

Education of Upper Caste Hindu Women in Punjab Arya Samaj (1877-1906)

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "**EDUCATION OF UPPER CASTE HINDU WOMEN IN PUNJAB ARYA SAMAJ (1877-1906)**" submitted by **Ms. PRIYANKA SRIVASTAVA** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**, has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University and this is her own work.

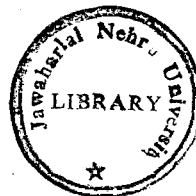
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To

My Mother, Father & Manas

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Finally the responsibility for errors remain mine alone.

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Chapter - I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Women's Question in 19th Century India

In the early nineteenth century in India, women were almost totally excluded from the formal system of education. There were strong and deep rooted prejudices against education of women. The formal system of schooling based on evaluation, agewise distribution into classes and certification, often at a location spatially removed from the homes of the pupils came along with colonial rule. Prior to such institutions, children learnt basic literacy skills, familiarity with the scriptures at 'Pathshala,'tols and 'Madarsas.

The British government was, however the principal agent in disseminating modern education in India. The system of formal education set up by the British colonial power, clearly reflected a bias in favour of the native males; the English were primarily interested in educating men and not women in India; they generally refrained from assisting the educational activities for girls. This approach in part was in keeping with the overall attitude towards women, whether of the Indian or the British middle classes, namely that they should be trained not to pursue careers

but to be good wives and competent mothers;¹ it was also due to the anxiety of the British not to incur the displeasure of Indians by supporting schools which were suspected of intentions of proselytization. To some extent, however neglect was also due to the belief that any effort to encourage the education of women may be misinterpreted as undue interference in the socio-religious practices of Indians. All in all it reflected a general indifference of the rulers towards prevailing social relation and prejudices of the subjected people.

Apart from these considerations of political expediency, the government also held the view that if it helped to promote the education of men, they would, in turn, undertake to educate women. The famous Minute of Macaulay, which in 1835 introduced English education, tended to act as a set-back to religious and vernacular schools. The system it introduced led to a rather bookish type of education, mainly as a preparation for jobs, (since possession of English education came to be regarded as a prerequisite for government jobs). This further reduced its appropriateness for girls. It neither suited, nor interested the rulers to take much initiative in this area.

¹ Education for British women was a point of debate in 19th century England. The primary motive to educate women was to produce 'intellectual' wife and good mother. See: Oakley A, Subject women, Oxford, Martin Robertson, 1981.

Prior to the receipt of the despatch of 1854 from the court of directors, women's education was not recognized as a branch of the state system of education in India. The Wood despatch of 1854 may rightly be viewed as an important landmark in the educational policy in relation to women. Apart from the repudiation of the filtration theory accepted previously, this despatch officially recommended the obligation and desirability of making education accessible to the masses. It made specific mention of the need to encourage the education of women through a policy of grant-in-aid from public funds to voluntary educational activities for women. It was expressed that the education of women in the long run has a greater civilizing influence than education of men only. It was recognized that the progress of western culture and civilization in India could not be achieved without educating women.

However, the government's own initiatives in the realm of female education in India were limited and "It was believed by the authorities both in England as well as in India, that any attempt to introduce female education when there was no demand for it, would be perceived as interference with the social customs of the colonized".² Various government's reports on the progress of education in India reflected and emphasized the native prejudices regarding female education. The Review

² Bureau of Education, India, Selections from education records, Part II 1840-1859 by J.A. Richley, CIE, Calcutta, 1922, p.32.

of Education in 1886, for instance, pointed out that Indians "at large encourage or tolerate the education of their girls only upto an age, and in standard at which it could do little good or according to the point of view little harm".³ Even after the opening of government institutions for female education, after 1854, there was a general apathy on the part of the colonial rulers towards female education.

In fact in the modern period, the first schemes for female education were propagated by missionary groups.⁴ The christian missionaries were inspired mainly by a proselytizing spirit, to spread christianity among the Indian people. They extensively opened schools for girls also. The education given by the women missionaries consisted of such mere rudiments as were possible under the conditions and for the short period, during which their pupils were available. The earliest efforts of the members of these societies were directed towards Christian converts only.⁵ Encouraged by their success in this direction, they set up institutions for the education of non-christian girls also.⁶ While much of their work was in part linked with the ordinary mission work of the

³ . Review of Education in India, 1886, Chapter III, Section VI, P.279.

⁴ Cown, M., G. Education of women in India, London, 1912. p.34.

⁵ Cown, M.G., op.cit., p.53.

⁶ Bureau of education India, Selections from Education records, Part II 1840-1859 by J.A. Richley, CIE, Calcutta, 1922, p.34.

churches, a large portion was also carried through separate women's societies founded just for this purpose.⁷

The schools opened by the colonial rulers and christian missionaries, for the purpose of women's education, were largely attended by the lower caste Hindu women or by the converted Christian, Eurasians and Europeans.⁸ The reluctance of the "respectable natives" to send their daughters to a missionary, and government schools (where basics of reading, writing and religion was imparted) was noted by the British administration.⁹ The fear of proselytization and absence of female teachers were among the reasons why upper caste Hindus were not willing to send their daughters to government and missionary schools. Apart from this, the strong taboos associated with the education of upper caste Hindu girls in the nineteenth century also had a major deterring effect on the whole process.

The debate centering around the question of the education of upper caste Hindu women, was posed in the space opened up by the vigorous social reform movements of the 19th century. These movements which arose in the complex colonial situation, were in the main, an important

⁷ Cown, M.G., op.cit., p.36.

⁸ Progress of Education in India 1887-88 to 1891-92 Second Quinquennial report by A.M. Nash Calcutta, 1893, p.294.

⁹ Bureau of education, India, Selections from education records, Part II 1840-1869 by J.A. Richley, CIE, Calcutta, 1922, p.34.

part of the Indian response to the many challenges posed by colonial rule. While, on the one hand, these movements were characterized by the needs and concerns of an emerging elite, on the other, they carried the imprints of a strong influence by the liberal ideas of the West. Encounter, though admittedly a forced one, with an alien culture resulted not only in an exposure to new ideas and organizations, but also brought in a realization of the subject status of the colonized a status forever inferior and designated as the "other", under the stiff colonial gaze. So when colonial British intervention and criticism of the indigenous customs and practices became more and more trenchant, the response of the reformers also naturally focussed keener attention on the indigenous identity of the colonized. The need to re-assert it and defend it against all assailants was strongly felt. "The embryonic national consciousness in the early nineteenth century was manifested in its concerns for the improvement of society and a pride in indigenous culture."¹⁰ In colonial India, the reformer's pre-occupation with the past came to have a political significance in that they contributed to national "pride" and "self respect".¹¹ In this construction of the past the women's question held a

¹⁰ Raichaudhuri, Tapan, Europe Reconsidered, p.2. Pub. OUP, New Delhi, 1988.

¹¹ K.N. Panikkar asserts that the reconstruction of past in 19th century, by the reformers had an, anti-colonial agenda and aimed at reforming the present state of affairs. See Panikkar K.N.

key position.

The consolidation of British rule in India ended the previous tolerance, giving space to an overwhelming contempt for Indian customs shared by the utilitarians, liberals and evangelicals alike. All shared a belief in the superiority of the British culture; and the position of women was an integral part of their judgement of civilization. According to James Mill, for instance, Hindu women were in: "A State of dependence, more strict and humiliating than that which is ordained for the weaker sex.... Nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which Hindus entertain for their women.. They are held in extreme degradation, excluded from the sacred texts, deprived of education and (of a share) in the paternal property".¹²

Christian missionaries were also vehement in their denunciation of indigenous society and the main target of their attack was those customs most obviously alien to British practices, such as Sati, Polygamy, Purdah and also lack of education.¹³ To the missionaries, progress in civilization was directly equated with conversion to

Culture, ideology and hegemony intellectual and social consciousness in colonial India. Tulika, New Delhi, 1995, p.112.

¹² Mill, James History of British India with notes by H.H. Wilson, London, 1840, pp.312-13.

¹³ Borthwick, M., Changing Role of Women in Bengal, 1849-1905. Princeton University Press, 1984, p.26.

Christianity. The criticism through these quarters, resulted in attention being focussed on Hindu identity. Defensive postures were an obvious outcome of such resentment.¹⁴ A new image of ideal Hindu womanhood had to be reconstructed against these attacks and a reform in the present condition of women thus came to preoccupy almost all the Hindu social reform movements of the nineteenth century.

For the women's question, this pre-occupation with past meant that reformers had to seek traditional sanction for the proposed liberation of women from certain existing customs. This looking back to the past itself developed two dimensions. While some depicted a perfect condition for women in the Vedic ages, others sought Shastric injunction to prove the invalidity of practices like-Sati, widowhood etc.

History was reconstituted to create a myth of the golden age of Hindu womanhood as located in the vedic period. Glorification of an ancient Hindu womanhood meant emphasis on a certain section of women and consequently exclusion of all other sections. And so in this process of

¹⁴ Partha Chatterjee has applied the material/spiritual dichotomy to explain reformers' preoccupation with cultural question in general and women's question in particular. According to him the loss of control over material reality, forced the rising urban elites to concentrate on their spiritual world. While the outer or material world is represented by the male, the inner or spiritual domain by the women. The need was to protect, preserve and strengthen the inner core of national culture. Reform in the position of women was an attempt to strengthen this spiritual domain. See Chatterjee Partha, The Nation and Its Fragments. OUP, New Delhi, 1993.

creation and idealization of Hindu womanhood the entire focus of attention of the Hindu social reformers got rivetted on the high caste Hindu women. Uma Chakravarti observes¹⁵ "whether it was to highlight her high status in the vedic past or to reform her low status in the present upper caste Hindu women was focus of attention, the vedic Dasi (women of lower castes performing menial jobs), representing another aspect of Hindu womanhood, disappeared without even leaving any trace of herself in the 19th century history". Thus nineteenth century social reformers' idealization of a golden ancient past had an important implication for reform schemes i.e., bias in favour of upper caste Hindu women.

The focus on the issue of the status of Hindu upper caste women, by the movements of Hindu social reform was also influenced partially by the Victorian ideal of womanhood where women, in both public and private domains were visualized as the helping partner, the companion, of a man, not as an independent entity in herself. Introduction of a feminine version of education was considered as an important element in the construction of this ideal womanhood.

The urgency to reform women's position in family and society could

¹⁵ Chakravarti, Uma, Whatever happened to the Vedica Desi in Sangri and Vaid (eds.) Recasting Women: Essay in the colonial India, Kali for women, New Delhi, 1989.

also be attributed to the changing pattern of urban family life in the 19th century. A new socio-cultural context, to a certain extent, changed the nature of conjugal relationships. The perception regarding the women's role as wife and mother was changing as far as urban educated males were concerned. A wife was now expected to participate in and understand the changing world of her husband. Therefore the advantages of the education of women was enumerated on the grounds that the introduction of literacy would help women to delight their husbands and to share in part the new world of their husbands. Moreover an educated wife could instruct her children and take better care of the household.

19th century Hindu social reform movements while immediately articulating a social agenda for bettering the lot of Hindu women, also aimed at re-organizing the familial relations. "The issue of women's education, attracted the attention of the reformers, as it was the most well articulated and definitively ideological area within the scope of social reform".¹⁶ Education was not only considered to be the golden gate to emancipation,¹⁷ but was also justified on the ground that education of

¹⁶ Bannerjee, Himani, "Fashioning a self: Educational proposes for and by women in popular magazines in colonial Bengal", Economic and Political Weekly, Oct. 26, 1991.

¹⁷ Mill, J.S., and Wollstonecraft, Mary reflected there views in their writings on the condition of women. Education was considered as a means to emancipation. See Wollstonecreft, Mary, A Vindication of the Rights of Women and Mill, J.S., The Subjection of Women

women would ensure the stability of the family and through it the stability of the society as a whole. Therefore, the argument went, a reform in the position of women would reform society at large.

In this way of thinking, the education of the upper caste Hindu women had nothing to do with their economic status or functions; "whereas", M. Borthwick writes, "education for males was directly related to the pursuit of employment, female education had no economic function".¹⁸ Education for women was rather viewed by the reformers as a means of producing the values of a patriarchy in a changed context, and condition them appropriately for their roles of cultural, supportive wives and good educated mothers. It was asserted that education would not turn women away from their traditional roles; on the contrary it would strengthen the structure of the family and the fabric of society. Even the female proponents of education for women, had internalized this idea. Krishna Bhabini Das, for instance phrased the general sentiments in her 'Shikshita Nari', by writing "there are some who raise objection to women's education on the ground that women lose their womanly virtues through the influence of education". She refuted this opinion by giving an example of American women who after acquiring education were able to

Introduction by Mary Warnock, Every Man's Library, London 1985.

¹⁸ Borthwick, M., Changing roles of women in Bengal, 1849-1905, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 1984, P.61.

do child care and housework with greater discipline, thus increasing happiness within the home and facilitating the progress of their nation. In another of her writing entitled "Life of the nation and Hindu women" she reiterates the nation's dependence for its future improvement on women and their organization of public life.¹⁹ With these objectives in mind, the Hindu social reformers of the 19th century propagated the project of female education.

The whole package for the education of Hindu women, comprised of the curriculum, the pedagogy and the amount of training imparted to the students, was primarily determined by the expectations regarding the girl-students in the family and society at large. Women were being tutored, trained and tailored for roles already envisaged for them by men, education was not meant to give women the freedom or the capacity to choose their own roles. The women's question of the 19th century was thus, to a large extent, a male initiated reform program where women were merely seen as one among several passive objects to be reformed. The social construction of femininity in 19th century India, being the reflection of a predominantly male point of views, determined the agenda

¹⁹ a) Krishnabhabini Das 'Shishita Nari' in Sahitya. 1891, pp.286-91,
b) Krishnabhabini Das, 'Jatiya Jiban of Hindu Nari', cited in Banerjee Himani, Fashioning a self: Education proposals for and by women in popular magazines in colonial Bengal, EPW, Oct. 26, 1991.

of education of women; and this particular form of the social construction of femininity was dictated by the structural necessities of social reproduction of the relations of production and corresponding cultural values. Thus the importance of education and its links with the family lies in its contribution to the reproduction of social relations²⁰ in the new context of colonial rule, rather than to its role of ushering in the possibilities of fundamental social change.

