Madras. The Vidyalaya stated vocational training for the poor and needy women weaving, dying, printing and book binding, which provided them the opportunity to earn their livelihood.

Durgabai, as a part of women and child welfare activities, started one residential school for physically and mentally retarded children in the year 1960. A number of children passed out from this school went to higher studies and some were totally rehabilitated and provided employment in

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67. K. Nageshwara Rao, Popularly known as 'Doshodharaba' was a great social worker and worked as the editor of Andhra Patrika.
68. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.I, Hyderabad, 1979, p.25.

the 'Sabha' itself.⁶⁹ These Durgabai's early educational activities aimed at the total rehabilitation of women and children than to provide mere school education.

In Andhra Pradesh

The formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956 paved the way for the Andhra Mahila Sabha, taking up welfare schemes for women and children of the state and especially in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Later Durgabai extended her activities to the other districts of Andhra Pradesh. Durgabai concentrated mostly in the field of adult education for women. She started Mahila Vidyalaya at Hyderabad in the year 1959, to impart a condensed course of education for adult women. Till now, 20 such courses have been conducted.⁷⁰ Initially, the pupils were trained for Osmania Matriculation and later when it was abolished, they were trained for the S.S.C. examination.⁷¹ Those who sought admission were either widows, or destitutes or housewives who could not complete their education for some or the other reason.⁷² The courses were financed by the Central Social Welfare Board through State Welfare Advisory Board. Apart concentrating on adult women education, Durgabai established Primary school in

69. S. Sarada, Op. Cit., p.141.

70. Andhra Mahila Sabha Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

71. S. Sarada, Op. Cit., p.142.

72. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.18.

the year 1963 in premises of Andhra Mahila Sabha. It was named as Sisuvihar, it became a part of Mahila Vidyalā. The Sisuvihar is conducting classes for L-kg and U-kg and classes I to IV.⁷³ Total strength of the school was ranging from 75 to 200. In later years it has been servicing as the practice school for teacher trainees of Andhra Mahila Sabha's College of Education.⁷⁴ A model upper primary school was started in the year 1963 and became a full fledged high school for girls in 1967 aided by the Government.⁷⁵ So far 21 batches of tenth class students have been sent to SSC Public examinations. The medium of instruction is Telugu and the school got a brilliant academic record.⁷⁶ Durgabai in her autobiography stated that "today we can confidently say that our Higher Secondary School is well established and considered to be one of the best schools in the twin cities"⁷⁷. The school instituted various prizes and medals to encourage the latest talents among the students, and besides socially useful productive work, the government selected this school for vocationalisation of education at school level to provide education and training for inculcating a positive attitude towards work and for giving opportunities of work experience in the vocational

73. Andhra Mahila Sabha, Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, p.25.

77. Andhra Mahila Sabha, Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

courses of Health and para Medical Care, House wiring, domestic appliances and knitting and garment making, darning Laundry and dry cleaning.⁷⁸ Thus the school fulfilling the services of imparting education as well as the training the girls to certain employment opportunities.

Durgabai extended her educational activities to the other districts of Andhra Pradesh. She concentrated mainly in the backward areas of Telangana, where general education is very rare and female literacy is still more worse. She established a high school at Sangareddi, Medak district. The school was aided and recognised by the Government. The school was named as Gandhi Centenary School as it was established as a part of Gandhi Centenary celebrations conducted by Andhra Mahila Sabha.⁷⁹

Durgabai extended her educational activities to Delhi. She established Andhra Educational Society, at Delhi which was the northern counterpart of Andhra Mahila Sabha.⁸⁰ During her stay in Delhi as the legislator of Constituent Assembly, Durgabai found that there were nearly 700 Andhra families in Delhi in the year and Andhra children had no scope of being taught in their mother tongue, even from their pre primary

78. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, Hyderabad, 1980, p.26.

79. Andhra Mahila Sabha, Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

80. I.V. Chalapathi Rao, Durgabai Deshmukh Life and Message, Hyderabad 1983, p.32.

stage of education.⁸¹ Durgabai started the school for Telugu children at her residence which was located at Canning lane at Delhi. Her mother Krishnavenamma became the first Telugu teacher of the school.⁸² Later with the cooperation of then eminent Andhra people like Dr. P.Narasimhayya, Dr.P.Viswanath, Dr.Dakshinamurthi and others, organised proper classes with the strength of 20 children in the year 1950, with the help of Madras Educational Association.⁸³ She started one more school with the strength of 15 children, at Lodhi Colony, where Andhra people live in majority. The school was opened both for girls and boys. Later she acquired the site from Delhi Administration, with the fund given by her client Smt. Kasturi Satyavatamma. She constructed Andhra Educational Society, near Karol Bagh, New Delhi in the year 1954. Durgabai later expanded its building with the grant given by Tanguturi Prakasham,⁸⁴ the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Delhi Administration, other philanthropic institutions and donations from selfless donors and Central Social Welfare board. The diversified activities of the 'Society' were Sisuvihar and primary and middle school extension activities, Telugu medium, Andhra Matric class, Prakasham Memorial shields, the middle school and the higher secondary school at

81. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, p.125.

82. Ibid., p.126.

83. Ibid., p.127.

84. Tanguturi Prakasham, well known as 'Andhra Kesari' was one of the freedom fighters of Andhra Pradesh.

Karol Bagh.⁸⁵ The higher secondary school though conceived as telugu medium school in 1952, in later year thrown open to all children irrespective of caste, creed or language.⁸⁶ It earned a distinction by becoming one of the top three higher secondary schools in Delhi⁸⁷ and won many distinctions in both curricular and extra curricular activities.

Higher Education

Durgabai Deshmukh firmly advocated the promotion of the higher education for women. She ascribed the non availability for women intellectuals, and able women leaders, to the lack of higher education.⁸⁸ While opposing the popular view of many people that girls should be taught domestic science only, and not the other subjects like Mathematics, Science, Economics to prepare them for better housewives, Durgabai says that "the aim of all our women is not to remain as housewives only, many of our girls wants to pursue their studies in the subjects like arts, science & technology. Some others like to enter into traditional professions in the fields of education, health and social service."⁸⁹ She felt the need for establishing additional colleges to fulfil the changing needs

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85. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, p.130.
86. Ibid., p.130.
87. Ibid., p.132.
88. Durgabai Deshmukh, 'Women as full Partners', Op. Cit, p.11.
89. Durgabai Deshmukh, 'Higher education for Women', unpublished monography - Literacy project, Andhra Pradesh State Archives, Hyderabad, n.d.

of the educated women. Durgabai holds a view that 'education is not an end in itself but only means to an end, the ultimate end being the community's good.'⁹⁰ She says that every women has a duty & responsibility to make her contribution in building up a worthwhile community of which the nation could be proud of. She adds that educated women have a greater responsibility in wiping of the illiteracy among women, particularly among rural women⁹¹. Durgabhai Deshmukh envisaged various programmes for the promotion of literacy among women like the functional literacy programmes, and established scores of college, and training institutes to propagate the higher education among women in Andhra and other areas through Andhra Mahila Sabha, an exemplary in the field of women's education and other welfare activities. Andhra Mahila Sabha is running two women's colleges, one is imparting general education, and other for Professional Training⁹². The former i.e., the Arts and Science college for women was started in the year 1968.⁹³ Andhra Mahila Sabha at first started evening classes for working women in the year 1966, but later due to the increase in the strength and the progress of the classes started condensed course institution, recognised by Osmania University, and with the financial aid from the Government grants, University Grants Commission, and

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. S. Sarada, Op. Cit., p.143.

