

# **EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN BIHAR: (1921-47)**

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**SAVITA**

**ZAKIR HUSAIN CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI-110067  
INDIA**

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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI - 110 067


ZAKIR HUSAIN CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Certificate

Date:

Certified that this dissertation entitled **Education of Women in Bihar (1921-1947)** submitted by **Ms. Savita** in fulfilment of eight credits out of the total requirements of twenty four credits for the Degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this university is to the best of our knowledge, her own bonafide and original work.

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

  
18/7/2000

Prof Binod Khadria  
Chairperson



Prof. S.C. Ghosh  
Supervisor

Chairperson  
Zakir Husain Centre For  
Educational Studies  
School of Social Sciences-II  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi - 110067

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## Introduction

Prior to the advent of Gandhi on national scene there had been very little nationalist political activity in Bihar & no distinctive Bihari style of national politics had emerged where as in neighbouring Bengal and Maharashtra a creative regional elite had established a strong sense of regional identity and assumed the leadership of the national movement. This was partly due to the continued social and political dominance in the region of the traditional ruling elite of large land-lords. Although they no longer fulfilled their traditional role in Bihar society and had developed into what D.A. Low has called of "Husk Culture",<sup>1</sup> they were politically unchallenged until the second decade of the twentieth century.

Bihar also lacked the advantages of a city like Calcutta, Patna a major town and the future capital, boasted in 1901 on mere 1,34,753 inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> It had no industries worth recording & offered few opportunities at have, Bihari youth had not only to travel to Calcutta to further their education but

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<sup>1</sup> G. McDonal; *Unity on Trial: Congress in Bihar, 1929-39* in D.A. Low (ed.), *Congress and the 'Raj'*: London, 1977, p.292.

<sup>2</sup> *Census of India, 1901, VI, p.31.*

tended also to find jobs and take up residence in that city or Allahabad (the process still continuing with Delhi replacing the former two).

Mainly making educational and employment disadvantages as the major plank the demand for a separate province for the Biharis was made. In 1876 the slogan was aired "Bihar for Biharis". It was the time when the adjoining Bengal was experiencing the first movement for socio-religious reforms initiated in India "the Brahma Samaj", under the impact of western ideas, culture and technology.

Though the objective of the reform movement supported by the new elites (an English-educated generation at odds with the traditional zamindars and constituted the Junior partners of the colonial rulers)<sup>3</sup> was not to attack the prevalent patriarchal system in any way or do challenge the power and position enjoyed by men nor even to make women more equal partners of men in the societal or economic roles outside the family. Its purpose was to improve the position of women within the

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<sup>3</sup> Bharati Ray (ed.): From the Seams of History: Essays on Indian Women, oxford, 1995, pg.85.

patriarchal framework and to make them more capable of fulfilling their roles as wives and mothers within the family.<sup>4</sup>

The impact of Bengal "Renaissance" (however, some scholars have grave doubts about the applicability of the term "Renaissance" in the context of the nineteenth century resurgence in Bengal, the recent Marxist studies on modern Indian history have raised objection to the use of the term in the nineteenth century context when economic exploitation of India by British Colonialism was going on in full swing<sup>5</sup>) percolated into Bihar in a slow manner (Indeed in many respects, Bihar represented the extreme case of what happened to a region subjected to societal stagnation, economic exploitation & cultural degeneration under conditions of land and stifling feudalism, external and internal colonialism and the most brutalizing experience of a late capitalism).<sup>6</sup> Now the question is how far the late renaissance was meaningful for the women for whom it was intended in the case of Bihar because

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Susobhan Sarkar, *Bengal Renaissance & Other Essays*, New Delhi, 1970, pp.150-1; V.C. Joshi (ed.), *Rammohan Roay and the process of Modernisation in India*, New Delhi, 1975.

<sup>6</sup> A.N. Das, *Republic of Bihar*, Penguin, India, 1992.



modernization or revitalization, the instrumental process in the development of a modern outlook can not be meaningful and beneficial to a nation unless its women are also enlightened and imbued with the spirit of nationalism.

In the present dissertation "Education of women in Bihar (1921-41)", not only the problem and issues of women's education, the circumstances amidst which it could develop, the obstacles which these developments were faced with, the social implication of such a growth, the pioneers, are dealt with.

The focus of the dissertation is to present a general historical narrative of the attempts at introducing education in Bihar and to locate within the framework, the development of women's education which took off a little later and acquired less significance compared to other states of India, e.g. Bengal, Maharashtra, Madras. The approach adopted in historical because it seeks to examine the growth and development of women's chronologically breaking up appropriate historical periods meaningfully.

It has also been the aim of this study to analyse the typical social and political environment in which the education of

women developed and an analysis of the individual and organizational endeavors who developed it. Why women? Because we need to draw up an agenda for the study of women in Indian economic and social history which deals with. Women's roles in the historical process as participants, like men, and as participants in relation to men, as objects like men and as objects in relation to men. Also we need to investigate the historical roots of the present socio-economic condition of women.

In the period selected for the study (1921-47) education of women had definitely come to be a public issue, opposition to it notwithstanding. The slogan of India leaders and social reformers by this time had become "educating a girl means educating a family."<sup>7</sup> The 1920s were a period of immense social and political awakening in India followed by internal social reforms efforts. Thus, the issue of women's status, long the focus of social reform, was also reflected in a series of legal enactments relating to or affecting women. To mention only a

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<sup>7</sup> Rajagopal, T.S. Indian Women in the New age or Women in Young India, 1936, pg.199.

few, the Sati Apolitian Act was passed in 1829 and the widow Remmarriage Act in 1854. The Special Marriage Act followed in 1872 (later amended in 1923). By 1929, 'Indian Women had been grated the right to vote. The Sarda Act which set the minimum age for girls at 14, was enacted in 1929. The Montagu – Chelmsford Act of 1919 permitted greater Indian initiative in education policy and the introduction of compulsory education by local option. The British Government had also gradually changed its position vis-à-vis women's education and was willing by that time to lend support.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, the emergence of a class of women, who were aware that organised action was necessary to ameliorate their lot, was our additional factor in helping to focus on the current position of women & the need to educate them (Forbes 1979: 162). During this period Gandhi and Besant also supported women's causes by opposing purdah and supporting widow remarriage.<sup>9</sup> Mary writers (McDonald 1943: 157: Basu 1976:

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<sup>8</sup> Karuna Chanana: Social Change or Social Reform: Women, Education, and Family in Pre-Independence India, in Karuna Chanana (ed.) Socialisation, Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity, New Delhi, 1988, pg.38.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pg.39.

37; Menon 1975: 23) credit Gandhi with breaking the age-old barriers of purdah and bringing women out of their homes. Quite literally he made women more visible. Furthermore, he tried to channel their traditional qualities of forbearance and self-sacrifice into the non-violence movement (Ahmad, 1984). Gandhi stressed the need for educating women. The impression that gained currency all over India was that Gandhi was not only a social reformer but a reformer who had a special message for women (Srinivas 1978: 26-27). Clearly the impetus for women's education had increased by the third decade of the twentieth century.