For instance, the curriculum for female schools, was also a point of debate. The rudiments of reading and writing in vernacular languages and a little arithmetic, hygiene, needle work, embroidery as well as English were regarded as more than enough for girls. As a matter of fact, this model of female education, stressed upon the cultivation of "genteel" norms and domestic "virtues" among upper caste respectable women. Speaking in 1856, a young Bengali radical said "Females are not required to be educated by the standards which is adopted to men.. Women has but one resource home. The end and aim for her life is to cultivate the

²⁰ Louis Althusser in his path breaking essay 'ideology and ideological State apparatuses' has given a rigorous analysis of the mechanism which the social relations of production are reproduced and its roles in the total reproduction of society. Though his analysis specifically focusses on the capitalist mode of production, there are elements in his discourse which can be extended to the colonial societies incorporated into the World Capitalist system. See Althusser, Louis, Lenin and Philosophy and other essays, NLB, London, 1971.

domestic affections, to minister to the comfort and happiness of her husband, to look after and tend her children, and exercise her little supervision over domestic economy".²¹

This framework of ideas, formed the backdrop for the Indian initiative, in the sphere of female education. It was formalized with the establishment of Bethune school in Calcutta in 1849. From the 1850 onwards Indian themselves began to open school for girls. In the year to follow, not only were a number of educational institutions started but the 'Zenana' system also flourished. While educated men often taught women in their respective family, group teaching was also recognized as a feasible alternative to education in a school.

Arya Samaj in Punjab

In Northern India, particularly in Punjab, the question of the

²¹ Banarjee, Sumanta, 'Marginalisation of women's popular culture in 19th century bengal'. In Sangari and Vaid (eds.) Recasting Women-Essay in the Colonial India. Kali for women, New Delhi, 1989, p.162. Advocates of female education in other presidencies reflected same opinion regarding the motives of female education V. Krishnamachari wrote in Madras Mail in May 1885, "The need is to devise such a system of education for Hindu females as will make her more agreeable companion, a good mother, an intelligent and loving wife, and an excellent house wife". Krishnamancharis, Madras Mail, May 18, 1885. Veresalingam himself argued that since knowledge regulated the emotions "Women should be educated so that they would cease quarreling, manage household efficiently and rear intelligent children". Cited in Chaudhari, M., Indian women's Movement: Reform and Revival, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1993, p.47.

education of upper caste Hindu women was launched by the 'Arya Samaj' movement with the aims of social reform and revival. Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, in Bombay, in 1875 but the 'Samaj' acquired its principal base in Punjab and later in other parts of northern India. Dayananda believed in the revival of an ideal and purified Hindu society based on Vedic infallibility. In his scheme for the revival of ideal Hindu society, Hindu women had an important role to play. He vehemently criticized the present condition of Hindu women and emphasized upon their role for the creation of a strong and ideal Hindu Samaj. In this connection he favoured the idea of education of the upper caste women. The socio-historical conditions of post-annexation Punjab provided the space for the reception of the ideology of Dayananda Saraswati. The main reason for the great success of Arya Samaj in this area was the peculiar social structure of Punjab, and the special needs and aspirations of an important section of the Punjabi Hindus in the 1870s. We would try to locate the question of women's education in Punjab Arya Samaj within the context of the socio-economic and political environment in which 'Arya Samaj' was established and became one of the most prominent movements in late 19th century Punjab.

Punjab had always been an area of social and racial diversity. Because of its strategic position on the map, the province of Punjab had been the scene of numerous battles. For longer than anywhere else in

India it had been in the grip of Muslim armies and also experienced two centuries of Sikh rule.²² Contact between the Islamic world and the Hindu tradition had resulted not only in more than half of the population being Muslim, but also in the fact that, it was here that Sikhism had grown as an independent religion. The Sikhs retained their ties to Hinduism but also converted heavily from it.²³ In the nineteenth century, this diversity was greater in the central districts visited by Swami Dayananda. There the population was approximately half Muslim, three eighth Hindus and one eighth Sikhs.²⁴ Punjab entered the British colonial folds by mid 19th century, when the British had already established themselves as colonial rulers. British conquest, added a new dimension to the complex socio-economic and political situations of 19th century Punjab.

²² Jordens, J.T.F., Swami Dayanand: His life an Ideas, OUP, New Delhi, 1978, p.161.

²³ Jones, K.W., 'Arya Dharma: Hindu Consciousness in the 19th Century Punjab', Manohar, New Delhi, 1976. p.2.

²⁴ Census of India 1891, The Punjab and its feudatories, Part-I the report of the census, (Ed.), E.D. Maclagan, 1892, p.88: These Three communal groups constituted, the most important unit of society in the Punjab, Even the newly education Punjabis tended to identity themselves with their community. See Barrier, N.G., 'The Punjab government and communal politics 1870-1908' Journal of Asian Studies, 27 (1968), p.528.

The lack of political power, to some extent, moulded the social structure of the Hindus in Punjab. There, because of the lack of political superiority, Brahmans and Rajputs ceased to be the dominant sections of the Hindu social structure. In this situation Hindu society allowed for greater leadership in social and religious life to the commercial castes of Punjab. Monied, literate serving in business, commerce, government and various professions, the Khatri, Baniya, Arora and Sud castes comprised a sensitive and vibrant section of the Punjabi society. As Jones, in his detailed study, has pointed out: "For here in the world of finance, commerce and professions Hindu remained dominant".²⁵ Within Punjab these castes were largely concentrated in the areas visited by Dayananda. It was this section of the Punjabi Hindus which responded to Dayanand's ideas, and subsequently went on to form the basis of the Arya Samaj in Punjab.

Among the above mentioned castes, Khatri had a distinguished position for they held a powerful grip on trade, were generally literate and prosperous and also had a long tradition of government services, under both the Mughals and the Sikhs. These trading castes constituted a vital community which was willing to improve its social and religious status in accordance with its economic status. Profound changes occurred

²⁵ Jones, K.W. op.cit. Manohar, New Delhi, 1976, p.7.

in the socio-economic structure of Punjab after British annexation.

The establishment of the British system of administration brought in its wake a multitude of new job opportunities both inside and outside the new government structure. At first these vacancies were filled by imported western educated elites, mostly from Bengal because of the lack of English education in Punjab. But after the creation of the Punjab Education Department (1856), education opportunities grew rapidly and were enthusiastically seized upon as providing the passport for new and better means of livelihood. The British economic structure also created a number of other opportunities in the grain trade and in the money lending business as a result of the agrarian indebtedness.

These opportunities did not attract the old aristocratic elites, who had been deprived by the British of their political power, and now limited themselves to an empty tussle for honour and protocol precedence.²⁶ Among the Hindus, the merchant class, particularly the Khatri, grabbed the new opportunities. Thus, the rapidly rising class of English educated elite was primarily dominated by the ambitious Hindu 'vaishyas'. It was this newly emerging group which was also facing the complex cultural and social tensions arising from the new situation in Punjab to which novel dimensions had been added after British annexation.

²⁶ Jones, K.W., Communalism in Punjab: The Arya Samaj contribution, Journal of the Asian Studies, 28 (1968) p.41.

British administration, brought with it another important new element into Punjab-- the christian missionaries. Missionary propaganda spread quickly in the spheres of education and publication and new institutions sprang up in many places-- orphanages, zenana missions, educational institutes. Punjabi religious communities soon realized the threat of Christianity and the close affiliations between the government and missionaries,²⁷ since the government was seen to be supporting missionary activities.

In the 1860s the church mission society opened the medical mission and the zenana mission. The zenana mission attempted to reach women in the seclusion of their homes.²⁸ The tradition of Purdah kept most women beyond the reach of Christian missionaries, but in the 1860s it was decided to send female missionaries to individual homes. Zenana mission provoked the cry of "religion in danger" and "conversion in home" and made them more conscious about their religious identities.

The aggressive proselytizing policy²⁹ adopted by the christian missionaries was bound to elicit reactions from the three religious

²⁷ More than two-third of the British of the first Punjab commission were Evangelicals who strongly believed in the mission of christianity and tended to support the church's efforts. See Barrier N.G., *The Punjab government and communal politics 1870-1905*, Journal of Asian Studies, 127 (1968), p.526.

²⁸ Jones, K.W., *op.cit.*, p.9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.9.

communities of Punjab, especially from those groups which were acquiring a better economic status from the new educational and occupational opportunities. The Muslim community, although in the majority numerically, was the least represented among the social groups that mattered and its responses were correspondingly weak. The Sikh community reacted aggressively but their activities were seriously checked by the brutal repression of the 'Kuka movement'³⁰ in 1872.³¹

The new rising elite in Punjab was strongly dominated by the Hindu Khatri and vaishyas. For centuries, the Hindus of Punjab had to cope with two proselytizing religions, namely Islam and Sikhism, and after the British annexation when a new future was opening for them they were facing a new and more serious threat from Christianity. So they started organising themselves in search of a new identity.

The leadership of the first Hindu reaction was undertaken by the Bengali Brahmos who formed the largest, most influential and publicly active section of the Bengalis in Punjab. In 1863 "Brahmo Samaj" was founded in Lahore and soon its branches sprang up in other parts of the provinces. Brahmo Samaj attracted educated Hindu Punjabis initially

³⁰ J.T.F., Jordens, op.cit., p.164.

³¹ Kuka movement which rose as a socio-religious reform movement among the Sikhs gradually changed into a political movement aiming at re-establishing Sikh political power. See Jordens, J.T.F op.cit., pp.164-5

as it represented a modernised and rationalized version of Hinduism in a complex and changed socio-economic and cultural context within a colonial situation. From the beginning, a small but socially significant number of educated Punjabi Hindus participated in the activities of "Brahmo Samaj". But Brahmos represented by elite Bengalis were not much liked by the wider Hindu community in Punjab partly on account of a rivalry in new occupational opportunities. Partly this attitude arose on account of a "tolerance and appreciation of christian ethics" shown by the Brahmos, "which was ill suited to the Punjab of late 19th century".³²

Lajpat Rai reflected the general Hindu sentiments in Punjab when he wrote "Christianity has made great strides in India and the voice of Brahmo Samaj was a mere wail in the wilderness. The Brahmo leaders chief weapon was rationalism which could attract a few. Whatever little Hinduism it contained gradually dropped out, as the leadership passed into hands grown vigorous on English though and English food.... Torn by internal dissention the 'Brahmo Samaj' had ceased to be an effective shield for the protection of Hindu theism."³³

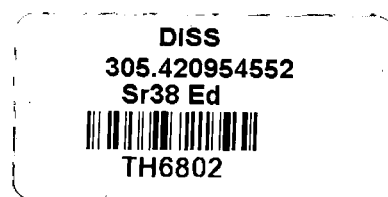
It was in such a situation, when the threat from Christianity was

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³² Joshi V.C. (ed.), Lala Lajpat Rai, Autobiographical writings, Jullunder, 1965, p.27.

³³ Rai, Lajpat, The History of Arya Samaj, An account of it's aims, doctrines and activities with a biographical sketch of the founder, London, 1915, p.101.

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becoming more acute and the Brahma Samaj was scarcely able to meet this growing challenge, that Dayananda started his visit of the Punjab in 1877. He toured the towns of the province and lectured extensively.³⁴ A wandering holy man from Gujrat, Dayananda developed and preached his own brand of reinterpreted and purified Hinduism. He was in favour of reviving the golden past of vedic Hinduism which he considered ideal. He presented a scheme of reforming each and every aspect of Hindu social and religious life and made it a principle of Arya Samaj.³⁵

Swami Dayanand's message attained popularity among the Punjabi Hindus perhaps through its very ambiguity. On the one hand it sharply criticised the degenerate Hindu socio-religious practices (child marriage, idolatry, taboos on foreign travel, Brahman predominance and the multiplicity of castes based on birth alone), while on the other he asserted the superiority of purified Hinduism over all other faiths-Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. The overt and aggressive assertion of a purified and revived Hinduism ensured that unlike the Brahmos, Aryans would not be

³⁴ Dayanand lectured constantly, practically everyday spent in a town and tried to cover all the main aspects of his teachings. he did give special lectures on Islam and Christianity and some on Brahma Samaj and Sikhism. He also criticised contemporary degenerated Hinduism. See Jordens J.T.F, op.cit., pp.165-166.

³⁵ 19th principle of Arya Samaj - "In the interest of the country, both kind of reforms shall receive attention in the Arya Samaj, spiritual as well as worldly. There shall be uplifting in both directions for the promotion of purity." See Lajpat Rai, op.cit., p.42.

alienated from the larger body of Hinduism.

"For Dayananda" wrote Charles Heimsath³⁶ "India's degradation was a personal humiliation. He attributed it chiefly to the Hindu's preoccupation with superfluous rituals. Dayananda was also struck by the need in Hindu culture for vigor, self-assertion and physical courage".

Aggressive and uncompromising, Dayanand's doctrine fitted in the colonial situation of Punjab. A restless, questing generation of Punjabi Hindus needed a new faith and through Dayananda they discovered it. While Dayananda overtly opposed orthodoxy, he also in an indirect yet more significant way undermined existing reform organisations. His doctrines satisfied the newly emerged Hindu Punjabi elites. The careers of some of the prominent Arya Samajis of Punjab illustrate the influence that the ideals of Arya Samaj had on the educated Hindu Punjabis.