93. Andhra Mahila Sabha, Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

various other Philanthropic organizations and the doners, Durgabai built the campus of the Arts and Science college with accommodation for its Library, Laboratories, lecture halls and hostels for the students. The college offers arts, commerce and science subjects with intermediate and degree courses'. by 1985-86, the college also provided the Indoor & outdoor games to the students and the National Service Scheme has been effectively implemented⁹⁴ and the college is progressing academically well in the twin cities of Hyderabad & Secunderabad. The college of Education was established by Smt. Durgabai in the 'Andhra Mahila Sabha' Campus in the year 1971 to train women as a professional teacher and thus make them 'economically self-sufficient and culturally elevated'. Durgabai in her autobiography writes that "It was a dream of mine from a very early stage that the whole system of education should be a continuous process, providing for complete chain of opportunity, under which a girl joining in the nursery stage of education in Andhra Mahila Sabha, after completing the middle, secondary school and the graduation, should end her academic career after getting the degree of Master of Education'.⁹⁵ The college was recognised and aided by Osmania University. Its strength is limited to 100 and admission is on the basis of an entrance examination.⁹⁶ The

94. Ibid.

95. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, p.70.

96. Andhra Mahila Sabha, Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

college has had a distinguished academic record with 90 to 100% passes in University examination. The college has been launching a number of innovative and experimental projects like tutorial guidance, remedial reading, improvisation of apparatus, training in educational technology, case studies etc.⁹⁷ The college is the first in the State of Andhra Pradesh to introduce 'work experience' as an integral part of the curriculum.⁹⁸ Experimental projects like kitchen, gardening, maintenance of equipment, crafts, and file making are essential, it also involves the students in the manufacture of socially useful products like candle sticks, incense burning sticks (Agarbattis) cleaning powder & phenyle.⁹⁹ The college have the unique privilege of imparting best possible ways of teaching and learning, which in turn hastens the growth in learning and helps the teacher trainees with a right attitude towards the profession. As Miss. K. Lakshmi, Principal of the college rightly sums up "nearly two thousand trained graduate teachers have left the portals of the Institution with a spriti of commitment and zeal and also with the necessary confidence to stand on their own feet in the world of challenges".¹⁰⁰ Thus it rightly cherishing the goals of the founders of the college Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh.

97. Ibid.

98. S. Sarada, Op. Cit, p.143.

99. Ibid.

100. K. Lakshmi, College of Education, Hyderabad, Andhra Mahila, Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

Another remarkable college started by Durgabai was 'Sri Venkateswara College' at Delhi. After establishing the Andhra Educational Society at Delhi to serve the primary and secondary educational needs of Andhra children, Durgabai thought of starting one college at Delhi to promote the higher education for women. After successfully persuading the Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam for issuing grants, Durgabai with the help of her colleagues Dri.K.L. Rao and P.V.Rao and with the above comradeship of Dr. Chintaman Deshmukh, build Sri Venkateswara College of Andhra Educational Society's premises in the year 1961,¹⁰¹ where functioned for 10 years and later shifted to its own building near Dhaula Kuan and affiliated to Delhi University.¹⁰²

NON FORMAL EDUCATION AND FUNCTIONAL LITERACY FOR WOMEN IN

ANDHRA - DURGABAI'S CONTRIBUTION

The most baffling problem confronting India is the problem of mass illiteracy developmental process demand the mobilisation of all available educated and trained man and women power. Very recently the trend in the women's education emphasises the need to develop all human resources men as well as women for the development of society.¹⁰³ But most grave

101. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, Op. Cit., p.130.

102. Ibid., p.131.

103. Karuna Ahmad, Social Context of Women's Education in India, 1921-81:Tentative Formulations, Occassional Paper on history and Society, no.VI, Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi.

problem in the field of education is that wastage which is mostly due to the drop outs in educational institutions. The proportions are more in rural areas and more among girls than boys. The reasons for the drop outs are mostly economic, social and educational, inspite of the massive outlays on formal education. Since independence, mass illiteracy still prevails in India. By increasing formal educational facilities it is not possible to spread literacy to the largest proportion of population especially women, in the rate of drop outs among girls remain unabated. Though the population of the girls at primary school level is quite impressive, very tiny percentage of girls are pursuing higher studies. The majority belongs to urban areas because of the availability of better educational facility and concentration of most of the educational centres. Domestic customs, or financial problems and most of the taboos and traditions had succeed rural girls out of the scope of the educational at primary levels itself. Besides the curricula offered in most of the formal educational institutions was not relevant to the lives of the women, mostly rural women. Apart from this formal educational system has already reached a stage, where it is not possible to educate the adult women, who are both economically and socially backward in the society. Therefore the best attendance to combat these problems was the non-formal system of education. Non-formal Education is the organised provision of learning opportunities outside the formal system, covering a period of the life time and

programmed to meet the specific needs - remedial, vocational, health and welfare, civil and political or for self fulfilment. The curriculum takes into account on the local conditions, local culture and local language while imparting education and it is modified from time to time to suit the needs of the education was realised by the Government and the Indian Education Commission as it states that "The Formal Educational System was to be supplemented by a planned programme of non-formal and informal education both to make education available to all people in the state and the country as promised by the article 45 of the constitution". The Central Social Welfare which was set up in 1953 under the Chairmanship of Smt.Durgabai Deshmukh, established rural extension project in rural areas. Various state social welfare boards were established.

The provisional state council of Andhra pradesh which was established in the year 1961, took up the task of promoting the education of girls at various kinds and providing the adult and vocational education for women. But inspite of all these measures, the literacy rate of women in Andhra is very low. According to 1971 Census the female literacy rate is 23.25%. Even though the state assumed full responsibilities among rural women, the problem still persists widely in rural areas. The non formal educational programmes can best be handled by the voluntary organisations especially in rural areas. For this ability to recruit the personnel and the ability to build up quick rapport with the local bodies

like Panchayat Samitis as well as clientele with whom they have to work, voluntary organisations are best suited to take up the non formal and functional literacy programmes in rural areas. The familiarity with the local dialect, and the knowledge of the local traditions and the problems of rural people enables them to carry on the programmes ably and efficiently.

Voluntary institutions have always played a significant role in the development of education in our country. According to survey conducted by Central Social Welfare Board in 1964, there were 12,000 voluntary welfare organisations serving the orphans, the destitutes, widows etc. Andhra Mahila Sabha founded by Durgabai belongs to the same group. Durgabai's clear vision of comprehensive development for the women and downtrodden has resulted in so many facets of activities of Andhra Mahila Sabha, the greatest contribution being in the field of non formal education for women. As the need for the non formal educational system was as a remedy in solving the problems of education of girls and rural women. Durgabai decided that Andhra Mahila Sabha should undertake such programmes and thus help the eradication of illiteracy as the first step in socio-economic development.¹⁰⁴ The inspiration for taking up the Non formal Education came to 'Sabha' in the year 1960, as a sequel to the spelling out of the concept of Functional literacy in the conference of

104. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, Op. Cit, p.79.

Education Minister at Teheran in Iran in the year 1965, conducted by UNESCO.¹⁰⁵ The concept of 'Functional Literacy' which was finalised by the World conference of Education Ministry reads that "Rather than an end in itself literacy training, consisting merely in the teaching to read and write should be made an opportunity for acquiring information that can immediately be used to improve living standards. Reading and writing should not only lead to elementary general knowledge but to training for work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civil and a better understanding of the surrounding world and should ultimately open the way to basic human culture".¹⁰⁶ After conference, UNESCO appointed an International Liaison Committee for eradication of illiteracy in the world, to take steps to implement the Functional Literacy Programmes in developing countries. Durgabai was appointed as the Member of International Liaison Committee.¹⁰⁷ As a member, Durgabai pointed out the need for implementing such programmes in India. Durgabai organised a Seminar on the 'Eradication of Illiteracy' UNESCO' contribution to the World Programme with special reference to India in the year 1966 at Hyderabad. The Seminar was attended by 72 delegates, including some Central and State Government

105. Andhra Mahila Sabha, 'Literacy House', an unpublished Monograph, Andhra Pradesh Archives, n.d. p.1.

106. Durgabai Deshmukh, 'The Mission of Literacy', Op. Cit, p.2.

107. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.43.