The term "education" has been used to refer to the "vernacular education" as well as "English education" but the assertion is on the "English education". Apart from this indigenous institution and system of education envisaged by missionaries and social reformers for women has also been included. Though a vast corpus of literature has been written about the Educational policies of the British Government the reforms introduced in the nineteenth century, women's education in general and Bengal (Basu 1982, Bagal 1936, Borth

Wick 1984, Sarkar 1999) Punjab (Chanana 1984) in particular, no such studies have been attempted before in Bihar (keeping the fact in mind that much applauded Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain of Bengal began her 1st educational adventure in Bhagalpur, Bihar). It also constitutes the first attempt to study women's education through a holistic approach of the analysis of social and political changes.

This study is projected into a regional unit of India, the Bihari society, since it is presumed that a better picture of social change in the Indian society can be obtained by studying the transformation taking place in various regional sub-cultures which in continentlike country of India have been having their own distinctive influences over a considerable period of time. Neera Desai (1964, p.3) has particularly expressed the view that unless a close study of the changes that have taken place in different regional communities of India under the British impact is made, "a rich and adequate understanding of the concrete changes that have taken place, in India as a whole will not be possible." Concurring with this view I am attempting to study a regional unit of India, that is Bihar.

The study has been divided into four thematical chapters. In the first introductory chapter the background of the creation of Bihar, socio-political condition prevailing, along with a brief introduction and the position of women at that time. It is seen why Bihar demanded separation and how far English education employment issues served as a cause. By keeping the focus on the women's position in the society I am trying to point out the overarching importance and impact of socialisation on the lives of girls and women. This process is moreover, so intertwined in women's lives that it determines motivations, expectations, perception and attitudes to formal education of girls' and women's. Therefore, it seems relevant to stress that formal education can not be effective unless we understand its strong interlinkages with the socialisation process in so far as socialisation involves internationalisation of values and identity formation.

In the second chapter the general state of education in Bihar, establishment of schools, colleges, universities is provided. It is seen how English Education became a

qualification of jobs and how it seemed to create a new class which in fact was receptive to change and new ideas.

The third chapter, traces the development of institutions for women's education, efforts put by several organisations and individuals, missionaries & the genesis of women's organisation in the state.

The fourth and the last chapter is an attempt to provide a detailed description of the two pioneers: One individual crusader, a woman to start a school for girls in the region against all odds and one institution to provide higher education to the women of Bihar for the first time. In this chapter I have tried to portrayed both, the personality (who made it possible) and her efforts.

The materials for this dissertation have been and mostly from primary sources and from scattered secondary sources, in the Bihar State Archives, Patna, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi, ICHR Library, New Delhi, Central Reference Library, New Delhi and finally from my college and one school from Patna, Bihar. I have taken pains to gather material from Bihar since no published source was available directly dealing

with the matter. And also used oral sources for my fourth chapter since no written material was available. It is hoped that the present study will be able to subtly show how in a caste ridden, feudal, patriarchal set up women's issues gathered momentum and evolved in the due course.



## Chapter-I

### Background

The state of Bihar, situated between 21°58'10" and 27°31'15" north latitudes came under the British Domination as a result of the battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar 1764, though the English had started trading here about a century back. It remained a part of Bengal presidency upto April 1, 1912 when along with Orissa it was separated from Bengal. Eventually Orissa too was separated from Bihar (1936-37) and some Bengali speaking areas of the districts of Purnea and Manbhum were lost to West Bengal as a result of the states reorganisation in 1956.<sup>1</sup>

We do not come across any reference to this name (Bihar) either in Pali or Sanskrit literature. In fact, the application Bihar for this territory is as late as 1199, A.D. or around A.D. 1203-04. It is for the first time from the Tabagat-I-Nasiri, a historical bookwork composed by Maulana Minhaj-Uddin Abu-Umar-I-Usmar in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A.D. that we

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<sup>1</sup> Bihar: Past and Present pg.24.

learn that the word Bihar was used to denote the name of a place.<sup>2</sup>

**Growth of social and political consciousness in Bihar:-**

The political evolution of Bihar from a portion of the Bengal presidency in 1859 to a full-fledged province of British India in 1912 has to be traced in order to understand the diversities in which this evolution expressed itself:-

(1) closer attention of government to the local problems of Bihar, (2) official recognitions of Hindi as the language of the land, (3) growth of press and public platform in Bihar (4) extension of opportunities for employment of Biharis in Bihar and eventual separation of Bihar from Bengal.

The revolt of 1857-58 had clearly shown to the British that the landed aristocracy in Bihar still exercised an enormous influence upon the ignorant peasantry so much so that the latter could even stand up in arms against the British Rule if incited to do so by their feudal lords.<sup>3</sup> In the post-revolt period it was therefore the consistent effort of the British Government to win

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> K.K. Datta (ed.): Comprehensive History of Bihar, Vol.III, Part II, 1976, pg.227.

over the big landlords in Bihar to its side while at the same time to endeavour to weaken the hold of these people over the masses.<sup>4</sup> For achievement of the former objective the government started the practice of conferring titles and honours on Indian gentleman for loyal conduct, associating more intelligent of them with government as honorary magistrates and member of the local committees and municipalities encouraging settlement of Europeans in the interior as lessees of Zamindars, and bringing more important Zamindaries under European management.<sup>5</sup> The dissemination of vernacular education in the countryside and enactment of measures for protection of tenants' rights were on the other hand steps calculated to ensure the gradual liberation of the ryots from the influence of the landlords.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time giving a close attention to the local problems, Mayo aware of the existence of a dangerous anti-British feeling, in the muslim mind started a dialogue with the provincial governments to do something to win over the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> R.R. Diwakar: Bihar Through the Ages, Patna, 1958, pg.58.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pg.59.

educated sections of the Indian muslims to the side of British rule, one of the most important suggestion made was to modify the British Indian educational system so as to make it acceptable to the Muslims.<sup>7</sup> On receipt of the suggestions of the Government of India, the Government of Bengal re-examined its educational policy and found it to be extremely deficient from the point of view of the Muslim community. George Campbell, the lieutenant governor observed in his note of 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug. 1872: ---  
- "Do not think the Mahommedans have been fairly treated in Bengal in regard to our educational machinery."<sup>8</sup> While the investigations amply confirmed that the Mohammedans in the presidency of Bengal were far behind the other community in respect of English education and in the enjoyment of the fruits of it, it was found that their condition in the Bihar portion of the presidency was not as bad as in Bengal proper. Commenting on this aspect of the question George Campbell observed in his note:- "In Bihar the Mohammedans are quite in a minority and they have a full share of government's service." English education has not taken root there and the Hindus of Bihar have

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<sup>7</sup> K.K. Datta, *op.cit.*, pg.212.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pg.213.

no advantages over them; in fact, Mahommedans seem to me as compared to the indigenious Hindoos, to have perhaps more than their share of the appointments and good things in life, the gift of Government in Bihar. The competition they have to fear is rather that of the educated Bengalees who come in and get many good things.”<sup>9</sup>

The effect of these pronouncements on the muslim mind was far-reaching. The Mohammedan intelligentsia became more keenly conscious of the educational and political backwardness of their community and they became more vociferous in asserting their claims.<sup>10</sup> The government thus succeeded in inducing them to think that the backwardness of the Mohammedans was due to the competition of the Hindus particularly of the Bengalis and that the British Government was anxious to help them if they put forward their claims against the Hindus.