Lajpat Rai was born in an Agrawal 'Bania' family in Dhuddhike in Ferozpur district. His father was a school teacher who was greatly influenced by Islam while his mother practiced Hinduism. Throughout his childhood, he had to face the conflicting religious ideas of his parents. Young Lajpat Rai taught by his teacher father grew up to be proficient in Persian and Urdu. He came to Lahore for further studies at the age of

³⁶ Heimsath, C., Hindu social reform and Indian Nationalism, Princeton University Press, NJ, 1964, p.121.

sixteen, where he met Shiv Narain Agnihotri and Bhawani Das, prominent Brahmo Samaji's in Lahore. At the urging of Pandit Agnihotri he joined Brahmo Samaj but, however his close friendship with Guru Datt and Lala Hansraj proved more decisive. He was involved in the Hindi-Urdu controversy in his college in Lahore and Swami Dayanand's stress on Hindi and Sanskrit language and valorization of ancient vedic Hindu culture and society, satisfied the nascent Hindu nationalist ideas of Lala Lajpat Rai. In December 1882, alongwith Pt. Guru Datt and Hansraj Lajpat attended the Arya Samaj anniversary and a few other meetings. He was influenced a lot by the ideology of Arya Samaj. He joined Arya Samaj in December 1882 despite his father's opposition and immediately became involved in it's affairs. He expressed his respect for Aryan ideology by saying that "Nationalist outlook of Arya Samaj impressed me.....It was Arya Samaj that taught me to learn vedic religion and to be proud of Aryan greatness. I became wedded to the idea of Hindu nationality, I learnt to respect ancient Aryan culture."³⁷

Munshi Ram was born into the Khatri caste in Talwan, Jullundhar district and came from a rigid orthodox Hindu family. Munshi Ram rebelled against the strictness and orthodoxy of his family. He came to Lahore for leagal studies and there during his student life was attracted

³⁷ Joshi, V.C., (ed.), op.cit., pp27-28

to Brahmo ideology. He read almost all the literature available on Brahmo Samaj and participated in its meetings and studied its philosophy thoroughly. But two Brahmo doctrines could not find acceptance in his mind: the rejection of the Hindu dogma of rebirth and the belief in the continuous creation of souls. He decided to study 'Satyarth Prakash' and this work cleared up all his doubts. His atheism evaporated and he resolved to join the Arya Samaj.³⁸

Moreover the unorthodox and flexible nature of Arya Samaj provided a broader space for the new professional class. "Its opposition to orthodoxy and idol worship and its survival as vedic rituals in modern form without temple and priest made a direct appeal on the Punjabi intelligentsia".³⁹ The simple ideas of Arya Samaj broadened its membership Mulraj while discussing the peculiarities of Arya Samaj wrote "On the broad platform of this religion which is simple and free from philosophical theories, men whose minds are in different stages of development and who have different modes of thinking can come together to revive the study of the Vedas and to worship and glorify the Omnipotent Being who was adored by our ancestors".⁴⁰

³⁸ Jordens, J.T.F. - Swami Shradhananda : His Life and Causes, OUP, 1981, New Delhi, p.17.

³⁹ Tandon Prakash, Punjabi Saga (1857-1947), New Delhi, 1988, p.35.

⁴⁰ Jordens, J.T.F, op.cit., p.171.

In these situations, on July 24, 1877, Lahore Arya Samaj was established and soon its branches sprang up in the province. Its initial membership was about a hundred, a number far exceeding the tally of the Brahma Samaj founded 14 years earlier. A month later the membership had trebled and a bookshop library had been opened, and soon afterwards a Sanskrit school was inaugurated, attended by a hundred people.⁴¹ It was a remarkable and rapid achievement illustrating the impact of the Swami and the way in which he fulfilled a pressing need of the Punjabi Hindus. By 1883, when Dayananda died, Arya Samaj had gained spectacular popularity among the Hindus of Punjab.⁴²

The membership of the Lahore and other Arya Samaj of the province further revealed the fact that a particular section of Punjabi Hindus i.e. the urban, educated, newly emerged professionals and intelligentsia were specifically attracted to Arya Samaj. A committee of twenty two was elected for Lahore Arya Samaj and the list reveals that half the members had a university degree. Five M.A.'s, three doctors, one lawyer and two B.A.'s. These figures speak all the more eloquently when seen in the context of the situation of higher education in the Punjab at

⁴¹ Jordens, J.T.F, op.cit., p.173.

⁴² After the demise of Swami Dayananda in 1883, Tribune published from Lahore paid homage to him and mentioned the popularity of his doctrine and ideas among the Hindus of Punjab. Tribune, Nov. 3, 1883, editorial.

that juncture. By 1877 not more than a dozen Punjabis could have gained M.A. degree which means that nearly half that number were on the Samaj Committee.⁴³ Further, of the 22 committee members only one was a brahman whereas over 80% were khatris. They dominated the Samaj as completely as they dominated higher education. Most of them were government servants or professionals. The Lahore Arya Samaj committee therefore contained some of the best educated Punjabis, mostly the trading castes primarily khatris, and among them the number of professionals and government servants was very high.⁴⁴ These trends were a feature of all the Arya Samaj units in Punjab; which clearly reveals the fact as to which sections of Punjabi Hindus were receiving the message of Swami Dayananda and how their ideas and their needs in the context of particular socio-economic cultural conditions of late 19th century Punjab added new dimensions to the ideology and reform programmes of Punjab Arya Samaj.

As mentioned earlier, Swami Dayananda gave major importance to the Hindu woman in the creation of an ideal Hindu society. His references to the women of the past were part of his wider concern for a

⁴³ Mehta, H.R., History of the Growth and development of Western Education in Punjab (1846-1884), Punjab Government Records, Monograph No. 5, n.p., 1929, p.50 cited in Jordens op.cit., p.173.

⁴⁴ Jordens, op.cit., p.174.

reformed Hindu society, dominated by Aryan institutions. Central to his thinking in this regard was his understanding of the role of women in the formation of an ideal Hindu society. He sharply criticised the existing condition of the Hindu women. He criticised Hindus for keeping their women in a degenerate condition and stressed upon the role of education in preparing women for their role in the family and society. For the regeneration of Hinduism reform in the condition of women was considered necessary by him.

After the establishment of Arya Samaj in Punjab various reform programmes were launched by the Aryans. Women's question also gradually acquired an important place among these programmes due to certain factors peculiar to late 19th century and gradually much of the constructive efforts for the betterment of Hindu women came to centre around the question of women's education in Punjab.

Chapter II

CONDITION OF UPPER CASTE HINDU WOMEN IN 19th CENTURY PUNJAB

Dayananda's Perception of Hindu Women

Swami Dayananda's attention was attracted towards women's question during his visit to Bengal. He had constructed and glorified the myth of golden age of Aryan womanhood. He believed that in the ideal society of the Vedic period women lived an idyllic existence, participated in socio-religious activities, were educated and it was Muslim influence that customs such as *Purdah* were introduced to the Hindus. He not only idealized the position of women in vedic past but also made a criticism of the present degenerate condition of women. He criticised oppressive customs such as child marriage seclusion and through his reinterpretation of Shastras rejected such customs. Dayananda held the view that the degenerate condition of Hinduism was partly due to the degenerate condition of Hindu women and had he visualized the important role of women in reasserting the glory of Aryavrata and it was primarily for this that he called upon the Aryans to take up the cause of upliftment of women.

The cultural nationalism which Swami Dayananda and his Arya samaj propagated, reflected a sharp difference from the universalism of

the earlier phase of socio-religious reform movement's brand of cultural nationalism as it valorized only certain features of Hindu past. Dayananda developed a doctrine which was meant to revive a purified and reformed Hinduism and the superiority of this Hinduism was established over all other contemporary faiths. It is important to note here that his emphasis on the superiority of this regenerated Hinduism and exaltation of a Vedic past was reflected in every aspect of his reform programme.

In Dayanand's writing the regeneration of Aryavarta was the basic theme of his ideology. He not only glorified the ancient vedic past but also developed a scheme for its revival in modern times. His idea was to create an Aryan race physically fit and morally strong, and in this project for the creation of an ideal Aryan race, he realized, that the role of women was of great importance. Thus his concern for the condition of Hindu woman was largely derived from his basic theme of the revival of Aryavarta dominated by Aryan institutions. Dayanand's interest lay in creating a 'mainly' race of Aryans.¹ To Dayananda women's reproductive

¹ Dayananda's concern with manliness echoed a similar interest expressed by ideologues of cultural nationalism elsewhere in India. A part of Bankim Chandra's project of nation formation (jati-pratistha) was Bahubol (physical strength See Ranajit Guha, An Indian Historiography of India - A nineteenth century agenda and its implication, Calcutta 1988.

capacities were means for the reproduction and rearing of this race. It was one of the main reasons for his opposition to the practice of child marriage² amongst the Hindus. In his work Satyartha Prakash" he laid down certain rules and regulations for ideal conception which was followed by a series of regulations of food, clothing and cleanliness etc. for both mother and child. All these regulations were part of a project for creating a superior "Aryan race'.

For the creation of a physically strong and morally superior Aryan race, each institution of the Hindu social structure, according to Dayananda, had a specific role to play. He perceived family as the primary institution where a child begins to receive education. Moreover the role of family was considered crucial for the reproduction of Hindu cultural and moral values. For education appropriate to this purpose of rearing the child in the family the role of mother was important "children do not receive so good a benefit of education as they do from the mother. Blessed is the mother who teaches her child what constitutes good character from its birth till the completion of its education."³

² Dayananda wrote "a girl's marriage at the age of 8 or 10 years is of no use. The best Children are the fruits of the marriage of women 16-24 years old." See Dayananda Saraswati - Satyartha Prakash, N.Delhi 1988, pp.54-56.

³ Sawami Dayananda, op.cit., p.21.

Further he advocated women's right to receive education on the ground that an ignorant wife could not participate as an equal partner in social and religious duties with her husband as the women in the Vedic ages did. Besides for the sake of the happiness in the family, he said, the education of women was essential, because - "If the master of a house be educated and his wife uneducated, there will every day be war of gods and devils in the house. How can there be any joy in it?"⁴ Therefore, one can conclude that in Dayanand's view, it was the role of woman as mother, the teacher and rearer of her child and as a dutiful, pious wife in the family, that required education of Hindu women. For the strengthening of patriarchal Hindu family and for assigning to woman their role and place in the Hindu social structure education was deemed necessary for woman. One excerpt from his work 'Satyartha Prakash' would make this point obvious:

"Women should necessarily learn grammar, theology medicine, arithmetic and art. Without this much, it is not possible to ascertain what is right and what is wrong, what type of treatment should be offered to the husband and others; how should children be born, bred and brought up; how household affairs should be carried on, how happiness should be secured in the family. Arithmetic is necessary for keeping

⁴ Ibid., p.51.

family accounts. Without the study of Vedas it is not possible to understand religious duties."⁵

Thus we can argue, on the basis of Dayanand's writings that his ideas on the upliftment of Hindu women and the question of their education were, to a large extent, guided by his wider concern i.e. revival of the past glory of Aryavarta. Emancipation of Hindu women was not the objective. Instead strengthening of the patriarchal family as an institution, contributing to the reproduction of Hindu cultural and moral values was the theme on which the scheme of educating Hindu women and their general upliftment was based.

The Satyartha prakash of Swami Dayananda, the founder of Arya Samaj, was not just a book of religion. Rather it was meant to be a moral code of conduct, a guide for the Aryan people to adhere to. Swami Dayananda died in the year 1883. He died too early, his followers felt, without giving them adequate guidance to follow his precepts as taught in the Satyartha Prakash. They nevertheless endeavored to be true to his word and to make Satyartha Prakash their guide. This was particularly true of his followers in Punjab, where the number of Arya Samajis was growing rapidly. Women's question also retained its importance in the post Dayananda Arya Samaj. Dayananda's followers in Punjab, took up the

⁵ Swami Dayananda, op.cit. p.51.

question with all seriousness and began to work for reform in the condition of Hindu women. However, a recapitulation of some features of the condition of upper caste Hindu women in post annexation Punjab particularly the condition of their education is essential to understand the context in which the idea of reforming the condition of Hindu women and the scheme of educating them were popularized.

In Punjab in 1881, 24.8% of women over 15 years of age in all communities were widows. The figure for Hindus and Sikhs was 25.8%.⁶ The phenomenon of child marriage, widowhood and ban on widow remarriage was mainly confined to the upper and middle castes of the Hindus, census of 1901 observes "The higher is their (Women's) social position, the lower is the age of betrothal and marriage."⁷ Moreover, as Leitner observed, "widowhood was painful for upper and middle caste Hindus. The case of child widows in upper castes is pitiable."⁸

Social and religious taboos and customs made widowhood more difficult for Hindu women, and unlike most low caste women many upper caste Hindu widows, who were forced to earn their own living, could neither seek nor get any employment outside the house. "They

⁶ Census of India, Punjab, Para 39, Chapter 4, p.218.

⁷ Census of India, Punjab, op.cit., p.334.

⁸ Leitner G.W. History of Indigeneous Education in Punjab Since Annexation, Calcutta 1882, p.3.

generally employed themselves in spinning cotton and grinding corns."⁹ However, these few occupation available to women were threatened by colonial intrusion. For instance the destruction of handicraft industry due to the abundance of foreign mill made cloth had a severely adverse effect on these women.

In such a situation the position of these women became quite vulnerable and many of them were forced to adopt prostitution which posed a potential threat to the family, Arya Partika noted :

"They (women) generally yield to temptation and some of them become women of abandoned character and thus swell the ranks of prostitution, leaving thereby an indelible blot on the honour of those who even claim any relationship what ever with them."¹⁰

Educational Condition of Upper Caste Hindu Women in Late 19th Century Punjab

As far as the educational status of Hindu is concerned,^{not} much is known about pre-annexation Punjab. According to certain contemporary accounts, all the religious communities maintained their own educational institutions, where boys received secular and religious education and also some vocational training. "For girls learning was confined to the reading

⁹ Census of India, Punjab, 1881, Cahpter 8, p.384.

¹⁰ Arya Patrika, 6th August 1885.

of religious texts. They were taught in the seclusion of their houses and hardly were they taught to write".¹¹

After the annexation of Punjab, a new system of education was introduced and the Department of Education in Punjab was established in 1856. The motive of educating men was clear-to equip them for government professions, which was essential for the smooth functioning of the British structure of the Govt. It was not so keen on educating girls because they did not serve this purpose. An English civil Servant, Leitner notes that "The department ignored aided and unaided education of the female."¹²

Sir Robert Montgomery took the first initiative for the education of female, after annexation.¹³ Bedi Khem Singh school for girls, was established in the province, at the inspiration of Sir Montgomery.