Officials.¹⁰⁸ Durgabai discussed the issue of Literacy and the type of projects to be undertaken. Soon after the Seminar Durgabai started Action Oriented Programme. She selected Shadnagar block of Mahabadsnagar district, which was a backward area, where mass illiteracy prevails. Among the Southern states Andhra Pradesh comes last in the literacy levels. Female literacy is worse still, worst being the rural masses.¹⁰⁹ Compared to the Andhra' districts the Telangana districts, which were under 'Nizams' rule prior to the formation of Andhra Pradesh, have low level of literacy rate. Durgabai correctly pointed the need for implementing functional literacy programme in the block selected 30,000 farmers and farm women between the age group of 15-45.¹¹⁰ The Shadnagar experiment as it is popularly known as the starting point of Durgabai's services of such pioneering demonstrative and experimental service in promoting rural based Functional Literacy programme, through this 'experiment the 'Sabha' trained nearly 1000 young illiterate farmers and farm women.¹¹¹ Whereas a part of National Literacy Programme, the Government of India allotted 5 Literacy Projects to Andhra

108. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, p.81.

109. S. Sarada, Op. Cit, p.145.

110. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, p.82.

111. 'Functional Literacy' A brief note on the Workshop, Monograph dated 28th January 1976, Andhra Pradesh State Archives; also see Andhra Mahila Sabha - Literacy-House, a Monograph, Andhra Pradesh Archives, n.d, p.2.

Pradesh. The State government entrusted the projects to Sabha. Later the Sabha extended the functional Literacy to 5 more districts of Andhra Pradesh. Till 1980, the Sabha successfully covered 10 districts of Andhra Pradesh namely, Mahaboobnagar, Kurnool, Chittoor, West Godavari, Hyderabad, Nalgonda, Guntur, Karimnagar, Warangal and Vishakhapatnam.¹¹² By 1979, on the projects in 10 block successfully complete the target of making 47,000 young illiterate adults, adult farmers functionally literates in 2085 centre.¹¹³ Though the Functional Literacy Programmes achieved great success in several areas of Andhra, no special programme was created specifically to study women's needs and aspirations. Durgabai felt the need of envisaging such programme for rural women and started an innovative and pioneering programme called 'Non Formal Education for Rural Women.

NON FORMAL EDUCATION OF RURAL WOMEN IN ANDHRA

Non Formal Education of Rural women in Andhra was the another innovative and pioneering work undertaken by Smt. Durgabai. She found that in spite of the high rate of illiteracy, rural women, are taking part in an agricultural operations, she felt that given an opportunity to acquire literacy skill, they would be in a position to further improve their capacity to make greater contribution to the nation.¹¹⁴

112. Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, pp.84-86.

113. Andhra Mahila Sabha, 'Literacy House', Op. Cit, p.3.

114. Durgabai Deshmukh's Presidential Address on the occasion of the inauguration of the project for Non Formal Education for Rural women, Pathancheru, Medak district, 29th September 1975, Andhra Pradesh Archives.

With the financial assistance given by 'Freedom from Hunger Campaign Scheme' of Delhi, Durgabai started the above project through Andhra Mahila Sabha. The project was meant to train the rural women in Andhra in various processes of agricultural operations, starting from the preparation of the field and ending with the harvesting and even marketing. Durgabai introduced the project at 25 villages in the Shadnagar block¹¹⁵ of telangana area. In Andhra Pradesh: The rural women between the age group of 15-45 were selected, and the training programmes were successfully implemented for a duration of 2 1/2 years. Four graduate women were given intensive practical training in Agricultural operation for six months who worked as Farm women instructors, each instructors and educated 30 farm women in each village by practical and personnel demonstrations in modern methods of agriculture. During the training period, day to day problems and family life were also discussed. Nearly 1500 farm women were trained through this programme and were in a position to read, write and take down notes.¹¹⁶ Durgabai, then with the above assistance of Smt. Geeta Naidu, trained women through this project to enable them to increase the methods of cultivation. This project was the only one of its kind introduced anywhere in India.¹¹⁷ The visible attitudinal change brought about by

115. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, p.97.

116. Ibid., p.98.

117. Ibid., p.99.

this programme was the literacy became the need by women who participated in the programme. Inspired by the experience of successful implementation of this project Durgabai launched another project "Non formal education and Training in Agriculture and Family life. The 'Literacy House' of Andhra Mahila Sabha undertook the 'Project' with the financial assistance provided by the World Literacy, Canada, during the International Year of women in 1975. The interesting feature of this project is that it was managed by women.¹¹⁸ The project was planned for 2 1/2 years and implemented in two blocks, viz. 'Ganapavaram' in West Godavari district, a highly irrigated area, and at 'Pathancheru' of the Medak district, the area specialising dry crops. The overall objective of the project was to provide non formal education and training for rural women, and other projects area like to motivate the rural women to appreciate new values and practices, in the matter of health, nutrition, child care, home economics and techniques of agriculture through demonstration (The project utilised media of Audio visual education, communication and group dynamics).¹¹⁹ Five organisers were appointed to each block to be in charge of five villages each. Each organiser formed groups of 30 women in each village and the number of villages covered was 25 in each block per year and 3000 women

118. Durgabai Deshmukh's Presidential Address on the Occasion of the Inauguration of the Prospect of Non Formal Education for Rural Women, Op. Cit, p.2.

119. S. Sarada, Op. Cit, p.152.

drawn from 3000 households directly participated in the project over a period of two years. 'One healthy feature of the project was that more was built in evaluation. It assessed the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (K.A.P.) of rural women. In order to evaluate the impact of the programmes of project¹²⁰ two areas, one area covered by the project and the other area which is not covered by the project were compared: A perusal of the evaluation reports of the project indicates an overall 30% increase in the effectiveness of rural women in the Project area. Increase in the K.A.P. among rural women in project area was fourfold compared to others.¹²¹ The project covered 1500 rural women in 25 villages in Andhra Pradesh.

Integration of Functional Literacy with Family Welfare

Durgabai, from the beginning was in favour of well integrated programmes, of family welfare, health and population education within the framework of functional Literacy Project.¹²² Durgabai felt that the linking up the Health and Family Welfare programme with Literacy programme may act as incentives to the women and attract large number of women to attain the benefit of the literacy.¹²³ With her undaunted spirit and perseverance, Durgabai prevailed on the

120. Ibid.

121. Ibid.

122. Ibid., p.153.

123. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, Op. Cit., p.100.

Health Ministry during the early 70's to take the 'Package Programme' linking the family planning health workers with the literacy workers, so that they could serve as the health education promoters of the rural community, with the emphasis on mother child health.¹²⁴ The Health ministry sanctioned Five 'Auxiliary Nurse and Midwives' (ANM's) in each block on experimental basis, later after seeing the success of the programme, further sanction was given.¹²⁵ The Andhra Mahila Sabha itself trained and provided the ANM's needed, thus, providing employment opportunities for the trainees, soon after their completion of training.

In Sabha's Regional Handicrafts Training Institute, it imparted craft-training to literacy workers and also to ANM's.¹²⁶ The experiment proved very successful. But due to the lack of funds from Government, Sabha discontinued this programme. Another successful programme undertaken by Durgabai was the programme of 'Continuation of education for nonliterate's through ANM's'.¹²⁷

The Andhra Mahila Sabha imparted continuing education to 30 non literate farmers of Karimnagar block in the institute of Adult and Social education. It also conducted courses for the urban, semi literate housewives belonging mostly to middle

124. S. Sarada, Op. Cit., p.153.

125. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, p.100.