One of the several complaints made by the Muslims was against the recent substitution of Hindi for Urdu as the court language in Bihar. Although the viceroy refused to interfere with

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<sup>9</sup> K.K. Datta, *op.cit.*, pg.312.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

the Bengal government's decision on this question the Muhammedans of Bihar thought acutely on this subject since the substitution of Hindi for Urdu in the courts and other government offices in Bihar threatened to dislodge them from the privileged position which they had hitherto enjoyed in this part of the presidency. As this measure tended to sharpen all those latent social and political forces which led to the shaping of the Bihari people into a distinct political entity and eventually to creation of Bihar as a separate province.<sup>11</sup>

**Employment as issue and adoption of Hindi as the vernacular language of Bihar:**

In the adoption of Hindi as the official language of Bihar two officers of government played prominent parts: they were G.A. Grierson, the collector of Patna and Bhudeb Mukherjee, the inspector of schools for Bihar Division. Folk songs were sung in Bihar in praise of these officers for their advocating the cause of Hindi before the government of the contemporary Bihari

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<sup>11</sup> Kanak Singh: History of Freedom Movement in Bihar, Patna, 1985, pg.17.

leaders.<sup>12</sup> Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh of Darbhanga lent the weight of his personal influence in favour of Hindi.<sup>13</sup>

The introduction of Hindi as the vernacular language of the courts and officers in Bihar to some extent affected the mutual relationship between the educated sections of the Hindu and the Muslim communities. Nevertheless it was a reform of great importance for the Bihari Hindus. It opened the door for their cultural advancement as well as for their employment in public offices.<sup>14</sup>

However, as Bihar was educationally in a very backward state, the English education could make only a very slow progress here and the result was that the Biharis with the exception of the Mohammedans were virtually excluded from the public services in their own area. Advantage was taken of this situation by the Bengalis who by their lead in English Education held most of the offices to which Indians could aspire.<sup>15</sup> Before the advent of the Bengalis such offices in Bihar were held for the most part by the Mohammedans. It is the Mohammadans

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<sup>12</sup> K.K. Datta, *op.cit.*, pg.342.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

therefore who first raised the slogan of "Bihar for the Biharis" – a slogan later enthusiastically picked up by the Bihari Hindus particularly the Kayasthas, when after making some progress in education they found their own employment prospects blocked.<sup>16</sup> The British Government and the Anglo-Indian community who were not too happy with the intellectual advancement of the Bengalis because of their critical attitude towards British rule and their persistent cry for larger share in government, extended their moral support to the voices of protest raised in Bihar against employment of the Bengalis.<sup>17</sup> Gradually the old agitation for employment of Bihari in Bihar converted into a movement for separation of Bihar from Bengal. Their argument was that Bihar could never get political justice so long as it was governed from Calcutta where Bengali influence was always predominant. They pleaded therefore for the establishment of a full-fledged local government for Bihar. This was the first agitation in India for a linguistic province. The

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Kanak Singh, *op.cit.*, pg.18.



creation of the province of Bihar and Orissa in 1912 was the first recognition on the part of British Govt. of this principle.<sup>18</sup>

**Position of Women in the Province:**

The position of women was not very enviable. Purdah system was greatly in vogue and the women were not allowed to go in public.<sup>19</sup> When they went out they were carefully screened from the public view.<sup>20</sup> Pardah was recognised even by the British courts. Ladies of high rank were examined either on commission or by the Judge himself and their evidence was heard through the double screen of the palanquin.<sup>21</sup> The degree of seclusion varied from place to place and caste to caste. In the Rajput families of Tirhut purdah was so rigorously observed that it was considered improper for a young married couple to see or speak to each other in daytime.<sup>22</sup> But some women at Dariapur and round about in the Patna district did not conceal themselves so much.<sup>23</sup> The women of Agrahari caste openly took part in the

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<sup>18</sup> K.K. Datta, op.cit, p.412.

<sup>19</sup> Francis Buchanan, An Account of the Districts of Behar and Patna, p.290.

<sup>20</sup> Francis Buchanan, An Account of the districts of Purnea, p.158.

<sup>21</sup> R.R. Diwakar (ed.) Bihar Through The Ages, p.680.

<sup>22</sup> H. Risky, Tribes and castes of Bengal, vol.II, p.48.

<sup>23</sup> V.H. Jackson (ed.) Journal of Patna & Gaya, p.2.

business of their husbands<sup>24</sup> purdah was not observed among the lower castes. The women of lower caste worked hard too and added to the family earnings. The Ahir women used to sell cowdung cakes, milk, ghee, etc.<sup>25</sup> Many women retailed in green vegetables & fish, some were employed for bringing water.<sup>26</sup>

Although purdah was in existence in Bihar, not all the women were ignorant. During the survey of the districts of Bihar, Buchanan found ten or twelve ladies in the district of Shahabad who could read and write letters and understand accounts. He mentions that the ladies of Tilanthu (Tirhut) 'not only write a fair hand but understand the political effusion of Tulsidas.'<sup>27</sup> Bihari women possessed great forbearance and could undergo great suffering. They cooked food and did most of the household works. The girls at an early age were initiated into the household.<sup>28</sup> They shared with their elder sisters in nursing, rearing and amusing the infants of the family while the matrons looked after the household occupations. A girl after

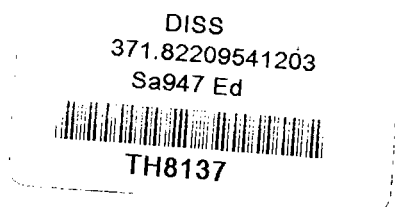
<sup>24</sup> L.S.S. O' Mally, Monghyr Distt. Gazette, p.138.

<sup>25</sup> L.S.S. O' Mally, Saran Distt. Gazette, p.43.

<sup>26</sup> Savitri Saran, Social History of Bihar in the first half of the nineteenth century (unpublished Ph.D. thesis of the D.U.), p.274.

<sup>27</sup> Buchanan, Acc. Of Shahbad, p.172.

<sup>28</sup> Savitri Saran, op.cit., p.275.