However the half hearted efforts of the government were supplemented by the activities of the missionaries in the sphere of education. Christian missionaries were active in Punjab even before the opening of govt. department. The American Presbyterian mission was first in the field in 1834 and had a vigorous start. The church missionary society followed in 1854, and in 1855, the church of Scotland' opened

¹¹ Leitner G.W. op.cit., p.97.

¹² Ibid., p.107.

¹³ Ibid., p.102.

institutions for the education for boys and girls as well as Zenana mission for educating women in their homes.

The number and strength of missionary institutions, for the education of girls increased considerably, in the later half of the 19th century in Punjab. Their efforts were supported by government. According to the director of the Public Instructions Punjab Report on Popular Education, in ¹⁸⁷⁴ out of 218 aided institutions for female education, 45 were mission schools and 2 sets of Zenana mission: and these schools which were established through the large towns of the province contained 1,108 girls & 253 girls in Zenana classes.¹⁴ American Presbyterian church maintained schools for Hindu girls and church mission established orphanages which imparted reading and writing also.¹⁵ Government also opened schools for girls but it could be said that pre-annexation traditional religious education of the girls maintained by different communities was not supplemented by secular government schools. The neglect of the government paved the way for overtly Christian missionary schools.

Curriculum for the girls, in government as well as in missionary

¹⁴ Report on Popular Educaiton in the Punjab and its Dependencies for the year 1874-75 by Major, W.M. HolRoyd Director of Public Instructions, Punjab, Lahore 1876, p.61.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.62.

schools more or less contained - "reading, writing and arithmetic in Persian and urdu, geography history, the Bible and Christian instruction, plain needle work and knitting."¹⁶ However emphasis both in government and mission schools was on domestic and moral education. Urdu and Persian was a feature of govt. girls schools. Persian & urdu could be used in boy's schools because it facilitated greater availability of jobs.

It is important to note here that most of the English secondary schools were attended by European and native Christian girls, none of these schools had any Hindus; and the attendance in middle and vernacular schools, of Hindu girls were not very great.¹⁷ Apart from European and native Christian girls, government schools for girls, were mostly attended by Muhammadan girls. Hindu girls went to aided schools, maintained either by Christian missions or by different native communities.¹⁸ According to the reports in 1876-77 out of the 6987 girls attending grant-in-aid female schools, number of Hindu girls was 2,736,

¹⁶ Report on Popular Education in Punjab and its dependencies for the year 1875-76 by Major W.R.M. HolRoyd. Director P.I., Punjab Lahore 1877, p.65.

¹⁷ Report on Progress of Education in India - 1887-88 to 1891-92. Second Quinquennial Report by A.M. Nash, Calcutta, 1893.

¹⁸ Report on Popular Education in Punjab and its Dependencies for the year 1876-77 by Director of P.I., Major W.R.M. HolRoyd, Punjab, Lahore 1876, p.44.

whereas in govt. schools for female out of 3,374 pupils, number of Muslim girls was 2,710.¹⁹ Most of the school going Hindu girls could attend primary schools; only a few could reach upto middle or secondary education and their numbers even in primary schools was very small.²⁰

A large section of the Hindu girls, who were attending government or aided schools, belonged to the lower castes and classes.²¹ While in part this phenomenon was due to various taboos, prejudices and customs, confined basically to the upper and middle castes, it also came about due to the content of the female education in government and aided schools. Sardar Gurudayal Singh, Asst. Commissioner of Hoshiarpur said - "The girls who generally come to the schools are of poorer classes, The rich and higher classes, still object to send their daughters to schools." The reason according to him mainly was the curriculum of the girls schools, which was more or less similar to the boy's schools. He found teaching of Urdu and Persian language most objectionable (the immoral tendency of Persian poetry was considered notorious by him). He further asserted that Nagri and Sanskrit must be introduced if, it is thought desirable, to

¹⁹ Ibid., For the year 1875-76, Statements Section XI, XXIV.

²⁰ Ibid., p.46.

²¹ Ibid., p.48.

induce the higher classes of natives, to send their daughters to schools.²²

In fact in the memorials addressed to the Education Commission,²³ many of the witnesses reflected the views of the upper and middle caste Hindus towards the education of their daughters. Sardar Dayal Singh, another witness insisted that the aim of female education in this country is not to make sound scholars but to make better mothers and wives. Therefore the girls should be taught only those subjects as might facilitate the attainment of this object.²⁴ Khan Ahmad Khan said that - "it is not so necessary for girls to receive the knowledge of subjects like geography. Moral and religious education must be given to them."²⁵

Moreover absence of female teachers and appointment of European male or female and lower caste teachers also kept the girls of the upper and middle castes away from the schools.²⁶ Hindu moral code of

²² Report by Punjab Provincial Committee & Memorials addressed in the Education Commission', Appendix to the Education Commission Report, Evidence of Sardar Gurudayal Singh, p.238.

²³ Report of Punjab...op.cit., Evidence of Khan Ahmad Khan and Mary Chatterjee. (They reflected same same views on female education in Punjab), p.175-126.

²⁴ Report of Punjab...op.cit., Evidence of Sardar Dayal Singh, p.352.

²⁵ Ibid., Evidence of Khan Ahmad Khan, p.106.

²⁶ Leitner G.W., op.cit., p.105.

conduct was against male teachers²⁷ at the same time the moral standards of lower class female teachers was suspected. Thus parents of upper and middle caste Hindu girls, hesitated to send, their daughters to distant schools, were against the same curriculum as in boys schools, and were not in favour of male and European teachers. As a result girls of upper and middle castes rarely received any formal education in the post annexation Punjab.

Search for Identity and Position of Women

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, decisive steps were taken in the realm of female education by the Arya Samaj of the Punjab. Punjab Arya Samaj's appeal for female education, considerably influenced the upper and middle caste Hindus of the Punjab. It is a fact that the concern of a large section of Punjab Arya Samaj's was motivated by the teaching of Swami Dayananda; but the complex colonial situation, the emerging Punjabi Hindu elite and its socio-cultural needs reflected in a particular mind set, created the fertile grounds for the reception, propagation and consolidation of Dayanand's project for the upliftment and education of women. However reforming the condition of women became an important agenda of Punjab Arya Samaj due to some significant socio-cultural factors. Post Annexation Punjab, it should

²⁷ Schools for Hindu Girls were not even permitted for male inspection. See Report on Popular Education, op.cit., p.44.

be mentioned was marked by not only a change in the politico- economic fabric of the structure. This also resulted in the enhancement of the socio-cultural tensions existing in pre- annexation Punjab among the three communities: Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The alien and assertive British rule added to this a new dimension: Christianity.

British rule was, initially, by a section of the Punjabees seen to be presenting professional classes with immense opportunities to enhance their economic status. However, the same urban, educated Punjab soon felt the humiliation of the racist attitude of an alien and superior authority. Paisa Akbar noted that "The English donot care for the manners and customs of other people. The natives are much dissatisfied with the treatment they receive at the hands of the English, who look down upon them with contempt and call them "niggers" and "black men".²⁸

The colonized people in Punjab, as in other parts of India faced the contempt of the colonial power. This was felt more obviously in the context of the position of women. The superior morality and sense of justice of the colonizing power were evident, it was repeatedly claimed, in their better treatment of their women. The manner in which the colonized people treated their women was in marked contrast to this

²⁸ The Report of the native newspapers, Punjab, 1896, Paisa Akbar (Lahore) 15th August, 1896.

uncivilized behaviour. Closely associated was that of the extent of liberty and freedom that they enjoyed. The western model of woman was portrayed as self-conscious and independent while the Indian woman was declared to be stifled within the "Purdah"

Moreover the British through their particular system of compiling knowledge and the intense study of the "native societies," not only created a sense of humiliation among the Indians but also underlined the inherent divisions among various communities. Studies by the colonial officials of indigenous customs, traditions, caste and so on pointed out that reprehensible customs such as child marriage, were a feature of Hindu community: "No fewer than 17,899 males and 26,686 females were married before they had reached the age of five, the great majority of this being Hindus."²⁹ The criticism made by colonial power made the urban educated Punjabi Hindus receptive to idea of social reform and women's upliftment.

Thus in the colonial period in Punjab women's position attracted, attention of the Aryan reformers as it was the position of women which to a large extent was determining, the superiority of ones community. Arya Samaj in Punjab was closely associated with the reassertion of the

²⁹ Census of India. 1901, vol XVI, NWP and Oudh, Part I, Report by R.Burer, p.116.

prestige of Hindu community. Hence, a model of womanhood different from Western as well as other indigenous models represented by various reform groups was needed. The quest for a self-enhancing identity had become a task of this section of Punjabee Hindus which formed the back bone of the Arya Samaj in Punjab. They followed the ideas and teachings of Swami Dayananda but the socio-cultural needs and a particular mind set of this section of Punjabee (which belonged to upper and middle castes of the Hindus) Hindus played an important part in formulating the reform programs of Arya Samaj in Punjab including the women's question. Woman's question became a crucial part of the identity quest of Arya Samaj. The ideas, prejudices and conflict of this class were reflected in all reform programs concerning women.

The question of reforming the condition of women, attracted the attention of Punjabee Arya Samaj not only because colonial power had made it a signifier for the health of any community but some other factors were also responsible for it. Women, as in other communities, in Hindu social structure, too were always considered the symbol of the morality. Speaking of the Punjab of the 19th Century and its customs, Prakash Tandon reflects how important it was, to protect the moral character of the girls among Hindus. He wrote about the marriage "if the boy's family came to suspect that the girl's parents had not taken enough care to guard her modesty, the betrothal would immediately be broken off.

such girls brought shame upon their families."³⁰ Therefore the evils of child marriage, the brutal life that came with compulsory widowhood and prostitution, alarmed the Arya Samajis of Punjab because the degenerate condition of upper caste women threatened the structure of Hindu society particularly the patriarchal family.

Reform in the position of women was felt necessary to establish the superiority of the community. Lala Lajpat Rai for instance, wrote "The present position of women in India is extremely harmful to the progress of the community. It substantially hampers the growth of the religion and the social, mental and material progress of the community"³¹.

The question of educating women was considered crucial because they were the first teacher of their child who taught religious duties and cultural values to the child "to follow the path of the Vedas, it is necessary for us to increase the number of pious and educated mothers".³²

In a changing context purdah and total illiteracy of upper and middle caste women ensured their isolation from the world of their husbands. Swami Shradhananda pointed out that an ignorant wife was

³⁰ Tandon, Prakash, Punjabi Century, 1857-1947, New Delhi, 1988, p.55.

³¹ Joshi, V.C., (Ed.), Lala Lajpat Rai, Writing and Speeches, Delhi, 1966, p.379.

³² Swami Shradhananda Grandhavali, Vol.8, New Delhi, 1987, p.21.

an obstacle in the way of the progress of her husband as she was unable to understand the progressive acts of her husband.³³ Thus an uneducated wife and mother impeded the progress of the community.

Moreover, the threat of Christianity was also there. Christian missionaries in Punjab, through their various institutions, were spreading the message of the gospels. From 1860 onwards they sought to reach women in the seclusion of their homes "The tradition of Purdah" write Jones "Had kept most women beyond the reach of Christian preaching, until it was decided in the 1860s to send female missionaries into the home."³⁴ The threat of the conversion of women, it was felt, was a threat to the whole order of society. In schools too Christianity influenced girls and Aryans realised the repercussion of the spread of Christianity into their homes. Lala Munshi Ram, one of the propagators of female education in Punjab Arya Samaj recalled:

"On my return to home, Ved Kumari (his daughter) came running to me with this newly learnt message: Christ is the prophet, no price is required to mention his name Christ is my anchor. He is my Ram, he is my Krishna. I was startled to hear this and, on enquiry, I learnt that they were taught even to detest our holy sastras. I realised then that an

³³ Swami Shradhananda - op.cit. P.22.

³⁴ Jones, K.W- Arya Dhama: Hindu consciousness in 19thc. Punjab, Delhi, 1976, p.9.

Aryan Girl's school was an absolute necessity."³⁵

His campaign to open a girl's school was not because of any idealistic concern for the status of women but out of the fear of Christian conversion.

It was assumed that an education emphasizing the sociocultural and religious values would, to a certain extent, prevent the threat of Christianity. Because women were seen as repositories of the tradition, therefore it was expressed that "Christian missionary school for girls are far more injurious to us than those for boys. Our girls know nothing of their own religion and the readers conform an idea of the effect which the preaching of these ladies (Christian missionary teachers) can produce on their minds. I am not against female education. On the contrary I hold that an educated and religious wife can prove an invaluable help to her husband. But I consider it foolish to give our girls poisonous bread to eat."³⁶ The "poisonous" impact of the teachings of Christian schools on girls was pointed out possibly because it had the potential to threaten the traditional religious- cultural values. Women were considered the future teachers of their sons, an education representing the ideals of the

³⁵ Swami Shradhananda Ki Diary (Hindi), Pub-Delhi P.53.

³⁶ The Aryan Gazette (Lahore), 28th April 1898, from the Selections, from vernacular newspaper report published in the Punjab for the year 1898.

Aryan ideology was to ensure the perpetuation and preservation of those values.

Thus one can conjecture that the project of female education, as propagated by Punjab Arya Samaj, was formulated by the socio-cultural needs of the male of a newly emerged, urban social group. A large section of the Punjab Arya Samaj consistently advocated the idea of educating women and opening schools for them. What one understands is that this idea was not guided by some idealist or humanist concerns. Education was not seen as one of the means for emancipation of women, it was rather meant to adjust them to the ideas and ideals of Hindu Punjabee male of the urban educated class. Educating women was considered as one of the ways of controlling processes by which women could acquire socio-cultural traits, moral values and habits so that they could coordinate their mind and life with that of their male counterparts.