126. Sarada, Op. Cit, p.154.

127. Ibid., p.155.

class.¹²⁸ The Sabha started printing the reading material and also follow up literature for the benefit of the neoliterates.¹²⁹ Through the literature, which was in local dialect, covers the subjects covering irrigation, farming, health, family planning and cropping pattern and pest control etc. Sabha through its 'Literacy House', conducted written workshops, on the issues of social awareness. The Sabha conducted 3 workshops especially women writers, who wrote on social awareness, topics relating to women's problems like "Manam Marali" (we should change), 'Pillala Pempakam' (Child care) etc. And many more issues relating women's problems.

All these measures of printing follow up literature helps the women to read and write the literature, maintains her newly acquired literacy, and prevents the danger of relapsing into illiteracy.¹³⁰ The functional and non formal educational programmes started by Durgabai greater acclaimed by the government as well the public and was given the Nehru Literacy Award in the year 1973 for her outstanding contributions to the Adult literacy. The Literacy House, established by Smt. Durgabai still carries out this multipronged attack on illiteracy, started by Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh.

128. Ibid., p.155.

129. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, p.88.

130. Ibid, p.89.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER WELFARE MEASURES

Durgabai Deshmukh is a woman of remarkable ability and resourcefulness. About the women's educational programmes, Durgabai undertook various welfare measures for the upliftment of women. She gave a major thrust to women's welfare activities in the fields of health, rehabilitation, and training with her pioneering work. As a chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board, she worked for the separate department of women's welfare, as she felt that the problem of women needs a separate and careful solution and undertook¹ various schemes to revolutionise social welfare work in India, a field in which she had unrivaled competence.¹ Durgabai gave institutional form to the changing needs of the women and the main beneficiaries of the social institutions established by her were on women and children who were predominantly drawn from the middle and lower class sections. The complex of the welfare institution called Andhra Mahila Sabha at Madras and in Andhra Pradesh was considered as the institutional reflection of her life.

1. C.D. Deshmukh, The Course of my Life, London, 1974, p.237.

It is well known that all over India, there is a network of institutions which renders services to the needy, the destitutes and the discarded section of population, especially women. The traditional approach to welfare work was to provide the minimum needs of shelter, food and clothing. This policy of charity continued with little or no hope for future. Besides, the rehabilitation and help measures given for a short period were not much helpful to their needs. Andhra Mahila Sabha is a substantial deviation from the traditional approach of charity. Its founder president Smt. Durgabai Deshmuh never believed in mere providing charity to women to make them more dependent and helpless. She undertook the challenging process of educating and training women to find employment and make them economically and socially independent. Durgabai undertook various welfare measures in various parts of Andhra, in particular and India in general. With the changing pattern of families and economic conditions, there is a widening range of problems affecting women's welfare. The problems are vast and complex. The change for the betterment of women's condition can only be brought with a long term realistic approach to women's problems and practical implementation of welfare programmes; Durgabai with a clear perception of the women's needs, moulded her welfare activities according to the changing needs of women. Durgabai's able contributions in various fields of women's welfare like rehabilitation, health, family planning, and training measures are vast and varied and hence need a detailed description.

RESCUE AND REHABILITATION:

The efforts to provide rescue homes and rehabilitation centre for the widows, dependent, neglected and destitute women who are in moral danger have been undertaken by a number of philanthropists, intellectuals and voluntary organisations in the colonial and post colonial periods. The government also made some efforts to remove the social disabilities of women by enacting most of the laws and legislations. The after care services or the rescue & rehabilitation services were successfully undertaken by the Government and voluntary organisations. The Andhra Mahila Sabha, started by Durgabai Deshmukh, primarily resolved to undertake the rescue and rehabilitation of the needy women. Durgabai perceived the need of an institution which would give protection to those destitute women who are deprived of their families and dejected by the extended families. In some cases of women, where no one came forward to sign as guardians, Andhra Mahila Sabha took up the guardianship and provided them succour and shelter. Durgabai never believed in providing mere charity which made them more dependent on the other hand she wanted to induce in them self esteem and self-sufficiency by providing education and training, and make them to join the mainstream of life once again.² Durgabai undertook the rehabilitation programme for the needy women from the year

2. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol. I, Hyderabad, 1979, p.49.

1940, as many number of women started coming to Sabha for their livelihood. Durgabai, by seeing the pitiable condition of the poor women, opened some sections in the Sabha like spinning, binding, handmade paper, tailoring, embroidery, bamboo, cane work and mat weaving at Madhavbagh, near Luz corner, Madras. With the grants given by Maharaja Vikramadeva Varma, Durgabai constructed one shed and equipped it with sewing machines etc. Many women joined the industrial unit and earned their livelihood. Durgabai started one 'Parisramika Sakha' (The Industrial Section) at Madras. This section serves for both the training and production unit. This unit was constructed with the grant given by Rani Rajyalakshmi, and started the tailoring, embroidery and weaving classes with 20 students.³ Durgabai inducted 20 war widows and destitutes into the Sabha on the request of Government and trained them in the Industrial unit. The printing press was added to the Sabha in 1953. A number of women and children were given training in printing, composing, book binding etc. The industrial unit of Madras trained and rehabilitated nearly 60 women until 1968,⁴ after that it shifted its activities to Hyderabad and was named as Regional Handicrafts Training Institute. While in the composing and Printing section of the press, the semi literates and technically trained women were employed, the binding section was given to the generally poor, widowed, deserted and

3. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, Hyderabad, 1979, p.41.

4. Andhra Mahila Sabha dicentennial Souvenir, 1968.

destitute women to learn and earn for themselves and they were given a stipend of Rs. 45/- per month which was very low. The learners-cum-producers of this Mahila press belonged to the socially lower classes and they printed 'Andhra Mahila.' a Monthly magazine of the Sabha and even today also it caters the needs of the outside agencies. The handicrafts section trained nearly 120 women at Hyderabad. But all the training cum production units of the Sabha except Mahila press closed down due to the under utilization of the services caused by the lack of technical knowledge of the organisers. Though its contributions were limited, it provided selfless services and rehabilitation to the needy and poorer section of womenhood.

HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING

In a perfectly adjusted society, health is an indispensable factor and in any integrated programme of women's welfare, health measures play a great role.⁵ The health of women is the most neglected area in the colonial India. The lamentable lack of personnel and the institutions for carrying out the health measures, high rate of maternal mortality and morbidity due to the insufficient and inefficient medical services and inadequate, and systematic data to study the women's health status, affirms the above mentioned fact of negligence of women's health. In Andhra, women's health was largely neglected in the pre-colonial

5. Hannah Sen, (ed.) Problems of Women's Welfare in Social Welfare in India, Delhi, 1955, p.57.

period, very rudimentary and primitive medicines were provided to women. This is largely due to the prejudices against the western medicine and the existing low status of the Andhra women which is interlinked with the new. The figures mentioned below show the disparity between the men and women population of Andhra region. The figure taken from 1931 census, gives a broad picture of variations between the male and female population.