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marriage became the mistress of her husbands household but generally she had to live under the control of her mother-in-law. If the latter was ill tempered the life of the former sometimes became miserable.<sup>29</sup> The Parmar Rajputs after marriage did not permit their wives to meet their father, mother, sisters or elder brothers but allowed them to see their younger brothers.<sup>30</sup> This restriction was not prevalent among the other Rajputs. Their women were allowed to meet their near relations but these relations could not eat or even drink water at their houses. The reason behind such a custom was that the wife should give up all connections with her own kindred and become completely devoted to the interests of her husband.<sup>31</sup> Men could perform various religious rites and ceremonies but the women's religious exercises were limited.<sup>32</sup>

At Manihari in Bhagalpur they were not allowed to pray or make offerings or to be present at sacrifices. They could only join feasts at marriages funerals etc.<sup>33</sup> Women could not speak

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<sup>29</sup> "Notes on the Ryots of Bihar", Calcutta Review, vol.69, p.335.

<sup>30</sup> Savitri Saran op.cit., p.275.

<sup>31</sup> Buchanan, Account of Shahabad, p.212.

<sup>32</sup> Dineakar, op.cit., p.681.

<sup>33</sup> Oldham (ed.), Journal of Bhagalpur, pp.100-101.

freely even if their husband had bad character but the slightest doubt on a wife's character was enough to ruin her life.<sup>34</sup>

Sati: The practice was in existence. It was most common among the higher castes as their widows were not allowed to re-marry. There was also a belief that the woman who became sati not only gained salvation for herself but she and her husband would never be separated from each other.<sup>35</sup> The belief in Sati was so strong that in 1822 a widow named Dayal Kaur insisted on becoming Sati before a magistrate who tried to stop her and expressed that self-cremation was not at all terrible and that she had performed the rite in two earlier lives at Banaras and Kanauj.<sup>36</sup> Widows who burnt themselves with the body of their dead husbands were very much honoured and usually a small temple was erected over the ashes.

This was called Sati-Chaura or abode of virtue. In Shahabad it was called Siras. Women of all classes made offerings at it, especially during the marriage season.<sup>37</sup> In the year 1815 the total number of Sati in the 6 districts of Bihar was

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<sup>34</sup> Diwakar, op.cit., p.681.

<sup>35</sup> Bengal Judicial Consultations, 5 Dec., 1812.

<sup>36</sup> Bhagalpur Judicial Records, 182-183.

<sup>37</sup> Buchanan. Account of Shahbad, p.213.

twenty-nine. In the year 1818 the number however, increased to about 145 in Patna division alone.<sup>38</sup> The widow of a Muslim weaver in Shahabad, was said to have buried her self-alive with the body of her deceased husband.<sup>39</sup>

So, practically there was no change in the suppressed condition of the women of Bihar, while the adjacent Bengal was prepared to make women's issue an agenda through social reform movement. But some changes were felt after the coming of Gandhi to Champaran in 1917.

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<sup>38</sup> Calcutta Review, vol.I, p.231.

<sup>39</sup> Buchanan Account of Shahbad, p.213.

## **Chapter - II**

### **Growth and Development of Education in Bihar**

Certain features of the indigenous educational system, coming down from the hoary past continued through the British Rule in our country. The most important factor that helped to keep the system alive was the social philosophy regarding Education. Yet another factor which helped the continuity of the systems of Education was the non-interference on the part of sovereign or community with the working of educational institutions, so far as the curriculum and discipline were concerned. These were exclusively the concerns of the teachers. The practice of prescribing syllabus for schools by the government began with the British rule in this country, when the primary motive of education was linked with the interest of administration of the country.<sup>1</sup>

Broadly speaking there were two types of education institutions in Bihar when the British rule was inaugurated there-one of an advanced character and the other of a purely

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<sup>1</sup> K.K. Datta (ed.) Comprehensive History of Bihar, pg.357.

elementary nature. In the first category were the Tols and the Madrasas as devoted respectively to Sanskrit and Arabic-Persian learning. The elementary institution was called Pathsala in the case of Hindus and Maktab in that of the Mohammadans. As a general rule some amount of religious instruction was imparted in all indigenous schools.

During his survey Adam found 286 Hindi schools in the district of Behar and 80 in the district of Tirhut. Most of the schools had one teacher each and they belonged, in overwhelming number, to the Kayastha caste. The books taught in these schools were *Danalila*, *Dahilila*, *Sudamacharita*, *Gitagovinda*, *Ramjanma*, *Suryapurana*, and *Sundar Sudama*. Since all these books were in Hindi and Adam calls these schools as Hindi schools, it is not unlikely that these were superior to those which ordinarily functioned and imparted instruction through the medium of local dialects.<sup>2</sup>

Till the forties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the claims of Vernacular education in Bihar, for various reasons, remained ignored. It was in December 1844 that the Government resolved to set up

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<sup>2</sup> K.K. Data: History of Bihar pg. 396.

101 village schools in the several districts of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa for the purpose of giving sound and useful instruction through the Vernacular language. These schools came to be known as Hardinge's schools after the name of the Governor-General. According to the plan 14 schools were allotted to the Patna division and 17 to the Bhagalpur division.<sup>3</sup> In Tirhut also only one school could be established at Darbhanga.<sup>4</sup> The main defects of the scheme were the following: While drawing up the scheme the authorities were guided by the conditions obtaining in the neighbourhood of Calcutta. The peculiar circumstances of Bihar were not taken into consideration. Competent teachers were not available. Paucity of funds held up the progress of these schools. No special provision had been made in the educational budget for vernacular schools. They were maintained from the funds allotted for the purpose of English education. This was quite naturally, resented by the advocates of English education.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Jha, J.S., Education in Bihar, pg.39.



The most serious cause, however, was lack of co-operation, on the part of the people, due to apathy or suspicion or some other considerations. It was with an end in view of procuring people's cooperation that an obligatory clause of the regulations provided that the schools should be established in localities where the local inhabitants were prepared to subscribe for the construction of school houses and keep them in proper repair. In other words, the authorities considered it a test to gauge the interest of the people in the scheme. But as in the case of other new government schemes, people were very suspicious. Thus the Deputy Collector of Behar reported on the schools in the neighborhood; "The institutes (at Behar) seems to have excited vast suspicion among the people. Some of them think that the instruction given in it will affect their religion. Others consider it a most contemptible Ordo and Hindee to the exclusion of Arabic and Persian languages. On the whole I do not think the people of Behar can be easily prevailed upon to forsake their old system of instruction, though erroneous".<sup>6</sup> About this time S.Mackintosh, the Headmaster of Patna High School (C. 1841-1845), was, on this own, engaged in the work of spreading

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pg.6

Vernacular education in and around Patna. He was one of the few early educationists who realised that for any vernacular education to succeed in this province it must be "closely connected with the habits of the people."<sup>7</sup> So with an object to improve the indigenous system of education he started his experiment with 11 schools in Patna and its neighbourhood. Of these 3 were situated out of Patna, at Dinapur, Digha and Mainpura. In the town of Patna they were located in *Mahallas of Backerganj, Machharhatta and Hajiganj*. There were thus few localities from which children might not be sent with ease to one or other of these schools.<sup>8</sup>

Among the records of the Council of Education for the year 1844 there are many statements which show that majority of the students in these schools belonged to the Hindu community, the total number of Mohammanadan boys being 57 only. Of the Hindus the *Vaishyas* and *Sudras* were in overwhelming number. Thus of the total 647 students in April 1844, 57 were

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.351.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.358.