Chapter III

ACTIVITIES OF PUNJAB ARYA SAMAJ REGARDING HINDU WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Fashioning The Aryan Woman

Female education, in Punjab, received fitful support by Aryas during the 1890s. The first initiative it seems was taken by Amritsar Samaj, but it met only with indifferent success. Not only ~~was general~~ public opinion lukewarm but actual financial support was also lacking. A lack of female teachers, text books and public support was compounded by differing views on the content and scope of Hindu female education.

The failure of the earlier efforts for the educations of the Hindu females, in Punjab, reflected the general indifference and prejudices of the educated Hindu Punjabis towards education of their women. The socio-economic conditions of the post-annexation Punjab and consequent emergence of an urban educated Hindu social group and their specific socio-cultural requirements provided the space for the agenda of education of a section of Hindu women. However, various religious, cultural taboos associated with the education of Hindu upper ~~caste women~~ ~~intervened in the~~ educational activities for women. 1890 onwards, Arya Samaj in Punjab, through its consistent efforts, institutions and innovations, addressed various aspects of Hindu female education and

made it more 'acceptable' and 'respectable' among the urban Hindus in Punjab.

Early Arya Samaj Efforts

Various innovative measures were adopted. The Amritsar Samaj, for instance, through its appeal tried to persuade "all the pleaders at present practising in Amritsar...to pay out of their daily income a donation of two annas a day... which comes up to two or three rupees a day."¹ This contribution was meant to further the cause of female education. As early as 1885, the Amritsar Samaj, announced the establishment of two girls' school in the city and a third one at Kutra Dula; commenting on this '*Arya Patrika*' wrote "our brothers of the Amritsar Samaj are of course working very zéalously and steadily... The cause of female education through indigenious agency has received great encouragement in the city of Amritsar."²

During the year 1885-1888, the Amritsar Samaj provided continued leadership while the Lahore Arya Samaj concentrated on the 'Dayananda Anglo-Vedic Schools' for boys. They too maintained a girls' school, but 'Anglo-vernacular girls' School', was a project of the Lahore 'Brahma

¹ Arya Patrika, 12 September, p.4.

² Ibid., 3rd October, 1885, p.4.

Samaj', which, according to '*Tribune*' attracted students from well to do families".³ By 1889, the Ferozpur Samaj had also managed to organize a fairly successful school.

However, the education of Hindu girls, in Punjab, remained limited in scope and importance, until the Jullundur Samaj provided new patterns of motivation and leadership. The consistent efforts and campaigns of Lala Dev Raj, Lala Munshi Ram, the militant wing of 'Arya Samaj', gradually popularized the Aryan scheme of Hindu Women's Education.

On 26th December, 1886, Jullundur Arya Samaj agreed to open a 'zenana school', for which, a monthly expenditure of one rupee was sanctioned.⁴ This attempt of Jullundur Samaj, proved to be a failure. Report of the 'Arya Samaj' of the year 1886, mentioned that the "zenana school run by the Samaj was in bad shape because o the lack of a good teacher".⁵ Lala Dev Raj's mother, Kahan Devi, took charge of the school, classes were held in her house under the instruction of one Mai Lado, who had earlier taught in a mission school. But after some time, the Jullundur Samaj stopped its monthly contribution of Rupee 1. Kahan

³ Tribune, December 22, 1896, p.5.

⁴ Vidyalkar, Satyadev, Lala Dev Raj (Jullunder city 'KMV' Prabandh Kritre Sabha), 1937, pp.11-12.

⁵ Ibid., p.112.

Devi, for some time, personally financed the school, but the school soon had to be closed down for lack of students.⁶

Lala Dev Raj did not give up. He went to the houses of the Hindus in the city and neighboring areas, argued with them on the relevance of female education and tried to convince them to educate their daughters.⁷ However, another attempt, made by Jullundur Samaj, was equally disappointing. In 1890-91, a third attempt of Samaj, proved more successful. An 'Arya Kanya Pathshala' was opened with a body of one male and one female teachers and 11 students. Success came only a year later with the appointment of a female head mistress, Bibi Guru Devi, who provided leadership for the teaching staff. The 1892 Arya Samaj report, mentioned with satisfaction the progress of the school and expressed confidence that one day it would become a 'Mahavidyalay'. Lala Dev Raj took the position of school manager while two local Aryas--Master Hira Singh and Master Sant Ram- agreed to serve as school inspectors.⁸ The school prospered inspite of some opposition and the number of students rose steadily from its original eleven to fifty five

⁶ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., p.112.

⁷ Ibid., p.110.

⁸ Jones, K.W. Arya Dharma, Hindu Consciousness in 19th century Punjab, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978, p.105.

by the end of 1892.⁹

The success of the 'Arya Kanya Pathshala' of the Jullundur, increased the financial problems. Lala Devraj and Lala Munshi Ram turned their creative energies to deal with this problem. They engaged themselves in the fund raising projects for the school. They employed the techniques already used by the propagators of the 'Dayananda Anglo-Vedic College'. 'Tribune' of March 16, 1892 reported that "the Arya gentlemen of Jullundur are working hard for the success of the girls' school. They have started a fund raising programme in imitation of the 'Ata fund'. They go about collecting such articles as are thrown away but which still fetch some price. The money go to swell the school fund".¹⁰ Apart from the Raddi fund and Ata fund, Devraj took to begging in the streets of Jullundur and neighboring small towns.¹¹

The new methods of fund collection not only added to the growing monetary base for continued expansion of the 'Arya Kanya Pathshalas' but also helped in sensitizing the community on the issue of female education. The Ata system (collection of wheat flour from houses of the Hindus in the city) appealed to Hindus as part of their traditional world. In fact in all matters, organizational, ideological and even in financial, 'Arya Samaj'

⁹ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit, p.113.

¹⁰ Tribune, March 16, 1892, p.4.

¹¹ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit, pp. 128-129.

cautiously stressed their adherence to the Hindu Past. "The System" noted Arya Patrika "is the more commendable because it is in accordance with an old practice and custom of the country and it is not a new thing."¹²

The real shift however came in the year 1892, with the proposal of Lala Devraj and Lala Munshi Ram to establish a high school for girls. Lala Devraj announced that the Samaj intends to open a high school a 'Kanya Mahavidyalaya' for girls at a projected cost of Rs. 250,000 which was to have a girls' hostel and a Vidhwa Ashrama. This announcement seemed grand beyond possible realization and presented a goal which found little approval among the urban Punjabi Hindus. Within Arya Samaj a storm of protest was raised by none other than the DAV wing of the Arya Samaj. This debate over the proposed high school demonstrated differences of opinion as to the advisability of giving higher education to women as well as the general tension existent in the Samaj by the early 1890s.

It is important to mention here that 'Arya Samaj, in 1893, split on the two issues of meat eating vs. Vegetarianism, and Anglicized vs. Sanskrit based education. The college faction, led by Hans Raj and Lala Lajpat Rai henceforward concentrated on building up a chain of DAV

¹² Arya Patrika, August 17, p.4.

colleges while 'Mahatma' faction, led by Munshi Ram and Lekh Ram and Lala Devraj, involved itself in the establishment of 'Gurukul Kangari' (Sanskrit based boys' school) and in the cause of female education.

The issue of the establishment of 'Kanya Mehavidyalaya' became another controversial issue within Arya Samaj. This became the starting point for a prolonged and bitter controversy between the two factions of Arya Samaj as to the necessity of starting a high school for girls at that particular juncture.

A Sectarian Debate in the 1890's

In 1890s a series of letters appeared in the '*Tribune*' arguing the merits of primary vs. high school for girls. Lala Lajpat Rai initiated the debate by questioning the advisability of higher education for girls. He argued that it was "pre mature from a practical point of view to think of giving higher education to girls".¹³ In his another letter, he argued that there are some strong and important inducements to back male education "while the education of the girls cannot necessarily derive any support from the same motives for education".¹⁴

DAV wing did not reject the idea of educating Hindu women. They

¹³ Tribune, March 16, 1892, p.4.

¹⁴ Tribune, March 23, 1894, p.5.

on the other hand argued that the establishment of such an institution would be at the cost of primary education for girls. Further they insisted that the drive for a women's college would compete with DAV college for Aryan contribution.¹⁵ Lala Lajpat Rai wrote in this connection : "the question simply is whether it is practical at the present time to do so (open a high school for girls) and whether any attempt made in this direction will be a well directed attempt. It is wise to direct our energies for extending the primary education of the girls."¹⁶

It was also argued that since government efforts for girls' education had not made much headway, the experiment was doomed to failure. Opponents of high school refused to recognize the success of similar institution in the province of Bombay and Calcutta- "What might be a successful under taking in Calcutta and Bombay need not be so in Lahore."¹⁷ Lala Lal Chand and Ralla Ram joined Lajpat Rai in calling for caution and continued broadening of primary education.¹⁸ Lala Hansraj and Lajpat Rai continued their campaign against 'KMV' in '*Arya Gazette*'.

¹⁵ Tribune, April 25, May 16, 1894 p.5. Letter to the editor by Lala Ralla Ram and Lala Lal Chand.

¹⁶ Tribune, March 28, 1894, p.5.

¹⁷ Tribune, March 28, 1894. p.4.

¹⁸ Tribune, March 28, 1894, p.5.

The opposition of higher education for Hindu female was based on the premise of the lack of funds and on the argument that it would prevent the broadening of primary education for girls', but it also revealed the prejudices regarding higher education of female. The agenda of Hindu female education was not concerned with women per se but with their roles in Hindu family and society. For their roles of mother and wives a limited extent of education was considered sufficient for them. Discussing loopholes of the argument of 'college faction' Madhu Kishwar¹⁹ argues that when the government had taken measures to limit the higher education among Indian men on the grounds that primary education needed to be first consolidated, it was Lala Lajpat Rai himself and his supporters who opposed this argument. They pointed to the failures of government efforts as an index of the impracticability of female education, forgetting the fact that Arya Samaj itself had pointed out the insufficiency of government efforts in the realm of female education.

On the other hand the advocates of higher education for Hindu female, Sundar Dass, Lala Kanshi Ram and Lala Ralla Ram, Lala Dev Raj found themselves caught between the desire to educate women and the

¹⁹ Kishwar, Madhu, 'The daughter of Aryavarta', Women in Colonial India, Essays on Survival, Work and the State, (edited by J. Kirshna Murty), OUP 1989, pp.100-101.

fear, which they shared with others, of the possible effect that education might have on women and on the family. The arguments of the champion of higher female education showed the ambiguity that surrounded female education and the fears that it created even among those who called for its extension.

They argued that the issue could not be seen merely as a problem of 'economics' and 'statistics' alone,²⁰ but only in the long term perspective of its impact on future generation. They argued that higher education of women, in the long term, would facilitate the primary education of girls. Lala Bulki Ram for instance argued: "It appears to me that the question is not one of primary vs. high education for girls but it is between education and no education at all."²¹ He was of the opinion that no solid scheme of primary education of girls could be extended which leaves out the establishment of high schools for girls, "because", he argued "to deny high education to our women is to deny them, as a class, any education whatsoever. The want of well trained female teachers could not be supplied unless and until high school were establish".²² Lala Sundar Dass supported his argument and said that it was impossible to

²⁰ Tribune, letter by Sundra Dass Suri, 11 April, 1894, P.5.

²¹ Tribune, 14th April, 1894, Letter by Lala Bulki Ram, p.5.

²² Ibid.

get female teachers if Arya Samaj confines its efforts to the narrow bounds of primary education.²³

Educating 'Aryan Wives and Mothers'

Another argument of the champions of higher education was based primarily on the premise that it was necessary for bridging the mental gap between husband and wife. Lala Harkishan Lal, argued that a lowly educated wife cannot share her husband's world "The educated husband only needs to be taken into confidence and he will point to you the gloomy darkness and miserable life that he leads at home".²⁴ He also insisted that if Hindus did not educate their daughters properly, "they would be superseded by better ones, imported from abroad".²⁵

It is important to mention here, that higher education for women, was not just advocated on the grounds of preparing efficient wives and mothers or female teacher. Threat of highly educated christian woman was posed to further the cause of higher education for Hindu women. Fear of Chirsticanity became a recurrent theme for propagating the cause of Hindu female education.

²³ Ibid., 17th April, 1894, letter by Sundar Dass, p.5.

²⁴ Tribune, 7th April, 1894, p.4.

²⁵ Ibid.

It was repeatedly asserted that for the progress and solidification of the community and religion, education of women is necessary and that an illiterate and ill mannered Hindu Wife would pave the way for the entry of Christian women in the houses of Hindus.²⁶ Demographic factors were used to urge the Hindus to take up the cause of female education. For instance, in *Panchal Pandita*, In a news item the increasing growth of christian population in the census of 1901 was pointed out and an appeal was made to educate women for the sake of community.²⁷

It could be said, that for the advocates of the female education there were certain tangible benefits to be had from giving girls higher education. By and large the aim of higher education, as laid down by its proponents, was to create primary school teachers competent mothers and "intelligent" companions for an emerging group of western educated urban Hindu men and contribution of Hindu women's education in enhancing the prestige of the community. Its liberational role and any economic function was clearly subordinate to the wider social goals which stressed women's willing acquiescence and not a questioning and enquiring mind. Therefore the proponents of higher education assured

²⁶ Panchal Pandita, July 1902, p.11.

²⁷ Ibid.

that nobody was "seriously thinking of turning out ladies mistresses of arts".²⁸ They tried to convince their opponents that they too believed that "the character of girls' education should be different from that of boys' in many essential respects".²⁹ Because the Hindu girl has a function of very different nature to perform from those of Hindu boys. They would not encourage any system which would deprive women of her "national traits of character".

We can say, that the basic purpose of Hindu female education, as propagated by Aryan reformers, was primarily to reemphasize and reassert women's role as wives and mother. Higher education for Hindu women was propagated on the pretext of preserving their 'feminine' qualities and conditioning them for new situations, and there was no dichotomy between the two groups on this issue.