Percentage-wise

District	1901		1911		1921		1931	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Visakha- patnam	49.4	50.6	49.0	51.0	48.9	51.1	49.1	50.9
Godavari(E)	49.2	50.8	49.1	50.9	49.0	51.0	50.6	49.4
Godavari(W)	54.3	45.7	54.1	45.9	52.1	47.9	54.3	45.7
Guntur	50.5	49.5	50.5	49.5	50.5	49.5	50.6	49.4
Nellore	50.3	49.7	50.1	49.9	50.3	49.7	50.1	49.9
Cuddapah	50.6	49.4	50.8	49.2	50.9	49.1	51.0	49.0
Kurnool	50.5	49.5	50.4	49.6	50.7	49.3	50.8	49.2
Bellary	50.8	49.2	50.6	49.4	51.0	49.0	50.8	49.2
Anantpur	51.3	48.7	51.3	48.7	51.5	48.5	51.4	48.6

Source: The Census Reports of the relevant periods.

The figure in the above mentioned table shows the slight variations in the percentage between the male and female population among Andhra districts. Decline of the female population in Andhra districts can be attributed to the increasing death rates among women due to sub-consciousness neglect of the girl child, the cautious preference to the male child and most importantly the increasing maternal mortality and child morbidity. In almost all the states of Indian Union, welfare activities for the care of mother and child are coming into existence. Many voluntary organisations started undertaking measures to promote the health of mother and child.

Durgabai undertook programmes for women's health in the year 1950. Under her leadership, the Andhra Mahila Sabha of Madras started providing the creative, preventive, diagnostic and therapeutic treatment for and women children in particular and also for the public in general.⁶ The medical services in maternity and child health (MCH) and rehabilitation health and family welfare programme of the Sabha which were started at Madras spread in Andhra Pradesh in later years. A small health clinic in Madras, started as an out patient clinic in the year 1950 by Durgabai, was popularly known as "Andhra Hospital". The hospital was well equipped

6. S. Sarada, Andhra Mahila Sabha. Study in the Social Welfare Administration, Unpublished Thesis submitted to Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1982, p.156.

with labour and surgical theatre with 86 beds. It has in-patient and out-patient services in the field of maternal and child care. As Durgabai felt the intensity of the deteriorating health conditions of women, she introduced basic medical services like anti natal and post-natal care. The hospital provides not only curative but also the preventive services. The preventive side is given high priority through early diagnosis screening of high risk expectation mothers, aseptic and safe labour through in-patient care and follow up and after care of women of reproductive age-group, specific protection is given to women and children by immunisation programme, Nutrition supplementation and promotion of contraception.⁷ To correct the morbidity of the children, nutritional morbidity screening is conducted. At Madras nursing home, the children of the poorer sections are immunised against all possible infections including whooping cough and tetanus. The nursing home at Hyderabad was established in the year 1962. It also undertook the services of curative and preventive health services, but unlike the nursing home in Madras which charges nominal price for the services, the Hyderabad Nursing Home charges more for all the medical services and these services are available to the middle class sections of the society. The nursing home at Madras is mainly catering to the needs of the poorer classes. At both the nursing homes general nurses and Auxilliary nurse mid-wives are trained to provide health measures for the rural women. Hence, both the nursing homes are successful in

7. Ibid., p.157.

undertaking several health measures such as 1) general care for women, children and men (Hyderabad only); 2) gynaecological service; 3) pediatric services, with screening of high risk women and children for early diagnostic and prevention (only in Madras); 4) anti-pre-post natal care facilities; 5) after-care clinic for family planning adopters, 6) screening of infants and toddlers for latent morbidity (Madras only); 7) immunization services for children; 8) consultation facilities in all major medical, surgical, ophthalmic problems; 9) ENT, dental, dermatological services. In-patients wings have 100 beds with special room facilities. The total number of beds in the hospitals both at Hyderabad and Madras were 200, and the total number of out-patients treated were 65,000 and in-patients were 7,600. The quantitative assessment of the total strength of the institutions were supplemented by the quality of the service rendered to the health of the women and children with certain stamp of commitment to the cause of women.

FAMILY-PLANNING

Family planning is one of the important aspects relating to women's health, as the "unchecked" bearing of children impairs the health of mother and reduce the vitality of the race. The family planning approach to population limitation therefore concentrates on providing new and efficient birth control devices on national basis through mass programmes under various public health auspices.⁸ Eventhough India is

8. Neera Desai and Maitreyi Krishnaraj, Women and Society in India Delhi, 1987, p.235.

the first among the developing countries in the world to involve in a national family planning programme, the measures to educate the people regarding the need and devices of family planning are very much inadequate. Durgabai viewed the question from the practical angle and made provision for training the young women to play a vital role in the national family planning programmes as auxiliary nurse midwives to work in village with various skills of health and hygiene and to prepare a social climate for the acceptance of the smaller family.¹⁰ Durgabai found much relevance in the use of birth control devices. She believes in the concept of responsible parent-hood according to which women are equipped with essential skills and personality to work towards a better life for fewer children.¹¹ As a member of the Planning Commission, Durgabai came to the conclusion that family planning had no place in the draft of the Chapter on Health. She, with her persistent demands, got the family planning programmes its official recognition. She, with her official capacity, as a member in charge of social sciences (Health and Education) social welfare, Rehabilitation of the displaced persons and with public cooperation¹², initiated deliberations for government's acceptance to family planning programmes and also allocation of grants from time to time. During the first five year plan the family planning programme achieved

10. Surjit Kaur and Kamala Gopal Rao, Perspectives of population and family planning in B.N. Ganguli ed. Social Development.

11. Surjit Kaur and Kamala Gopal Rao, Op. Cit., p.222.

12. Ibid., p.223.

rapid progress, but in successive years imperfect and reluctant implementations, due to the lack of enthusiasm and interest on the part of successive ministries in charge of health and planning resulted in less implementation.¹³ The scheme of training of family welfare (planning) worker which was started by Durgabai in the year 1959, was also respected by the Government. The successful training of the family welfare was spreaded by the Andhra Mahila Sabha due to the positive funds. In the National Health seminar held at Madras in 1965, Durgabai, envisaged that the success of family planning depends largely upon the provision of readily accessible services or part of health services especially for mother and children, increases in the age of marriage, education and employment of women. Durgabai resumed her activities in the field in the year 1969 when she along with her husband C.D. Deshmukh established the Population Council of India. All India Conference on Population Control was held during the year 1970 followed by holding up of 4 regional conferences by the council for social development established by Durgabai. Thus by arranging various seminars and conferences all over India, Durgabai brought to the national focus the problems of family planning programmes.

MINI-HOSPITAL ON WHEELS

Provision of the medical services to the majority of the rural poor has been the concern of Durgabai. She felt that

13. Durgabai's letter to Prof. Caldwell, Op. Cit, p.2.

the need of mobile medical services to provide medical relief to the rural people and supplement greatly to the services of primary and secondary health centres and to make more effective the services of the trained nurses in-charge of the health centres.¹⁴ She urged the Government to provide a mobile van to make mobility of medical services easy and comfortable. The Sabha was sanctioned the mobile medical van (donated by Tata Engineering Locomotive Company) in the year 1978. The van being equipped with the Blood bank, X-ray and little surgical apparatus, which can very well called the mini-hospital on wheels started rendering its services in Ranga Reddy District. Between 1978-79 it served nearly 25,000 patients and later extended its services to some areas in Madras districts.¹⁵ The two rural centres covered by the medical team comprised of two doctors, a pharmacist and a senior sanitarian and a group of not more than five auxiliary nurse mid-wives (ANM) visiting three days every week. The two centres are Tukuguda in Ibrahimpatnam Block, covering a population of 15,000 villages, Ravirala, Sarnagar, Mamidipally and other villages. The other centre is Korremal which covers the population of 10,000 and villages of Srirangam, Mankal, Terriguda, Venkatapuram, Lingapuram and Uppal.¹⁶ The medical team assisted by a number of specialists and post-graduates.

14. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, Hyderabad, 1980, p.57.