*Brahmanas, 5 Babhans, 34 Kshatriyas, 128 Vaishyas and 366 Sudras.*<sup>9</sup>

Mackintosh's system was a great success for some years in the beginning. But he had to close these schools in the long run for want of funds. The significance of the experiment lies in the fact that where government officers failed Mackintosh succeeded in eliciting the co-operation of as many teachers as his funds could allow him to entertain. He proved that a little training and enlightened guidance could turn some of them into excellent teachers.<sup>10</sup> Another attempt at improving the indigenous vernacular schools was made by the government after the Wood's dispatch of 1854. R.B. Chapman, Inspector of Schools in Bihar, directed his attention specially to the extensions and improvement of existing educational institutions.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile Willaim Tayler had joined as the Commissioner of Patna division. Because of his keen interest in the education of Indians he was entrusted with the control and direction of educational operations in his division. Tayler made an earnest

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.358.

<sup>10</sup> Jha, J.S. op.cit., p.361.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.382.

effort to win over the *zamindars* to his side in implementing his educational schemes. The *zamindars* as a class had hitherto been opposed to the educational activities of the government. But Tayler succeeded in persuading many of them not only to co-operate with the government, but also to establish vernacular schools in their own estates. Thus a number of *zamindary* schools were opened by the *zamindars* of Bettiah, Hathua, Dumraon, Tikari and Deo.<sup>12</sup> The *Zamindary* schools went a long way with the Government so far as funds and management were concerned. But the defect there was of a different nature. There the study of Persian and use of *Kaithi* script went to such an extent that they appeared to have been established for those purposes and not for vernacular education. Education provided there was gratuitous. The *zamindars* did not permit the teachers in their service to receive rewards from Government for superior merit. The result was that when the school outgrew in number another teacher had to be appointed. But the *zamindar's* means were by no means inexhaustible. In Government schools assistant teachers were paid from schools fees, but *zamindar's*

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<sup>12</sup> Datta, op.cit. pg.402.

pride forbade the exploitation of that source. The sense of feudal dignity obliged them "to feed and clothe as well as educate the pupils than to make them pay." This naturally kept down the extension, and also the standard, of education.<sup>13</sup>

The indigenous schools which had come under the improvement scheme of the government numbered 66 in 1860 and 112 in 1861. The teachers of these schools, specially from Saran, Shahabad and Purnea were all *Mohammadans* and those from Behar and Patna were *Kayasthas*. Monghyr sent up a mixture of these two classes.<sup>14</sup> The Inspector of schools, N.W. Division, inferred from the above fact that the education of youth in Bihar was chiefly in the hands of *Muhammadans* and *Kayasthas*. It also indicated that the *Muhammadans* and *Kayasthas* were less influenced by professional prejudice and were more amenable to improvement than the *Brahmans*, or any other engaged in that occupation.<sup>15</sup> About this time Hindi was recognised as the mother-tongue of about 18,000,000 of people in Bihar. Hitherto the books were in Urdu language full of

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<sup>13</sup> Bengal Education Report 1861-62, Appendix 'A' p.112.

<sup>14</sup> Datta, op.cit., pg.403.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.404.

Persian and Arabic words. Instructions were therefore issued that Hindu should be taught in government schools of Bihar and that the list of Hindustani books be revised. Teaching of Urdu, was, however, allowed in *Maktabas*. All this naturally caused much suspicion among the people about the motive of the Government in the beginning but gradually the distrust disappeared, and these village schools showed fair progress.<sup>16</sup>

### **English Education Prior to 1863**

Contrary to the general belief that efforts for spreading English education was made in Bihar after the famous Resolution of Lord Bentick of 7 March 1835 there are references to the prior existence of some schools where instructions was given in English language, and also of some individuals making private arrangements for the tuition of their wards in English. Of course, there was no demand for English education in Bihar as it was in Calcutta, but the *Zamindars* and others who had frequently to visit Calcutta for the transaction of their business could very well realise the importance of knowing English to move in the official circle.<sup>17</sup> Adam has referred to the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.405.

<sup>17</sup> K.K. Data op.cit., p.409.

establishment of an English School for Ramgarh Kols, which however, had ceased to exist at the time of his famous survey. From a different sources it is known that about the year 1831 two British officers of Ramgarh district, Cuthbert and Neave, had made strenuous efforts for the establishment of a "College" for the Kols there.<sup>18</sup> The other institution which had made provision for English education was the school at Gaya maintained by Maharaja Mitrajit Singh of Tikari. From a report of the Officiating Magistrate of Gaya, of 25 January 1838, it is learnt that the institutions was broadly divided into two parts one in which English classes were held and the other in which Persian and Arabic were taught.<sup>19</sup>

But when efforts on the part of government were made to establish English schools at the several district headquarters in Bihar the result was far from encouraging for the government. Shortly after the Resolution of Lord Bentick correspondence was started on 20 April 1835 by the General Committee of Public Instructions to establish an English School at Patna. Mr. Glift of

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<sup>18</sup> Jha, J.S. op.cit., pp.121-124.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

the Allahabad College was sent to Patna as the headmaster of the school, which actually came into existence on 10 August 1835 after a series of meetings of "European and native gentlemen residing in or near Patna".<sup>20</sup> But the popular feeling was positively hostile to the new institution owing to a number of causes, the principal being the rumours regarding the motive of the government in establishing the school, the Resumption proceedings which had impoverished several respectable members of old aristocratic families, and the proselytizing activities of the Christian missionary. The public opinion was so strongly opposed that even those who saw the prospect of English learning for government employment dared not come forward.<sup>21</sup>

Thus the first attempt on the part of the Government to establish English schools in Bihar was not successful owing more to the boycott of government institutions than non-appreciation of English education by the people of Bihar. But profited by the experiences of difficulties in the way of English education the Government took certain measures to remove

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<sup>20</sup> K.K. Datta, *op.cit.*, pg.409.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*



them and also to promote the cause of English education. Accordingly Persian was abolished as the court language in 1837. In 1844 the Patna School was upgraded into a central College. But this was not a college in the modern sense of the term. The main idea was only "to centralise the education of Behar" with a view to providing efficient instruction by attracting meritorious students from all over the province by means of scholarships.<sup>22</sup>

The government policy was to discourage the admission of the boys of the poor section of the community.<sup>23</sup> The college remained unpopular among the inhabitants of Bihar throughout its short and unsatisfactory career.<sup>24</sup> The condition of other Zila schools in Bihar was also unsatisfactory. The Gaya school which had been established on 18 December 1845 had to contend against heavy odds.<sup>25</sup> In Muzaffarpur an Anglo-Vernacular school was established in February 1845 on the initiative of local government officers. Maharaja Rudra Singh of Darbhanga

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<sup>22</sup> Jha, J.S., op.cit., p.368.