The debate over higher education, illustrated the dilemma of the Aryan reformers over women's question as a whole. They wanted reforms for women but only so far as it increased the wellbeing of family and prestige of the community. Emancipation of women was never on the agenda. They wanted to educate women but only to enable them for their future roles in family and society. Reformers of the Arya Samaj,

²⁸ Tribune, 26th May, 1894, letter by Shiv Dayal, p.5.

²⁹ Tribune, 11th April, 1894, letter by S.D. Suri, p.5.

particularly those who participated in this debate, were too cautious to discuss the relation of higher education to economic function of any kind. Lala Dev Raj, for instance, announced that "we want to train the future mothers and wives of the Hindus, it is not our motive to produce clerks"³⁰ Another Samaji asserted that 'women' should be educated to the extent which enables them to become good mother and wives, they are not needed to go for jobs'.³¹

Opening of economic opportunities through education would have meant a fundamental change in the position of Hindu women. But by bringing out any basic change in the life of Hindu women through education, reformers could have threatened the established patriarchy. Women, however, were not meant to be so educated that they might threaten the control of patriarchal society. Even the enthusiasm to educate women was mixed with the fear of diversion of Hindu women from their traditional roles. Therefore both the groups in Arya Samaj argued that the main purpose of the education of the women was to produce good 'Aryan wives and mothers'. Both sections of the Arya Samaj expressed their unwillingness to discuss any significant change in the social role of Hindu women through education. On the contrary it was

³⁰ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., p.170.

³¹ Panchal Pandita, April 1906, Article by Vishnu Dutt on ed. of Hindu women'.

the social roles of the Hindu women that was to be reemphasized through education. Thus Lala Lajpat Rai, once the opponent of higher education of women, admitted later that "the nature of duties imposed on a wife and mother in the Hindu scriptures and books of law, makes a fairly good education an absolute necessity of a wife and mother".³²

Caution, opposition, the lack of trained female teachers, of text books and school facilities and the difficulty in raising funds, all inhibited the movement for establishing the 'Kanya Maha Vidyalaya' but ultimately the Jullundur Samaj pushed ahead with its goal of higher education for girls. Finally on 14th June, 1896 'Arya Kanya Pathshala' was converted into 'Kanya Maha Vidyalaya' (KMV) with a girl's hostel.

Pioneering Role of K.M.V.

'KMV' was founded in Jullundur & Hakim Chimmanlal of Dera Gazi Khan was the first to send his daughters and daughter-in-law to 'KMV' ashram (hostel).³³ An orphanage along with hostel was also established and in the year 1907 'KMV' established a 'Vidhwa ashram' or widows' home under its auspices. Women of the hostel, widow home and orphanage were taught according to the curriculum structure of 'KMV'.

³² Tribune, 18 March, 1915, Lala Lajpat Rai- (The position of Indian women'.

³³ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit, p.128.

Popularity of 'KMV' gradually increased and the number of girls student perpetually increased. They started with 99 girls in 1896 and by 1906, 247 girls were receiving education there.³⁴

With the establishment of 'KMV in Jullundur education of Hindu women in Punjab, entered into a new phase. The example of 'KMV inspired other local Samajis to open institution for girls' education. Ludhiana Saharanpur and various other Samajes affiliated their girls' schools with KMV, most of the Arya Samaj girls' school and even government girls' school adopted the curriculum structure of 'KMV'.³⁵ 1890 onwards 'KMV' became the nucleus of educational activity in the province of Punjab and north India. More important than this is the fact that the experiment of 'KMV' in Jullundur and consequent spread of educational activity of the Arya Samaj in the province was crucial in setting up the stereotype of Hindu women in the province and north India at that socio-historical juncture. The organization, curriculum and propaganda of female education popularized through the experiment of KMV, embodied the Aryan ideal of womanhood. In numerous ways, ^{it} helped to strengthen, popularize and to a certain extent construct the image of an ideal, moral traditional, Aryan woman among a certain section of the

³⁴ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit, p.118.

³⁵ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit, p.122.

Hindus.

'KMV' rose as a well organized institution for girls' education in Punjab. It adopted a curriculum structure of its own, independent from the government and missionary girls' school. Text books were especially written for 'KMV' by Lala Dev Raj and Lala Deen Dayal which were later prescribed not only in other 'Arya Kanya Pathshalas' of Punjab but also in the government schools. 'KMV' published a monthly magazine for women called '*Panchal Pandita*' (a propaganda organ) since, 1897, which carried the message of 'KMV' in articles on the method of teaching, educational essays for women, appeal for funds for 'KMV', the cause of Hindu female education etc.

The affairs of the 'KMV' were managed by a committee established in the year 1896. This committee managed the finances and devised the syllabus. From 1904, women also started participating in this committee.³⁶ 'KMV' had established its own independent examination and inspection system.³⁷ Financial help to 'KMV' basically came from the urban Hindu service class and city dwellers and traders. Lala Dev Raj also regularly went on fund raising campaigns along with his students.

³⁶ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit, p.134.

³⁷ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., p.124-25.

Annual functions of the different units of Arya Samaj in Punjab, were especially chosen for such fund raising programmes. In such gatherings of the Aryans, Lal Dev Raj and students of 'KMV' addressed the crowd on the merits and necessity of Hindu female education and appealed to the Aryans to support the cause of female education through monetary donations. Traditional festivals served to stimulate donations. For instance on the festival of 'Rakhi', students of 'KMV' sent 'Rakhis' and written appeals to educated Hindus requesting contribution. Through such attempts, the cause of female education was made a community centered issue.

Thus in so many respect, the experiment of 'KMV' stood as a model of female education in Punjab. Throughout the province of Punjab and other parts of north India, 'Arya Samaj' units established Aryan girls' schools based on the principles of 'KMV'.

Content of the Education

More important than management and organisation of the institution was the curriculum structure of the 'KMV'. Analysis of the curriculum structure is necessary since it determined the nature of education imparted to Hindu girls in the Aryan institutions. Most of the 'Arya Kanya Pathshalas' and even government school, adopted the curricula of 'KMV', by the year 1901, 104 'Arya Kanay Pathahals followed

the syllabus of 'KMV'

Curriculum content of female education had always been a source of controversy among the reformers. The main issue was the extent to which female education should differ from that of men. The school curriculum of Arya Samaj's institutions for girls' education in Punjab, which was largely determined by the syllabus of 'KMV', demonstrated the Aryan perception of Hindu women role in the Hindu social structure and embodied Aryan principles of womanhood in the late 19th century Punjab.

Medium of instruction in KMV as well as in other, 'Arya Kanya Pathahals' was Hindi while Sanskrit was introduced as a compulsory subject.³⁸ The imparting of 'Satyarth Prakash' and ideals of 'Arya Samaj' were important part of the curriculum. Reciting of Vedas and short stories related to Hindu mythology, how to read and write, some arithmetic, cooking, sewing, knitting, domestic economy, Indian history, and a heavy dose of moral education³⁹ was also taught.

There was a continual lament over the lack of suitable text books for girls, indicating that the nature of education for male and female was different. Lala Dev Raj took the initiative along with some other Arya

³⁸ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., p.123.

³⁹ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., pp.123-125.

Samajis to produce literature for women. The importance of this kind of literature is evident from the fact that some of these books got translated into Marathi, Telugu, Gujarati and other languages. These books were used as text books in 'KMV' and other Aryan girls' school. Moreover the Punjab and Central Provinces governments recommended these books for their schools. In 1904, Lala Dev Raj got an award of Rs. 200 for his contribution in this field.⁴⁰ The 'KMV' ran a 'Sahitya Bhandar' for distribution of such literature. These books were written in Hindi and the content of the books, as their names suggest, was basically moral, religious and domestic. Some of them were:

- a) *'Subodh Kanyan' (Stories of great pious women from Hindu mythology)*
- b) *Nari Prarthna (Bhajan)*
- c) *Bala Vinay*
- d) *Stri Dharm Niti (Duties of women)*
- e) *Stree Darpan (Book on home management)*
- f) *Nari Bhushan.*⁴¹

Through these books students were prepared to be good housewives as well as guardians of Hindu culture and tradition. In their course of

⁴⁰ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., p.198.

⁴¹ Panchal Pandita, 15th Nov, 1900, p.23.

learning they received knowledge about their moral, domestic and religious duties within the Hindu family and the community. And most importantly their minds were shaped by the epic image of Sita Savitri, on Damyanti, or historical figures like Durgavati etc.

'Panchal Pandita', the organ of the 'KMV' from 1897, became an instrument to carry the message and ideals of Arya Samaj, particularly the Aryan ideal of womanhood, far and wide. It was started as a 'monthly magazine of 20 pages solely devoted to the interest of Indian women'. *'Panchal Pandita'* carried information about the experiment being conducted at the 'KMV' to different Samajās, almost all of which opened 'Kanya Pathshalas'. Arya Samaj and even some government girls' schools not only included the books devised by the 'KMV' in their syllabus, but also the *'Panchal Pandita'*.⁴²

'Panchal Pandita' as claimed by its founders was launched with the objectives of "Furnishing good reading matter to our sisters cultivating their mental faculties by.....widening their interest by giving them a view of the world outside the closed zenanas, and of infusing in them liberal sympathies and elevating ideas".⁴³ Apart from the news and reports of

⁴² From the advertisement for the Panchal Pandita, appeared often in Tribune during these years, Editors of the massive were Lala Dev Raj and Lala Bandridas.

⁴³ Panchal Pandita, June 1900, p.22.

the educational activities of the Arya Samaj, '*Panchal Pandita*' regularly published essays, stories and moral tales illustrating ideal Aryan women and her roles in the family and society as perceived by Arya Samaj. Since *Panchal Pandita* was included in the syllabus of Aryan girls school and had a wide circulation, it could be said that the message, information, essays and stories published in the pages of magazine to a certain extent determined the nature of Aryan girls' education in Punjab.

The nature^{of} Hindu female's education as propagated by Arya Samaj in Punjab, needs some elaborate discussion as it has certain specific implications.

The Aryan ideology of cultural revivalism and its gradual association with the Hindu nationalism decisively affected the curriculum structure of Aryan girls' schools. Admittedly at the end of 19th century the idea of Hindu nationalism, its contours and meaning was still in its early stage of construction. However, the concern for Hindu community (Jati) had begun to be associated with the concern for the nation (Rashtra)

The use of Hindi, as medium of instruction in 'KMV' and other 'Kanya Pathshalas', for instance, had its own significance. Urdu and Persian, as medium of instruction was opposed by the Hindus for its

'Unhindu' and 'immoral' qualities⁴⁴ while English languages was also not favoured for its 'unfeminine', 'westernising' and 'denationalising' character. Arya Samaj in Punjab was closely associated with the Hindi movement. Many of the leaders of Punjab Arya Samaj, ^{were} engaged in the Urdu-Hindi controversy of late 19th century. Lala Lajpath Rai for instance participated in Hindi movement and emphasized on the importance of Hindi and Sanskrit for the Hindus.⁴⁵ Hindi was made a part of the assertion of the community identity. It was recognized by its propagators as the mother tongue of the Hindus and was given the place of national language. Therefore, use of Hindi as medium of instruction in girls school had some implications. English was introduced only in the year 1924 and it was an optional subject.⁴⁶

As regards the social role of women, the cultural revivalist ideology of Arya Samaj assigned a crucial role to the maternal role of Hindu women.⁴⁷ Women were considered important repositories of traditional

⁴⁴ Appendix to Education Commission Report, Report by the Punjab Provincial Committee and memories addressed to the Education Commission, Calcutta, 1884, Evidence of Sardar Guru Dayal Singh, p.238.

⁴⁵ Chand, Feroz, Lajpat Raj, Life and Works, Publication Division, Ministry of I&B, Govt. of India, 1978, p.82.

⁴⁶ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., p.123.

⁴⁷ Although the importance of 'enlightened' mother was a universal argument in favour of female edu., it had been greater application in Aryan ideology women were seen to be begetters of a new

and cultural values. They were not just responsible for the re-production of a physically healthy generation of Aryan male they also had an important function of transmitting the socio- cultural and traditional values laid down by the Aryan ideology to the future generation of Aryan Male so that the creation of a superior race of Hindu males would be ensured. In '*Panchal Pandita*' the argument was put forward, repeatedly, that education for Hindu women was necessary for the creation of an "enlightened" mother, and thus of an "enlightened" race.⁴⁸ It was asserted that it is the foremost duty of a mother to impart to her son the glorious tradition of Hinduism. She should tell her son the stories of 'Ramayana', 'Mahabharata', of 'Rana Pratap and Shivaji', "If a mother does not impart her son with the sense of patriotism and religiosity, she does not has any right to be called a mother."⁴⁹ The mother function of Hindu women, as visualized in Aryan ideology, made it essential to implant in her mind, through education, a sense of pride for Hindu Jati and nation.

Therefore particular emphasis was laid on religious and moral education, on teaching of '*Satyartha Prakash*', on the reciting of vedas, on

generation of man, physically and morally strong to enhance the glory of the community.

⁴⁸ Panchal Pandita, 15th May, 1901, p.5.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15 Jan, 1907, p.13.

the learning of Sanskrit and Hindi. Further the scheme of regeneration of 'Arya Vart' implied, one can say, exclusion of "other" kind of people and "other" kind of history. Aryan ideology emphasized the reinterpretation and glorification of a Hind past. Indian history, was a subject in the Aryan girls' school and through this subject they received the knowledge of this reinterpreted past. For instance in a question paper of 'history' of class IX, the questions asked were:

- 1) How did the Rajput woman of past practise their 'Rajput Dharma'?
- 2) Write the story of heroism and strength of the mother of Hambir Singh?
- 3) When and why the Rajputs wore saffron dress?
- 4) How was the condition of Rajputs during the reign of Prithviraj Chauhan?
- 5) Who were 'Sisodias'?
- 6) Write about the significance of
 - a) Rani Padmini
 - b) Chittor
 - c) Chandra Kavi.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Panchal Pandita, Nov. 1905, p.26.