15. Andhra Mahila Sabha Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

16. Ibid.

doctors, WHO voluntary services occasionally. Apart from the common ailments immunization was also undertaken. Though the service of the mobile van was effective to some extent, the nature of the service was not suited to the immediate needs of the rural poor. In rural areas especially like the backward regions like Telangana, the temporary case of the ills is of not much use to the rural masses who suffers from malnutrition, but number of deceases due to the impure drinking water and unhygenic surroundings. The real remedy for their ills and ill health lies in providing preventive measures through social education to the rural people about health and hygiene. In spite of the drawbacks, the mobile van of Sabha covers on an average 400 people per visit, ¹⁷ providing free consultation and free medicines, besides the doctors, some of the social workers accompanied by nurse trainees visit the villages to educate them in health, hygiene and motivate them to make better their living conditions.

MOBILE FOOD AND NUTRITION

Women being the chief nutritionist in the families have been deprived of the minimum required nutrition in India. The shortfall in the nutritional value are more common in rural women. Durgabai, who championed the cause of women and children used her international public relations to induce 'Freedom from Hunger' campaigns of food and agricultural organisation of United Nation and also through

17. S. Sarada, Op.Cit., p.166.

the "save the children" fund of United Kingdom.¹⁸ Durgabai during her visit to Washington to attend the seminar organised by the committee of "World Food Congress", read a paper on the education and training in nutrition in developing countries¹⁹ and emphasised the need for the nutrition programmes for women and children.

On the respect of Durgabai, 'Freedom from Hunger Campaign Committee allotted a mobile food and nutrition project to Andhra Mahila Sabha in the year 1960. This unit with a mobile van fully equipped with audio visual aids to promote nutrition education and demonstration is at Vidyanagar, Andhra Mahila Sabha. The unit conducted a number of demonstrative programme not only at Hyderabad, but also in many Telangana districts, motivating women through demonstration how to use without losing the nutritional value. The programmes were conducted mainly by Mahila mandals run by panchayat samitis, Women's welfare centres, police family welfare centres and harijan wadas. The young farmers association in Visakhapatnam have done remarkable service for nearly 30 to 40 villages for not only raising the agricultural crops but also for training the younger people in the area of growing nutrient goods and carrying the knowledge to the rural areas. In Hyderabad Smt. Sangam Lakshmi Bai took active part in this work. Thus many of the programme of the project

18. Ibid., p.167

19. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaketh, vol.II, p.61

under the leadership of Durgabai were directed towards diversifying the distray pattern by using local food resources and introduced nutritious food to infant, and lactating mothers.²⁰

Therapy and Rehabilitation of Handicapped

Durgabai established the orthopaedic centre for treatment, education and rehabilitation of physically handicapped and mentally retarded children²¹ in the year 1960 at Madras with the donation given by Smt and Shri.V. Hanumantha Rao. Initially the handicapped children were treated as out patients but later to meet the needs of the children coming from outside Madras, Durgabai, with the help of grant given by Centra Social Welfare Board and several other organisations constructed general hospital. The centre had out-patient department, 21 pre and post operative wards, 21 operation theaters, 4 physiotherapy, electro therapy, Wax therapy, Hydro therapy, Hydro therapy, Speech therapy departments, 5 Brace workshops. A Montissouri School and middle school for the handicapped childrens. X-ray, E.C.G. pathology laboratory and a residential home for the children.²² were also established.

Durgabai after her visit to the department of health education and welfare department Washington D.C. in the year 1969, opened a section for physically handicaped and mentally

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21. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speakes Vol.II, p.82

22. Anjhra Mahila Sabha Golden Jubilee Souveneir, 1987.

retarded and their training and rehabilitation as a part of the health programme.²³ Durgabai started one of the pioneer innovative and venturesome service known as vocational rehabilitation unit and rehabilitation of the mentally retarded for the total rehabilitation of orthopaedically handicapped and mentally retarded children. The handicapped girls were provided training in tailoring and printing.²⁴ The inmates of the handicapped and mentally retarded were given training in Sabha's sheltered workshop and provided with suitable jobs after training. Though started in a limited way and confined to a limited area the quality of the work done was in such a high order that it qualified soon for financial assistance from the department of Health education and welfare of the U.S. Government which enabled the orthopaedic centre to admit cerebral palsy cases for treatment at Hyderabad. The total number of the children admitted operated, treated, educated and totally rehabilitated by the orthopaedic centre were nearly 22000 and rehabilitation was provided to a number of men and women handicapped adolescence.

TRAINING MEASURES, ANM AND NURSE TRAINING

Nursing which plays an important role in the field of public health is at present a monopoly of women. Many middle class women are pursuing this profession. Andhra Mahila Sabha

23. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.91.

24. S. Sarada, Op. Cit., p.176.

was a pioneer in the training of Auxiliary Nurse and Midwives, General Nurses, Family Planning workers. In a committee constituted by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the Health Minister of India in the year 1959 with Miss Adrawala, the Nursing Advisor of India and Durgabai Deshmukh, the syllabus and the course of Auxiliary Nurse Midwives and General Nurses were approved and a scheme was drawn in favour of it. On the advice of Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, the Government entrusted the scheme of training 50 ANM's to Andhra Mahila Sabha. Durgabai welcomed the scheme as she felt that ANM is very much needed for providing the medicare for women, especially the rural women. Alongwith Andhra Mahila Sabha, the other voluntary organisations like 1) Matruseva Sangh of Nagpur run by well known social worker Smt. Kamalabai Hospet, 2) Kamala Nehru Hospital in Ahmedabad, 3) The hospital managed by Smt. Kapur in Ludhiana and 4) Red Cross Society of Guhati in Asssam, the ANM's were trained and recruited in the Sabha's Nursing home. As ANM's training became successful at Madras, Durgabai extended the training ANM's is very great in Andhra Pradesh especially in Telangana district where the medical services were very poor. Durgabai established the ANM's training centre at Hyderabad in the year 1963. On the advice of Miss Andrawala, the priority in recruiting the trainees were given to the woman from Telangana, gradually the ANM's Training Centre was opened at Mahaboob Nagar and Sangareddy districts. The Sabha trained 380 ANM's at Madras and Hyderabad. Impressed with the performance of ANM's of primary Health

Centre established by Government, the Health Ministry of Government of India handed over the scheme of Training the General Nurses to Andhra Mahila Sabha, Durgabai enthusiastically undertook the show and opened the school of Nursing at Hyderabad. The strength of trainees originally sanctioned was for 80 and for a period of 3 1/2 years. Andhra Mahila Sabha contributed to the nation nearly 305 nurses per year in all through its four Schools of Nursing at Madras, Hyderabad, Mahaboobnagar and Sangareddy. Apart from this during the period 1958 and 1969 Durgabai also undertook the training of family planning workers to carry the various welfare centres aided by Central Social Welfare Board on regional basis. The nurse trainees were drawn from all of the southern states, and Sabha is the only organisation which produce the largest number of trainees in the South.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Vocational training is considered to be the best opportunity for the women of middle and low income groups to supplement their family incomes and to enable them to earn their livelihood. Durgabai Deshmukh held the view that as the percapita income of our country is very low, women cannot remain as silent spectators without making active contribution to supplement their family incomes in order to raise the standards of living and to meet the needs of their family. She firmly believed that it is our individual necessity for many women to work for living. For achieving that she felt that education, training and employment should be interlinked

with each other. Durgabai undertook several vocational training programmes since 1940 to provide mainly to the educated and semi-literate women. The earlier training institution the 'Parisramika Sabha' of Madras was established mainly for the rehabilitation purpose of the destitute women, which became the forerunner of the Regional Handicrafts Institute of Hyderabad. During 1950's the Sabha undertook the training of nursing, teaching and handicrafts training. Handicrafts virtually became the women's preserves providing employment to them. Durgabai with the help of All India Handicrafts Board, under the guidance of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya established Regional Handicrafts Institute for women at Hyderabad in the year 1958. Since the Institute was regional, the Sabha rescruted trainees of 10 each from all the Southern States namely, Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry and 10 trainees were recruited from twin citites of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.³² The aim of the institute was to train the Instructors in Dyeing, Textile, Planning, Drawing and Painting, Printing and book binding, Doll Making, leather work, tailoring and Bamboo work.³³ The trainees were recruited mostly from artisan families. The trainees were sponsored from each state through State Social Welfare Advisory Board, Community Development Project, Mahila Mandal, Voluntary Women's organisation and schools as craft

32. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone That Speaker, , p.2.