<sup>23</sup> Datta, op.cit., pg.411.

<sup>24</sup> Datta, K.K., op.cit., p.412-13.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

gave a liberal donation of Rs.5,000 and his brother Rs.2,000 to this institution.<sup>26</sup>

The Bhagalpur government School was the only school in Bihar which made satisfactory progress from the very beginning.<sup>27</sup> Vigorous efforts were made to improve the Patna school also after the famous Despatch of 1854. The number of students in the school rose to 193 by 1855. In 1856 the status of the school was raised to “a High School or quasi College” to enable the junior scholarship-holders to prosecute their further study in the province itself.<sup>28</sup> Necessary funds for such a school at Patna could be raised by effecting reduction in the establishment of other institutions. Ultimately the Government of India sanctioned the establishment of a College at Patna on 15 November 1861. Accordingly the Patna School was raised to the rank of a College on 9 January 1863.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Datta op.cit., p.414.

## **University and Collegiate Education**

With the establishment of the Patna College in 1863 began the era of higher English education in Bihar. It started with 5 students and Mc Crindle as its first principle. The public-spirited landed magnets in the Province came forward with liberal donations for the promotion of this highest branch of education in Bihar. Special mention may be made of the Maharaja of Darbhanga and his brothers, Maharaja of Bettiah, Syed Wilayat Ali Khan and Syed Lutf Ali Khan of Patna, in this respect. In 1865-1866 it became a first grade college by providing instruction upto B.A. classes. The number of students rose rather slowly. For a long time Bengali students were in a majority. But with the growing appreciation of the advantages of higher education by the Biharis and the Government policy of diffusing education more among them than before led to the rise in their proportion in the college classes from 1873 onwards. The results in the University Examinations were considered to be fairly satisfactory. In English, however, the Biharis were reported to have been at a disadvantage in comparison with the Bengalis. Out of five that passed the B.A. examination in 1876-

77 only two were natives of Bihar. Even in their outlook the Biharis were very conservative. In 1875 the first experiment was made of opening a hostel for the college. Out of 30 boarders only 1 was a Bihari Hindu. The principal observed; "The Biharis hold back, partly from distrust of anything like innovation and partly from caste prejudices and scruples about eating." By 1882 the number of students rose to 188 in the college.<sup>29</sup>

In 1887 a second grade college was established in Bhagalpur, called the Tej Narayan Jubilee College. Raja Krityanand Singh and his brother made a munificent donation of three lacs of rupees towards the building of the college. Hari Prasanna Mukherji was the first principal of the college. In 1890 it was made a first grade college.<sup>30</sup> The next college to be established in Bihar was the Bihar National College at Patna. It was founded in 1889 by Bisheshwar Singh, the zamindar of Kulharia (district Shahabad) as a second grade college. It became a first grade college in 1892. In 1897 Raja Kameleswari Prasad High English School and the Victoria Jubilee school were amalgamated, at the instance of the Collector of Monghyr, with

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<sup>29</sup> Jha, J.C. History of Patna College, p.64.

<sup>30</sup> Datta, op.cit., pg.416.

the Monghyr Zila school to form the D.J. College there. It was affiliated to the University of Calcutta as a second grade college in 1898. In 1899 was established the G.B.B. College (now called Langat Singh College) at Muzaffarpur. In the same year was founded, the St. Columba's college at Hazaribagh with the Rev. J.A. Murray as its first Principal. Thus at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were one government and five unaided colleges in Bihar, with a total number of 776 on the roll. The largest number of students (263) was in the B.N.College, followed by the Patna College (205), T.N.J. College (173), D.J. College (70) and G.B.B. College (65). But during the next two years while the G.B.B. College improved its numerical strength by nearly 100 per cent, there was a decline in the number of students in all the other colleges including the B.N. College.<sup>31</sup>

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed greater educational and administrative activities in India. Lord Curzon appointed a Commission in 1902 with T.Releigh as its President, to report on the working of the universities and to suggest measures for the advancement of learning. The University Act of 1904 was accordingly passed after acute controversy.

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<sup>31</sup> Datta, *Ibid.*, p.417.

One important measure that followed the Act was the deputation of Jackson to draw up a scheme of improvement for each college, and the colleges were reconstituted on the lines suggested by him. Another notable event was the establishment of Law College at Patna in 1909 the colleges of the Province remained under the Calcutta University till 1913.<sup>32</sup> On 19 May 1913, however, the State government appointed a Committee of sixteen members with R.Nathan as the President to chalk out a plan for the establishment of a University at or near Patna. It recommended a teaching and residential University. The Patna University Act came into force on 1 October 1917, and J.G. Jennings was appointed the first Vice-Chancellor.<sup>33</sup>

After the establishment of the University in the Province the number of students went on increasing. But till 1937 only two more new colleges came into existence.<sup>34</sup> By 1937 the total number of students in the colleges of Bihar rose to 3620.<sup>35</sup> A

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Datta, K.K., History of Bihar p.418.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

beginning was made in the direction of co-education also. The number of girl students rose from 4 in 1931 to 30 in 1937.

In March 1932 the Patna University Act was amended. It made the University purely federal, but established a central board to coordinate the work of the colleges at Patna, provided for larger representative of the registered graduates on the Senate and fixed the number of teachers and non-teacher on the syndicate at 10 and 7, respectively, in addition to the Vice-Chancellor. With the coming into force of the Government of India Act (1919), the Patna University became a federal topic, subject to federal legislation. The government appointed a Committee to report on the progress of education in Bihar and to prepare a scheme for its expansion and intensification. Prof. K.T. Shah was the Chairman of the Committee. Dr. Sachachidanad Sinha (Vice-Chancellor of Patna University), Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Prof. H.B. Batheja, Dr. Zakir Husain, Ghulam-Saiyidain, Dr. K.D.Nag, Acharya Badrinath Verma, Prof. Amarnath Jha, B.Mukerji and the Principal of Patna Science College. By 1942 the number of colleges for males rose to 14. Two Arts colleges for females also came into existence in 1941. The number of students in the case of the former was 6407 and in the case of

the latter it was 90. The number of the colleges for males went on increasing. But for the next five years the number of women's colleges remained static, although the number of students the students rose considerably. In 1946 the number of colleges for males was 18 with 10,096 students on the roll. The number of students in the two women's colleges in the same year was 240.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Datta, K.K., *op.cit.*, p.420