The emphasis on the heroism, bravery and fighting spirit of the characters of a certain period of Indian history had an important significance. In the 'gloomy' and "dark" medieval. Islamic period of Indian history, the Rajput defenders of faith were portrayed as role models. Through this kind of education women learnt patriotism as perceived by Arya Samaj it gradually helped to strengthen in women the consciousness for community.

Apart from producing 'cultured and patriotic' mothers the nature of the education in Aryan Girls School aimed to train Hindu women for their roles as wives in the Hindu family. Unequal and subjugated position of Hindu wife was reemphasized and idealized through various sources. Examples of Sita and Savitri were given to illustrate the self sacrifice and devotion of Hindu wife.

The '*Patribrata Dharam*' (devotion to husband) of Hindu wife was perpetually emphasized through the content of the learning. Hindu women were considered true companions of their husbands.⁵¹ She was responsible for the happiness and progress of her husband. In a short essay titled '*pati seva*', for instance it was said that "an ideal wife is one who devotes her entire life for the happiness and well being of her

⁵¹ Panchal Pandita, July 1902, p.5.

husband, she should delight him and help him in all possible ways".⁵² The agenda of Hindu female education was popularized through *Panchal Pandita* by bringing out the fact that it would serve the needs of educated husband and bridge the mental gap between husband and wife.

Any new inclusion in the curriculum of Aryan girls' school was advocated on the grounds of its suitability to the husband and his happiness. For instance when 'music' as subject was included in the curriculum, objections were raised by a section of Aryan Hindus since women of respected Hindu families were not supposed to learn 'music'. On this the argument given in favour of subject was that "lessons in vocal and instrumental music would enable Aryan women to provide relaxation to their husbands who came tired and exhausted in the evening after their work. This would also refrain the husband ^{from} going outside the home for entertainment".⁵³

The submissive and docile qualities of a Hindu wife were reemphasized. It was asserted that the fear that 'education would make women aggressive was futile, on the contrary it helps women to become more obedient and docile'.⁵⁴ The submissive nature of Hindu wife was glorified time and again through various mythological and imaginary

⁵² Ibid, 15th Nov., 190, p.1.

⁵³ Panchal Pandita, May 1902, p.4.

⁵⁴ Ibid, Dec. 15, 1901, p.5.

tales. In a news item of *Panchal Pandita* for eg. titled 'ideal women' it was pointed out that a 'woman whose husband attempted to kill her, defended him before the magistrate and saved him from punishment.'⁵⁵ It was said, time and again that Hindu wife should ignore the shortcomings of her husband and adore him in every way."⁵⁶ The idealization of submissive nature of Hindu wife meant a complete denial of identity of woman in Hindu family and ensured that no challenges could be posed to the patriarchal structure of the family. It was meant to strengthen and consolidate the patriarchal family, the basic unit of Hindu social structure. The strengthening and disciplining of patriarchal family further ensured the strengthening of community.

The scheme of the education of Hindu woman perpetuated the idea of gender differential roles in the society. It reemphasised the sexual division of labour. It was asserted that the "basic duty of woman is home management and child rearing and she should be educated to perform these duties efficiently."⁵⁷ The basis of the idea of teaching women subjects like cooking, knitting, sewing and domestic sciences was to improve their skills of home management. They were taught mathematics primarily to keep the accounts of the home. '*Panchal Pandita*' regularly

⁵⁵ Ibid, 15th Dec., 1901, p.16.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 15th Dec., 1901, p.16.

⁵⁷ Panchal Pandita, 15th April, 1901, p.13.

published materials on cooking, and proper child rearing, nursing the sick and , duty of women towards their elders in the family.

The economically non-productive nature of female education was particularly emphasized. In the short tales and imaginary dialogues, printed in '*Panchal Pandita*', for instance, 'natural' and social difference between male and female and consequent sexual division of labour was pointed out. In an imaginary story titled '*Sulaxana ka Swapan*'⁵⁸ (Sulaxana's dream), , a society, dominated by women was illustrated. In this society women performed the roles, which are supposed to be 'natural roles' of their male counterparts whereas men took care of homes. This society proved to be a failure because it was 'unnatural'. The story was concluded with asserting the fact that bread earning, protection of females and country are responsibilities of male while women should confine themselves to the roles that are assigned to them by nature and society i.e. child rearing and home management. It was pointed out that education for women was not meant for jobs but for the improvement of their roles as mothers and wives in the Hindu family.

On the basis of above survey of the content of the teaching in 'Aryan' girls school, one can say, that it was to a large extent determined by the idea of welfare of the Hindu family and community. Proper child

⁵⁸ Panchal Pandita, Dec. 1905, pp.6-8.

raising, Character building and conjugality in the context of late 19th and early 20th century Punjab. The main public use of women's education, as propagated by 'Arya Samaj' of Punjab, lies in its ability to meet social needs of a particular section of Punjabee Hindus i.e. the need to create appropriate female personalities and to maintain familial social relations.

It is important to note here that Aryan venture of education of boys as propagated by the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic Schools, was a mixture of 'tradition' and 'modernity', since Hindu male were supposed to perform different roles in family and society therefore traditional as well as western education was considered necessary for them. The fact that 'Gurukul Wing' took the cause of female education was also decisive in determining the nature of education for girls, (they were in favour of traditional vedic education for boys also) but even the DAV wing which propagated a mixture of 'traditional' and modern education for boys, never came up with any such scheme for girls education. The basic reason being that women were visualized as the bearers of tradition, and as wives and mothers in the family and since they were not assigned any economic function, a certain kind of education was enough for them. Women ought to change only to the extent the men wish them to change and not further. Prakash Tandon remembering his mother reflects the dominant thought-"my mother kept pace with the development of my father, though at her own distance and without letting go any thing she

cherished. Generally speaking throughout the process of change our women showed enough attachment to tradition to prevent the change from swamping old values. Our fathers change rapidly, our mothers slowly and between them my generation managed to learn the new without forgetting the old".⁵⁹

Changing while preserving tradition was what the women were expected to do and notable fact is that what tradition was and what the change that could be allowed was what male reformers were debating and formulating. Education was a means of bringing out the desired change while preserving the status quo as far as women were concerned.

Education of the Widows

Another feature that marked the Aryan project of Hindu female education was the cause of Hindu widow's education.

The reform programme for the widows reflected the concern of the Samaj with a general debate on the question of the Plight of widows in Punjab and othe parts of the country. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, specific to each and every reform scheme of 'Arya Samaj' in Punjab was its close^{connection with} the identity of the community. Worsening condition of widows in the late 19th century Punjab, posed a serious threat on the prestige of the

⁵⁹ Panchal Pandita, Dec, 1905, pp.6-8.

community. Census figures⁶⁰ showing increase in the number of child widows over the years and the feeling that such women, in absence of any other source of livelihood, were often pushed into prostitution.⁶¹ This, perceived as an index of increasing immorality, was a serious blot on the prestige of the family & community. The Aryans in Punjab were compelled to take a position on the question.

The 'Arya Samaj' in Punjab publicly advocated cause of widow remarriage, though Swami Dayananda had forbidden the remarriage of twice born. 'Satyarth Prakash' advocated instead the doctrine of niyoga (levirate marriage) for widows and widowers.⁶² But Punjab Arya Samaji took up, the remarriage as a means of improving the degenerate condition of Hindu widows.

1890 onwards Arya Samaj in Punjab, came up with another scheme for the upliftment of the widows. Lala Dev Raj propagated the idea of educating Hindu widows. He emphasized that one of the aims of women's educational venture of Arya Samaj was "to educate Hindu widows for the

⁶⁰ Tandon, Prakash, The Punjabi Century (1857-1947) (Chettu and Windus), New Delhi, 1961, p.40.

⁶¹ Census of India, Punjab, 1901, Chapter 8, p.334.

⁶² Arya Patrika, Aug. 1, 1885, p.6, New Delhi.

creation of primary girls school teachers and 'Pracharikas'⁶³ (Woman Missionary) for the spread of Arya Samaj ideals. For the purpose of educating widows 'Mai Bhagwati memorial fund' was started by the managing committee of the 'KMV' in the year 1900. This fund intended to provide a scholarship of Rs.9 per month to Hindu widows for education.⁶⁴

The specific emphasise on the 'Pracharikas' had certain significant implications as far as 'Aryan Samaj' is concerned. In the context of the historical condition of late 19th century Punjab, 'Arya Samaj' had recognized the importance of missionary activities in strengthening and solidification of a community. The fear of increasing proselytizing missionary activities of the Christians was one of the most important factors behind the Aryan relief programme during the famines in Punjab and its attempt to bring back Hindu converts, into the fold of Hindusim through 'Shuddhi movement'. Role of the female 'Pracharikas' was considered crucial since they had an easy access to women who were confined to their households and convey them the message of Arya Samaj and convince them of the relavance of various programmes of Arya Samaj for the upliftment of Hindu women.

⁶³ Swami Dayananda, Satyartha Prakash, New Delhi, 36th edition, March 1988, p.74.

⁶⁴ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., p.156.

Arya Samajis' such as Lala Dev Raj consistently called upon Hindu widows "to acquire education and to devote their lives in the service of the community and religion."⁶⁵ It is important to mention here that widows as opposed to Hindu married women, were considered outside the familial ties and were therefore encouraged to participate in the public domain. For the married Hindu wife, this was discouraged by the patriarchal ideology of Arya Samaj which perceived such a participation as a direct interference in the primary concern of the Hindu married wife with the family.

In this course of development, gradually the idea of widow remarriage and 'niyoga' was given up in favour of a chaste widowhood, commenting on the remarriage of the child widow, and a student of the 'KMV', Sumitra, Lala Dev Raj wrote in his diary that 'instead of getting remarried Sumitra should have devoted her life for the spread of female education'.⁶⁶ This on the one hand implied that marriage was not considered as the only way of betterment in the condition of Hindu widows. On the other hand it indicated that Hindu widows were expected to suppress their sexuality in favour of a chaste and pious widowhood.

⁶⁵ Panchal Pandita, Aug, 1900, p.7.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 15th April, 1901, p.1.

Extremely austere life of a completely suppressed sexuality was advocated for them.⁶⁷ In fact the 'Bahagawati memorial fund' intended to give scholar ships only to the widows whose pious and pure character was certified by at least two Aryan males.⁶⁸ The '*Panchal Pandita*' carried articles which preached that widows should not desire the life of a married Hindu women but should practise self control and determine to spend their lives in 'Vidya' (education) and 'Dharma Prachar'.⁶⁹

Although encouraging the widows to teach was visualised as a missionary job but it had other important ramifications. It indicated the beginning of a minimal economic independence for the widows, an opportunity to stand on their own feet as it meant the emergence of few of them as teachers in govt. girls' schools. The Aryan project of Hindu widows education did indeed have a minimal positive content but on the whole it led to a further intensification and reaffirmation of suppressive patriarchal norms which essentially define widows in terms of chastity and piety.

Women's Participation in the Educational Activities

Another aspect of 'Aryan samaj's' educational project for women

⁶⁷ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., p.157.

⁶⁸ In the widows homes in KMV, girls were not even supposed to rest their head on a pillow. See Kishwar Madhu, op.cit., p.111.

⁶⁹ Panchal Pandita, Dec. 1901, pp.7-8.

which needs to be mentioned is the role of women in it. During the 1890s, in Punjab, various 'Stri Samaj' sprang up under the auspices of regular 'Samaj', these 'stree Samaj' provided valuable support for the advocates of 'Kanya Maha vidyalaya'.

A 'Stri Samaj' existed in Ludhiana, maintaining there both a Female Vedic school and an ashram (home for widows),⁷⁰ it held regular meetings of women and performed the devotional ceremonies, 'Tribune' noted that "A significant sign of social progress that we hear from different parts of the province, must be noted. Meetings of high class Hindu ladies is regularly held at Ludhiana. Devotional exercise, according to 'Arya Samaj' views being the object of the gathering".⁷¹ It further reported the meeting of Aryan women being held at Haryana, in district Hoshiarpur where "Mai Bhagwati", lectured on 'Nari Dharma', more than a thousand women were present".⁷² Women 'Pracharikas' or 'missionaries', began to travel throughout the Punjab. Women lecturers were few and rare yet they appeared in such divergent places as Jullundur, Haryana and even in the heavily Islamized district of 'Dera Gazi Khan'.⁷³

⁷⁰ Panchal Pandita, July 1903, p.21.

⁷¹ Panchal Pandita, July 1903, p.21.

⁷² Tribune, Jan.13, p.5.

⁷³ Tribune, January 13, 1892, p.5.

'KMV' experiment further emphasized upon the role of women themselves in spreading the cause of female education. Lack of female missionaries, as mentioned, was always a matter of regret for Arya Samajis in Punjab particularly those who advocated higher education for women. Swami Shardhananda, for instance was of the opinion that one of the major factors of spread of Christianity is the decisive role played by the educated female missionaries. He insisted that Arya Samaj should educate Hindu women for the sake of spreading 'Vedic Dharma' in the world".⁷⁴

1890 onwards, women's role in spreading female education acquired importance. The 'Pracharikas' lectured throughout the province and argued for the necessity of female education. Many of the girls, who studied in 'KMV' later opened school for girls in their homes and followed the curriculum of 'KMV' in their schools.⁷⁵ 'Pachal Pandita', regularly published the reports of girls school being opened by ex-students of 'KMV'. It noted with pride that one of the features of 'KMV' is the services it receives from its ex-students. Most of the girls after finishing their studies went back to their places to establish 'Stri Samaj' and 'Kanya Pathshalas' in their home towns; some of them came back to 'KMV' for

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

honorary teaching.⁷⁶ Saraswati for instance taught while Suhwa Devi opened a girls' school and Stri Samaj in Pak Pattan.⁷⁷ They also helped in collecting funds for expanding educational activities for women.⁷⁸

Mai Bhagwati was among the first women, who went from place to place, carrying the Samaj message. She was born in a Mehta family in Jullundur and was married while she was a child. She was interested in educating herself but could not do so properly because of the opposition of her family. However she started learning from a Pandit in Haryana. Her in-laws abused her for learning so she came back to her village and continued studying. She opened a 'Putri Pathshala' in her own house. She was highly influenced by Swami Dayananda who inspired her to work for the upliftment of Hindu women. She travelled throughout the Punjab and propagated the ideas of female education. She visited Lahore, preached gatherings there and started '*Stri Shiksha Vidhayaka*', the first Hindu magazine of Punjab devoted to the cause of female education. Its specific aim was to propagate the idea of female education and to call upon Hindu men to uplift their women. She taught at the KMV too and Dev Raj called her the inspiration behind the 'KMV' venture.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Swami Shradhananda Granthawali, editor Prof. Rajender Jigyasa Jullundur, 1987, p.54.