33. Ibid.

teachers and were mostly absorbed by or the organisation. On the successful completion of training, the trainees were also awarded with one certificate equivalent to certificate of Artisan Courses in Handicrafts training by the All India Handicrafts Board. Between 1958 and 1975 the Regional handicrafts trained nearly 505 candidates.³⁴ In sponsoring the candidates for training Andhra stood first followed by Kerala. But unfortunately the Regional Handicrafts Institute of 'Sabha' was closed down in the year 1979 due to the lack of funds from the All India Handicrafts Board.

HOSTEL FACILITIES

Building up of hostels for needy women is part of the welfare measures undertaken by Durgabai. The Andhra Mahila Sabha commenced its work service in 1942 and by 1980 it had nine hostels. Like the other activities of Durgabai the hostel buildings are first started at Madras. With the liberal grants given by Raja and Rani of Bobbili³⁵ Durgabai started the first work for womens hostels, the Mallama Devi Mahila Mandiram of Luz Church Road, Madras in the year 1945. The total inmates of the hostel were 30 women. The hostel was originally intended for the Sabha and staff members. The others established by Andhra Mahila Sabha are the hostel for Auxillary nurses and mid-wives trainee (ANM) at Madras (1955), Hostel for the children of Iswari Prasad

34. Andhra Mahila Sabha Golden Jubilee Souvener, 1987

35. Durgabai Deshmukh, The Stone that Speaker, Vol. I, p.33

Dattatreya Orthopaedic Centre's at Madras (1967), hostel for trainees in vocational rehabilitation centre, mentally rehabilitated unit, Madras (1967), Tourist hostel at Madras (1962-64), Hostel for ANM Trainees at Madras (1963) Mahaboubnagar (1966-67), Hostel for ANM trainees at Sanga Reddy (1966-67), Hostel for the students of both the college of Arts and Science and for women and the college of education at Hyderabad (1969).

The hostel of Sabha provided not only shelter but also education to many needy, destitute, deserted, widowed, helpless, neglected and downtrodden women and enabled them not only to acquire academic qualifications through condensed course or regular course, but also trained them as earnest and efficient workers. The hostels established during the year 1940's and 1950's are carrying their activities ably and efficiently by fulfilling the above mentioned services which were promulgated by Durgabai.

However, the hostels established during the later years like the tourist hostels are run like any other hostels. They lack the basic features of being voluntary in nature and has become more commercial oriented.

LEGAL AID FOR WOMEN:

No study of the women's welfare can be thorough without some references to the complicated question of legal right of inheritance, marriage, divorce and guardianship of women. In

this respect women have not, for considerable period, enjoyed equality with men, these rights often varying with the state or community to which they belonged. Though the constitution provided equality of all citizens, and special provisions for women, the personal laws further delegated the position of women, which in Durgabai's words left the status of women in a position of subordination constituting a gross anacronism.³⁶

Durgabai's life in Madura jail and her contact with the fellow women prisoners gave all insight into the womens problem, and once she wrote that "my choice of career as a lawyer was primarily due to this stimulus."³⁷ Durgabai could not be able to do justification to her career as lawyer which she undertook in 1942 at Madras, due to her preoccupation of her social measures. Her contributions in promoting the legal rights in the field of law is also not much remarkable.³⁸ However, Durgabai active support to the passing of Hindu code bill during her term as member of constituent Assembly is worth mentioning. The Hindu code bill which was drawn in order to carry out the process of the early legal acts drawn in favour of women, like Hindu widow Remarriage act of 1865, the child marriage restraint act which was popularly known as Sarada Act. The Hindu code bill sought to prohibit polygamy,

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36. Durgabai Deshmukh, Law and Women in India, unpublished monographs, State Archives, Hyderabad, n.d.
37. Durgabai Deshmukh, letter addressed to Prof. J.C. Caldwell of Australian National University, Canberra, Australia dated Feb. 23, 1974.
38. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.28.

make divorce less difficult and provide property right to women. Durgabai made many speeches in favour of Hindu code bill by stressing that it is injustice to create differences between men and women according difference to the law. Equality of human beings is a birth right, women have equal right over their parents' property as a soul in the family. As Hindu code bill sought to provide equal rights to both sexes "I strongly support this bill on behalf of women for equal rights."³⁹ Withstanding the strong opposition from the orthodox section the bill was introduced in 1952, largely due to the efforts of Nehru, B.N. Rao, Durgabai and Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer, the bill enacted a series of legislative measure for improving status of women like Hindu marriage act in 1955, which ended the age old institution of marriage as a onesided sacrament and permitted divorce on the grounds of adultery, desertion, insanity or incurable disease. The other act was the Hindu succession act in 1956, which provided the property rights to women, and the dowry (prohibition) Act as legislated in 1961 to abolish the evil dowry system. Durgabai felt that the above social laws would lack effectiveness unless they are backed by the public opinion and proper social education.⁴⁰ Durgabai held a view that the lack of social change, inspite of the plethora of social legislation on womens welfare.⁴¹ She felt that as the

39. Neti Seeta Devi, Op. Cit., p.210.

40. Durgabai Deshmukh, Law and Women in India, p.8.

41. Durgabai Deshmukh, Speech on Social change in India at Change and Regional Disparity Within and Between the Nations Conference, March 27 to April 1, 1967.

administrative efforts in the field of social legislation are inadequate, voluntary organisations should play a greater role in advocating the people in favour of equal rights for women.

Durgabai was impressed by the concept of family courts of China and Japan during her visit in 1952 as a delegate.⁴² Durgabai made one report recommending the introduction of family courts system in India, which not only reduce the number of cases going to High court and Supreme Court, but also help illiterate women to come under legal protection. Durgabai also suggested that the social worker should constitute the Bench to deal with the cases of marriage, adoption and divorce.⁴³ Though recommendations of the report were practical and the family court could provide speedy justice, the Government had not paid any attention to the report send by Durgabai.

Besides her occasional handling of the cases in criminal branch providing justice, Andhra Mahila Sabha opened the legal aid for women in the year 1983,⁴⁴ which aimed to give legal aid to poor, distressed and other socially economically oppressed women. To make legal constitution and representation facilities and to provide consultation in matters of family law, marriage, divorce and maintenance and

42. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman And I, p.35.

43. Durgabai Deshmukh, Chintaman and I, p.36. .

44. Andhra Mahila Sabha Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1987.

providing legal aid facilities for laws relating to human rights of women, the Sabha within 4 years of its inception dealt successfully with 300 cases among middle and lower class women, making the dispensability of legal facilities to downtrodden women in the society.

CHAPTER-V

CONCLUSION

In the present study, I have made an effort to trace out the activities of various philanthropists, intellectuals and women's associations for the upliftment of women in general, and the contributions of Durgabai Deshmukh in the field of women's welfare in particular. In the first chapter I have elaborated the need for women's studies, analysing the condition and status of women of a particular region and in the particular period; the role played by women both within and outside the family, the emergence of women's consciousness, their condition and also the role of men in taking up 'women's issues' in their 'public sphere' activities. In order to elaborate these points, I have taken up a case study of Durgabai Deshmukh's life history and her contribution to women's welfare programmes in Andhra through which I have tried to analyse the condition and nature of women's participation and women's consciousness in social reform activities. In addition to this, I have also briefly discussed the history of social reform activities and national movement in Andhra from the late 19th century upto the middle of 20th century that is colonial and post colonial in Andhra.