## Secondary Education

Secondary education here refers to the education imparted at the middle and high school stages. It has the College at the upper end and the primary education at the lower ends. In the beginning it consisted of all State managed, aided and unaided High Schools, Middle English and Middle Vernacular schools. About the close of the period two private Anglo-Vernacular schools came into existence. One of these had been established in December, 1861 at Darbhanga due to personal exertion on the part of James Forlong, the Court of Ward's Manager for Darbhanga Raj.<sup>37</sup> There were eight Zila schools in 1862 with 1135 students. In December only six students passed the Entrance examination, out of whom five joined the first years class of the Patna College. Various causes were reported to have been responsible for the failure of Zila schools in Bihar. The annual government assignment was the small sum of Rs.3,000 with the result that only two Zila schools had European headmasters. Qualified teachers were not available locally.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Datta op.cit., pg.424.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Under compulsion Bengali teachers had to be appointed to teach English without adequate knowledge of Hindustani. Above all there was no large market for English educated persons in Bihar. One notable feature of education at the secondary stage was the experiment of the teaching of science subjects through the medium of Vernacular languages. In preparing the text books for the purpose the *Bihar Scientific Society* (established in 1868 at Muzaffarpur) did commendable work.<sup>39</sup>

The Bihar Bandhu (established in 1874) took up the cause of Hindi. Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh of Darbhanga rendered yeoman's service in this regard by instituting a number of annual prizes for best books in Hindi on different subjects. The government at last made Hindi the Court language in 1880.<sup>40</sup> Another notable fact of the period is the proportion of Mohammadan students to Hindu boys in the Secondary schools. According to the annual reports of the years 1866 to 1870 the proportion of Muhammadan pupils to Mohammadan population was about twice as large as that of Hindu pupils to Hindu population in an English School, and in Middle class vernacular

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

schools the proportion was somewhat three times as great. The main reason for this imbalance was attributed to the fact that the Muhammadans were "more addicted to letters and to official service".<sup>41</sup> The Inspector of Schools himself admitted that "the government system of education is adapted to the creation of a class of official subordinates; and accordingly the government schools is attended by those only who desire service under government."<sup>42</sup> Thus in 1875-76, in the Survey school at Patna there were out of 37 students 21 Muhammadans. Likewise of 165 pupils in the Temple Medical School at Bankipur three fourth were Mohammadans. The seventies of the nineteenth century witnessed a greater consciousness on the part of people towards education particularly in the field of secondary education. Although the government expenditure on higher education was reduced people came forward to meet their own educational needs. The following statement gives in idea of the number of different classes schools with students in the year 1901 in Patna and Bhatnagar divisions.

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<sup>41</sup> Annual Reports of Inspector of Schools North West Division for 1869-70.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

There was further expansion in secondary education after the creation of the province. The first Quinquennial Report (1912-17) shows that there were 100 High Schools with 34,734 pupils and 226 M.E. Schools with 23,415.<sup>43</sup> During the next five years (1917-1922) although the number of secondary schools of all classes rose (to 567) the number of students declined owing chiefly to the Non-cooperation movement. The High Schools specially suffered most owing to political upheavals of the later years. In 1930 there were instances of picketing and concerted absence from schools on various special occasions. Yet the number of secondary schools went on increasing. By 1936-37 the number of High schools rose to 196 with 57,043 students and M.E. Schools to 637 having 83,009 students on the roll. The addition of so many schools, inspite of the economic depression, was attributed to the fact that many educated men were out of employment and therefore ready to take up teachership even on low any.

But there was a decline in the number of Middle Vernacular schools. There were 103 Middle Vernacular Schools

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<sup>43</sup> Datta, op.cit., pg.428

with 12,619 students. These Middle Vernacular Schools were getting unpopular as they did not prove useful for students desirous of studying in the High School. They also cost more to the local bodies. Hence the Patna District Board took a decision in 1938 to convert all Middle Vernacular schools to Middle English Schools.<sup>44</sup> The decision was likely to affect the study of vernacular. But from January 1939 the medium of instruction in class VIII of all High Schools became the mother tongue (Hindi) of students. During the year (1938-39) the government also decided to introduce as an experimental measures, the Basic Education Scheme outlined by the All India Board of Basic Education in a compact area in Champaran district.<sup>45</sup> The Basic Education Board was accordingly set up with the Minister for Education as its Chairman. The first step taken in the matter was the opening of Basic Training classes in September 1938 in the Patna Training School to train the requisite number of teachers for the proposed Basic Schools.

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<sup>44</sup> K.K.Datta, *op.cit.*, pg.430.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

## Primary Education

A new era in mass education began in 1904. The payment-by-result system was abolished in 1902-3. The new system that came into vogue was that of "maintained schools".<sup>46</sup> The District Boards were directed to spend ten to fifteen per cent of the cess income on education. But a more important scheme of education devised by Alexander Pedler was the Kindergarten school syllabus in the primary school.<sup>47</sup> The scheme was to come into force from 1903,. But it was much advance in time and the teachers were ill-equipped to implement it. It has to be given up in 1907.<sup>48</sup>

Soon after the creation of the province, the government appointed a Committee under the presidentship of Le Mesurier to examine the state of primary education. According to the recommendation of the Committee some changes were effected in the syllabus, the course of infant class being reduced from two years to one year for the boys who joined after the age of 8. The indigenous system of oral multiplication of mixed numbers

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

was reintroduced. Nature study and Drawing of Pedler's scheme were allowed to continue. During the first five years (1912-17) of the creation of the Province the number of primary schools rose to 25,804 with 7,05,082 students. But in the next five years (1917-22), surprisingly enough, both the number of schools and students fell. In 1938 it was decided to introduce compulsory education at all the headquarter municipalities of the Province. Spinning was introduced as compulsory subject in Girls Primary Schools, and as an optional subject in Boys Primary Schools.

In 1930-31 the Government set up a Committee to advise it on primary education. Based on the recommendation of the Committee a new syllabus was introduced from January 1935.<sup>49</sup> An infant class was again added to the existing three classes of the L.P. Schools. This was in line with the recommendation of the Hartog Committee which considered a four-year course to be the minimum for lasting literacy. In 1938 the Basic Education Board was set up and a Basic school was started at Brindaban (dist. Champaran). On 26 April 1938 the Mass Literacy Movement was inaugurated. An appeal was made to the

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<sup>49</sup> J.S.Jha op.cit., pg.124

teachers and students of Bihar to devote their summer vacation to the liquidation of illiteracy and ignorance amongst the masses of the Province.<sup>50</sup> For the purpose a Provincial Mass Literacy Committee was set up under the Presidentship of the Education Minister.