⁷⁷ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., p.155.

⁷⁸ Panchal Pandita, Jan 1905, 1905, p.25.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.19.

Savitri was another woman who worked with consistent devotion for the cause of Hindu female education in Punjab. She came to 'KMV' as a child widow even though her family was opposed to the idea. Savitri was the first 'Acharya' of the 'KMV'. She was the inspiring spirit behind the foundation of the 'Vidhwa Asharam' or Widow's home in 1907.⁸⁰ She devoted most of her time to this 'Ashrama' and was honorary incharge of the 'Ashrama'.⁸¹ She went on tours, both in the province and outside. In 1904-1905, she toured Maharashtra. There, in Pune she met Ramabai Ranade and other social reformers & took inspiration for her widow home.⁸² In the year 1906 she participated in the 'Congress Social Conference', held at Banaras and gave a speech on female education. Savitri regularly wrote in *Panchal Pandita* and from 1903, she was sub-editor of the magazine.⁸³ Savitri helped to mobilize support and resources for the 'KMV'. Lala Dev Raj idealized Savitri's devoted life. He was of the opinion that a child widow should adopt chaste and devoted life style of Savitri. According to him such devoted life was ideal for child widows.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.19.

⁸¹ Jivan Charit Mai Bhaj wati Ji, Panchal Pandita, April 1902, pp.17.

⁸² Panchal Pandita, January 1906, p.6.

⁸³ Panchal Pandita, Jan. 1903, p.1.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.5.

Lala Deve Raj's mother and wife provided him help in the functioning of 'KMV'.⁸⁵ In the management committee of KMV, women participated Subhadra Bai was the first member of 'KMV' committee in 1904 and by 1910 of out of 36 members 9 were women.⁸⁶ Valuable help came from women workers. They not only worked to collect funds and mobilize support but also helped in the editing of '*Panchal Pandita*', and in devising the 'KMV' syllabus.

Female propagators of 'Arya Samaj' ideals and the cause of the education of 'Aryan' women played an important role. By 1910, 50 female teachers were working in different schools all over the province. Lala Dev Raj always inspired them to undertake the work of spreading the message of female education throughout the country. Dev Raj's message to all his students was that 'each one of the girl should try to become a 'Pathshala' by herself. Girl students, when they went home for the summer vacation collected funds and had to take a pledge to educate at least two women.⁸⁷

Conclusion

In this way 'Arya Samaj', educational effort for Hindu women in Punjab, not only popularized the idea of women's education among the

⁸⁵ Panchal Pandita, January 1903, p.1.

⁸⁶ Lala Dev Raj, op.cit., p.186.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.136.

urban educated Punjabees but also encouraged women to take initiative and to participate in the extension of women's education. The growth^{of} the female education was an institutional change with far reaching implications for women. Encouragement of women to participate in educational and missionary activities of the 'Samaj' and women's participation in the public sphere for the first time in the context of community related activities, meant access to a far broader field of experience than had come within, their reach before. Bringing away girls from home to study collectively in a boarding institution like 'KMV' had a significance of its own.

Independent initiative of women, their independent travelling to far off places and participation in various socio-political activities certainly helped to widen their horizons. But the fact remains^{that} this process of opening and expanding of educational opportunities for women and encouragement of women's participation in various activities, was marked by the glorification of heavily patriarchal Hindu ideology. Valorization of classical Hindu socio-cultural values, uncritical idealisation of Hindu social institutions, and unwillingness to question its oppressive aspects, posed a big question mark on the emancipatory potential of the Aryan educational venture for women.

Chapter IV

CONCLUSION

The vigorous Hindu socio-cultural reform movements of 19th Century India, created the space for the agenda of formal education of the upper caste Hindu Women. The intricate socio-economic and cultural changes brought about by British rule resulted in the emergence of an urban educated stratum. The encounter of that stratum with an alien culture and their own specific needs, at that socio historical juncture formed the back drop to the socio-cultural reforms in which the question of the position of women acquired a crucial place. In northern India, specifically in Punjab the issue of upliftment of Hindu women, was championed by the 'Arya Samaj' movement which itself was a result of specific socio-historical circumstances. However the enhanced importance of the gender question in the agenda was not shaped by the ideas from the West and from the 'reformists'; it was shaped largely by the urgency to change the traditional family structure and women's role in it. In this context the primary thrust of Hindu women's education was to enable women adopt themselves to their redefined roles in the family. This entire movement *in no way intended to threaten or alter the existing hierarchies and gender relations in the family or society.*

The ideal of Swami Dayananda, the founder of the 'Arya Samaj' was received enthusiastically by a section of Punjabi Hindus, searching for a new, self-enhancing identity in post-annexation Punjab. Introduction of British rule in Punjab, apart from changing the political and economic-structure of the province added new dimensions to the complex socio-cultural conflict among the 3 religious community and British rule not only intensified the struggle but added to this new threat of conversion to Christianity. In post-annexation Punjab, thus, the question of asserting the superiority of the community acquired a central place. The emerging section of urban, educated, Punjabi Hindus propagated the ideology of Swami Dayanand as it was overtly Hindu and aggressive. In Arya Samaj the 'Women's Question' was also a part of the wider programme of asserting the identity of the community.

Swami Dayananda had a certain perception of womanhood. He defined the role of women primarily as mothers. Women were considered the begetters of a superior generation of the Aryan male. For the physical and mental superiority of this Aryan race a change in the position of women was necessary. He exalted the ancient Vedic image of a Hindu woman and criticising the contrasting condition of Hindu women in 19th century urged upon the Aryans to take up the cause of upliftment of their women. In his scheme of reforms in the condition of

women, he gave uttermost importance to the education of women, keeping in mind the tangible benefits of the education of women for the family and community. 'Aryans' in Punjab engaged in establishing a communal identity developed the Swami's model of womanhood, for women's position had become a signifier of the superiority of community. In these situation Arya Samaj, in Punjab took up the agenda of educating Hindu women and 1890 onwards their efforts and propaganda helped remove some of the prejudices against women's education among the urban middle classes.

The community centered agenda of women's education of Arya Samaj had some significant implication. The acceptance and glorification of Vedic and Shastric norms, first of all meant an uncritical acceptance of its oppressive character and expressed Aryan reformer's, unwillingness to question the repressive aspects of patriarchal classical Shastric laws. The code of *Manu* for instance, was exalted by Swami Dayananda and Samajis like Lala Lajpat Rai as the 'best known code of Hindu law. They felt the "This code assigns a very high position to women and exhibits an extraordinary solicitude for their safety, welfare, purity and honour".¹ The uncritical endorsement of Vedic and Shastric

¹ Tribune, 18th March, 1995, Lala Lajpat Rai, p.5.

laws gave a highly patriarchal tone to Aryan efforts of reforming the condition of Hindu women and determined the limitation of emancipatory content of their agenda of women's upliftment.

Curriculum structure of the so-called 'Aryan girls' educational institutions in numerous ways idealized and glorified the Shashtric image of women, her self sacrifice and subserviance in the patriarchal family. This implied the unwillingness to alter in any sense the role of women in family and in society; and reinforced the patriarchal oppression and a continuity of subjugation of Hindu women in family. The emphasis on a change in the nature of conjugal relationship, in a changed context, did not upset the basic gendered power relation between the husband and the wife since the Aryan wife was a companion to her husband primarily for his entertainment and well being.

The cultural revivalist ideology of Arya Samaj gave particular emphasis on the motherhood and curricula structure of Aryan girls' school was, to a large extent, shaped around this role. This meant the perpetuation of the traditional role of women as mother. More important is the fact that out of this specific emphasis on motherhood, at the turn of century a powerful image of moral, nurturing, spiritual 'mother India'

was to develop, symbolizing the essence of the cultural superiority of the Indians. Lala Devraj and other advocates of Women's education consistently propagated education of women on the grounds of women's mother role. Lala Lajpat Rai was of the opinion that a woman did not need to work outside the home; there was overwhelming importance given to woman's role as the mother; "the principle is to keep the mother function free of all anxieties and pecuniary cares. Every woman is a mother in embryo. That is her supreme function in life. That is her social mission."² This prepared the ground for the emerging nationalist discourse in which it was precisely the mother function, that was given an expression erasing all other aspects of the women's identity.

The cultural revivalist and nascent Hindu nationalist ideology of 'Arya Samaj' had another impact on the education of women. An analysis of the content of Aryan girls schools, reveal the fact that the Aryan project of women's education was, to a certain extent, a part of generating community consciousness among women. Imparting to women a certain kind of history and encouraging them to participate in the missionary activities of Arya Samaj was an effort to transmit in women the mainstream, sectarian Aryan interpretation of the history

² Tribune, op.cit., March 7, p.3.

and a future vision of the community. This sectarian interpretation and vision of a future of the community, it is important to note, was a part of a larger ideological project to reinforce the hegemonic influence of a social group over various sections of the community. In this project community was represented as a homogenous entity.

One can say that the ideological position of Arya Samaj was not established through coercion but by consent. This consent was manufactured precisely through formal and informal education as far as women were concerned. In this process, women internalized the patriarchal logic of defining their primary function as wives and mothers in family. Aryan women's voice expressed through the pages of journals even though exclusively meant for women, echoed the male point of view regarding their roles in the family and society. '*Panchal Pandita*' for instance, regularly published writings of Aryan women since 1900 and since 1903 Savitri Devi was its sub-editor. The content of the women's writing in this magazine, revolved around the role of women in the family. Women writers glorified the concepts of '*Vaidhvyā Dharma*' (widowhood), '*Patibrata Dharma*' (adoration of the husband) and '*Satitva Bal*' (strength of chastity).³ Savitri Devi, after becoming the honorary

³ Panchal Pandita, 15th Dec., 1901, pp.8-16.

incharge of Widows' home of 'KMV' suggested a hard and repressive lives for Widows and discouraged the idea of Widow remarriage.⁴

Another journal, *Arya Mahila Patrika*, edited by a woman, Surath Km. Devi expressed same ideas through its articles even in more rigid tones. For instance in one of the issues of magazine it was said that "In the Aryan woman, the notion of adoration for and the submission to the husband is so advanced that, in the end, the woman completely surrenders her being to the husband. And if by this complete surrender, the woman advances in the eternal scheme of Things and is born a man in the life, it would naturally follow that for a woman, cultivating such notions is the highest good."⁵ This meant not only a complete devotion of an Aryan wife to her husband but also expressed the 'natural' superiority of males. In this journal, it was declared with a sense of pride that an Aryan sati accepts the superiority of her husband in all matters. She wants to remain the *dasi* of her husband and does not have any desire to become his equal. She wants to spend her life in dependence (*adhinta*) of her husband."⁶ The same magazine glorified the chaste widowhood and role of women as mothers in no uncertain

⁴ Pancha Pandita, Dec. 1901, pp.7-8.

⁵ Arya Mahila, vol.1, No.1., May - July, 1917, p.4.

⁶ Ibid., p.9.

terms.⁷

'Stri Samaj' or women wing of Arya Samaj held its regular meetings throughout the province of Punjab. One of the feature of these meetings was to lectures given by women 'Pracharikas' of Arya Samaj. They preached women about Aryan perception of women's role. In one such meeting for instance, a woman, expressed the view that 'a woman should have no *guru* (teacher) but the husband and implicit obedience to him was the first duty of women.'⁸

In this way even women's participation in educational activities and the opportunity to express their opinion through magazines and public platforms could not ensure any significant change in the position of women. On the contrary, woman internalized the patriarchal norms regarding their roles and helped in the perpetuation of status quo in the potion of women in patriarchal family and society.

But indeed, there were some positive aspects of introducing literacy to woman which need to be mentioned. First of all Arya Samaj's

⁷ Ibid., p.53,62,63.

⁸ Tribune, 13th Jan., 1982, p.5.

efforts, for the education of woman, to some extent, removed some of the prejudices against the education of upper caste women. A certain amount of formal education was considered necessary for Aryan girls by a section of Punjabi Hindus. One of the consequence of this changed attitude was an increase in the age of marriage of Aryan girls.⁹

However, though the dominant ideology did not envisage a role for women outside the home, the fact of participation in the movement did open the way for Arya Samaj women to enlarge their sphere of activity. The independent travel programme for women 'Pracharikas' initiated by Arya Samaj with the express purpose of spreading the ideal of Aryan doctrine and the encouragement of a section women to actively participate in specific activities of Arya Samaj, had the potential to introduce women into the public sphere. The publishing of Savitri's travel of Maharashtra and her participation in activities like congress social conference',¹⁰ and the glorification of somewhat independent life style and her rebellion against her parents and in laws and the appeal to Aryan women to follow their path, had a significance of its own. It was not the intention of Aryan educational project to implant in women

⁹ India, Census, 1911, vol.15, p.240.

¹⁰ Panchal Pandita , Jan. 1906, p.6.

sense of independence of freedom of thought but the implicit logic of introducing literacy was bound to create spaces for further independent assertion and emergence of a critical spirit.

In other words, although these educational programmes were started with the purpose of manufacturing consent for maintaining the traditional gender roles in family or society, the means and the processes employed have their own autonomous logic which could not be fully controlled by its propagators. The education endeavours of Punjab Arya Samaj was not meant to challenge patriarchal structure or to transform the position of women in any fundamental sense; but eventually education formed the basis of autonomous Women's movements in the 20th century, fighting for altering women's position in family and society.

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