In 19th century, the intellectuals of Andhra just as any other parts in India and particularly in Madras Presidency had vigorously advocated reforms for women. They demanded education for women, ban on child marriage, encouragement of widow marriage, etc. The best example was the most

outstanding work of this kind done by Kandukuri Veeresalingam Panthulu. However, in this period, we hardly find any reform activities carried out by women themselves. Since women's education and other social reform activities was confined to women belonging to the elite section of society, the impact of the reform activities was meagre on the middle class and lower class women. During beginning of 20th century, the emergence of local women's associations, and a major woman's associations such as women's India Association testified that women had slowly started entering the public sphere and demanding the rights to involve in social reform activities. In Madras Presidency, Margaret Cousins, Annie Besant, and Muthu Lakshmi Reddy carried out reform activities for women, thus questioning the women's place in the society. However, their attempts have been one of raising women's status through various reforms for women. For instance, Reddy concentrated on raising the marriageable age for women and the abolition of Devadasi system.

Durgabai Deshmukh however realised importance of women's education as a primary need for women's liberation and thus most of her activities centred around the formation of educational institutions, both formal and non-formal, adult educational and, training centres for providing employment for women and health institutions. Since the field of her welfare activities were vast and varied, I have emphasised the need to study the history of these institutions to understand the type of education Durgabai had advocated for women and the welfare

measures she had undertaken through these institutions and the role of these institutions in raising women's consciousness in Andhra.

As a study on women intellectuals and activity, I have highlighted the conditions that framed their personality. For instance the socio-economic and political conditions of Andhra during 20th century had varied impact on Durgabai Deshmukh. Thus I have briefly focussed on the history of national movement in Andhra and Gandhi's views on women. Finally I have briefly outlined the contribution made by Durgabai for women's welfare activities in Andhra.

In the second chapter I have made an attempt to highlight the life history of Durgabai Deshmukh in order to find the linkage between the life experiences and her early activities in public sphere. Durgabai was born in a middle class family, was married in childhood. At an early age she came out of feudal conventions and entered into public life under Gandhiji's influence.

In the early 20th century, middle class women in Andhra just as in any other parts of India had to undergo the experience of culturally prescribed values, such as motherhood, chastity, morality etc. Durgabai who had entered public life at a very early age had to challenge the notion of confining women at home. After entering the national movement, as we have seen, she came under the influence of Gandhian politics and philosophy. For instance her

implementation of the constructive programmes as a local leader, like spinning Khadi, teaching Hindi for women which were advocated by Gandhi at the national level.

On the other hand, the formation of Women's India Association and its programmes specifically designed for the development of women had a great influence on Durgabai. For instance, she, vehemently opposed Gandhi's denial of participation of women in passive resistance, and carried out Salt Satyagraha at Madras. As we have seen in chapter II she never hesitated to oppose the leaders like Gandhi and Malaviya regarding her higher studies and with undaunted spirit and persistence, she educated herself and chose an independent career as a great social worker.

However, the kind of education that Durgabai advocated for women and how education sought to help their life and the relevance of the education which they received to fulfil their needs were discussed in the third chapter. Apart from that I have tried to show the development of education for women in Andhra from the late 19th century upto the middle of 20th century in chapter III. In the late 19th century, education has been imparted through Janana schools, particularly by the missionaries. Fearing the mass conversion of women the social reformers in Andhra started the educational programmes for women, which are mainly designed to reinforce the traditional values, such as teaching of embroidery, needle work, morality, dress designing, a bit of history and home accounts. Whatever

may be the kind of education imparted by the reform schools, the fact that the number of women getting educated through these schools, have increased over the years is very obvious. I have given some statistics substantiating the growth of women's education and I have also given the detailed description of the work of social reformers and women's associations in propagating the education for women in Andhra. The reformers like Veeresalingam Pantulu, Gurajada Appa Rao, Rayasam Venkata Sivudu and others were the pioneers in advocating women's education. I have also discussed into the efforts of the Andhra Intellectuals and the role of various journals in propagating the need for women's education and the role played by the women's Associations in arousing the consciousness among Andhra women making them to fight for their rights.

Durgabai, advocated the provision of equal educational opportunities for men and women, and emphasised that education should help the women to develop their total personality. Durgabai's view on the women's education and her efforts in promoting the education for women through various educational institutions established by her are discussed in detail in this chapter. Durgabai's pioneering activities in providing condensed courses for adult women, attracted many women who joined these institutions and became self reliant.

As we have seen that most of the educational programmes undertaken by Durgabai were designed to meet the needs of middle class and lower middle class women, and the various

institutions established by her at Madras, Andhra Pradesh reflect her concept of interlinking education, training and employment for women. Most of the formal educational institutions established by Durgabai are now run like any other existing government or private educational institutions in India. Her pioneering contributions in providing non-formal education and functional literacy for rural women were remarkable and noteworthy. Education for rural women has been a neglected area of study. In spite of various debates and discussions on this issue carried on with meandering rhetoric, nothing has been done until 1975, the international Women's Year. The programmes for providing functional literacy to women were undertaken for the first time by Durgabai with the help of UNESCO. Her pioneering work in imparting education and training for women achieved great success. As I have described in this chapter "Shadnagar experiment" in Andhra areas attained a remarkable success. Hence many such programmes were very much needed to wipe out the large scale illiteracy in India. The possibilities of nonformal education in bringing the rural women into the educational programmes are infinite. Though the coverage of the educational programmes were limited, large number women actively participated in the training programmes undertaken by Durgabai, and their receptiveness to the educational programmes itself is great achievement of Durgabai.

Apart from education, Durgabai's welfare measures extended to other aspects of women's life too. For instance,

in the IV chapter, I have elaborated welfare measures undertaken by Durgabai Deshmukh in the post colonial period. For most of the national leaders, national liberation was meant the liberation of women also, and hence they showed lot of reluctance while undertaking the welfare measures for women. However, Durgabai had shown consistent interest in providing welfare measures for women, throughout her life period, One such measure undertaken by her in 1950's, was the health programmes for women. This is also a period of the growth and expansion of Andhra Mahila Sabha, an exemplary in women's welfare activities started by Durgabai in 1939. As I mentioned in chapter IV, she provided shelter for poor and destitute women, and also trained them in various crafts and arts to make them self reliant. The training institutions established by Durgabai testify her belief in providing rehabilitating of women than merely giving them charity. As far as women's health measures, are concerned, 3d, she paid more attention to the problems of material mortality, and child morbidity by opening nursing homes to provide medical relief to women and children. Durgabai's interest in the welfare of rural women, once again reflected in the training of village level workers. In this chapter, I have also discussed training given to village level workers, auxiliary nurse and mid-wives, and provision of mobile health services in the welfare of rural women.

All these programmes and schemes initiated and stated by Durgabai show that Durgabai as person was committed to the

total upliftment of women and worked towards this at different levels as the chairman of Central Social Welfare Board, National Council of Women's Education. as founder President of various welfare institutions like Andhra Mahila Sabha, Council for Social Development, Blind Relief Association, and several other institutions. Thus she excelled in both the fields of social reform and social work. She courageously fought a relentless war against the evil of social backwardness and barriers to the development of women. There is no denying that a lot more needs to be done in the area of women welfare, however, one cannot ignore Durgabai's contributions for the welfare of women in Andhra which has laid the foundation for future activity.

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