The primary education made a steady progress during subsequent years excepting the Basic Education. The post-war development based on Sergeant Scheme (1944) did not give much prominence to its self-supporting feature. Although basic education was to be the base of development of education during the post-war period, Sergeant was not convinced that it might be self-supporting, nor he considered it to be desirable. But he laid great stress on the fact that the sum to be spent over education should be treated as of national importance. He suggested that seventy per cent of the educational funds be spent over the salary and other emoluments of teachers. New pay-scales were created. In 1951-52 the Central government deputed two officers, Dr.D.F.Lakhmi and Dr.F.G.Pearce, to Bihar to look into the working of the Basic schools and examine the possibility of Basic education being made self-supporting. Their report was favourable and the Planning Commission included it in its first plan.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



### Cultural Institutions

Some societies were established in Bihar in the sixties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the guidance of English-educated Indian Officers. The first literary society called the *Anjuman-ilmea* was established at Arrah in August 1866.<sup>51</sup> The society held periodical meetings, at which papers were read and discussed, the best contributions being printed and published once a quarter. In May 1868 the *Bihar Scientific Society* was established at Mazaffarpur due largely to the efforts of Syed Imdad Ali, a subordinate Judge of the district. The object of the Society was to prepare translation of English books into student's own language with a view to proving the fact that even scientific instruction could be imparted through the mother tongue of the students. A few more scientific and literary Societies which came into existence at Patna about this time were the *Bihar Literary Society* (1873), the *Bihar Association* (1871) and the *Bihar Upkar Sabha* (1876).<sup>52</sup>

During his visit to Mithila in October 1904 Justice Sarda Charan Mitter spoke on the advisability of setting up an association "to bring to light the vast number of historical and

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<sup>51</sup> K.K.Datta, op.cit., pg.449.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

literary matters of the Mithila country". Accordingly on 6 November a meeting of the literary persons and elites of the town took place in the Saraswati Academy, under the presidentship of M.M.Parmeshwar Jha, and an association, named the "*Mithila Research Society or Tatwabimarshim Sabha*" was formed.<sup>53</sup> The Patna Museum, which has a beautiful collection of Mauryan and pre-Mauryan terracotas and polished sculptures, owes its origin to the Society.

The K.P. Jaysawal Research Institute was established in 1950 at Patna, "with the object inter alia, to promote historical research, archaeological excavation and investigations and publications of works of permanent value to scholars". The A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies at Patna was established in 1958 in memory of the late Dr. Anugrah Narian Sinha of Bihar. An autonomous body the Institute is devoted to collecting and analysing data on social, economic and political problems.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> J.S.Jha, op.cit., pg.239.

<sup>54</sup> K.K.Datta, op.cit., pg.451.

## **Chapter -III**

### **Women's Education in Bihar: Beginning and Growth**

Women's literacy was virtually an unknown quantity when the nineteenth century opened (as a matter of fact education whether of males or females was more a private affair than a public concern in this country,<sup>1</sup> Ward's report of 1803 mentioned that nearly all Bengali villages had primary schools or Pathshalas but they seemed to have catered to boys alone.<sup>2</sup> Adam's report described a roughly similar picture in the mid-thirties but, again pre-colonial educational facilities - well organised as they were for those times - seemed to have offered nothing to girls. It was not simply a question of omission. Girls were expressly forbidden to read in literate, even well - educated households customary injunction had it that literate girls were fated to be widowed. In his second report on the State of Education in Bengal, Adam wrote in 1836 :

“A superstitious feeling is alleged to exist in the majority of Hindu families, principally cherished by the women and not discouraged by the men, that a girl taught to read and write

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<sup>1</sup> K.K. Datta : Op. Cit. Pg. 356

<sup>2</sup> Ramesh Chandra Mitra, Education, 1833 - 1905, in N.K. Singh, (ed). History of Bengal, 1757 - 1905, Calcutta, 1967, p - 419.

will soon become a widow.....and the belief is also generally entertained in native society that intrigue is facilitated by a knowledge of letters on the part of females..... when a sister.....is observed imitating her brother's attempt at penmanship, she is expressly forbidden to do so. These.....feelings prevail extensively.....both among Hindus who are devoted to the pursuits of religion and those who are engaged in the business of the world.”<sup>3</sup>

It is a historical fact of immense significance that women articulated an early yet strong sense about non - gendered , inalienable, equal human rights, first of all in the sphere of education, in contrast, abolition of widow immolation, legalising widow remarriage, a higher age of consent and marriage were rights that male reformers initiated.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Adam's Report, Sec 5, Second Report, 1836, (ed), A.N. Basu, Calcutta, 1941, pg 187-88.

<sup>4</sup> T. Sarkar, Words to Win, OUP, 1999, pg 79.

## THE BEGINNING

There were no girls schools in Bihar till late sixties of the nineteenth century except those of the Christian missionaries in 1853, when Fr. Anastasinns Hartman after obtaining the services of the sisters of the Institute of Blessed Virgin Mary of Munich established St. Joseph's Convent School with nine students, three boarders, and six orphans at Bankipore, Patna.<sup>5</sup> It mainly served the Christian community as a school and an orphanage.<sup>6</sup>

The custom of holding periodical religious meetings in almost all big Hindu villages wherein learned pundits delivered discourses on Shrimad Bhagvata and separate seating arrangements were made for women, helped them greatly in acquiring proficiency in religious literature.<sup>7</sup> Buchanan refers to ladies in the District of Shahabad at the time of his survey, who could read and write letters and understand accounts.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> P.C. Horo : Christian Mission and Christian Communities in Bihar, (P.U.) unpublished, 1983, pg - 21

<sup>6</sup> Ibid pg - 21

<sup>7</sup> K.K. Datta, op. Cit, pg 442

<sup>8</sup> Buchanan - An account of the District of Shahabad, pg - 172

In the distt. of Purnea there were about 20 women who were able to correspond.<sup>9</sup>

The credit for setting up of girls schools on modern lines in Bihar goes to the local educated Bengalis and some of the cultural associations of Calcutta. In 1867 the first girls school was established in Patna by the Bengali community with the active cooperation of the Principal of Patna College, Mc. Crindle. The name of Girish Chandra Ghose, Judge of the Small causes Court, may specially be mentioned in this connection.<sup>10</sup> In January 1868 the Secretary of the Bengal Social Science Association, Calcutta, addressed a letter to the Commissioner of Patna Division to enquire about the State of female education in Bihar. The reply of the Commissioner reveals that till August of that year there were only two girls schools at Patna, the other being the Nonmoohia School established by Mohammad Aziz Khan. There was a female teacher in the school. It was held in the house of Mohammad Aziz Khan.

Apart from his own children other girls in the school belonged to lower order of the society. But Aziz had to encounter severe

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<sup>9</sup> 5.Buchana - An account of the Distt. of Purnea pg-172

<sup>10</sup> Datt, Op. Cit pg 442.

criticism from the members of his community.<sup>11</sup> The Deputy Inspector of School at Patna wrote his conversation with a respectable old man of Phoolwari Sharif at a Mushaira. The old man had heard about opening of a girls school at Bhagalpur. 'Have you any such school in Patna also?' he asked with some anxiety. On being told that there were two girls schools in Patna, he heaved a deep sigh and said, 'Bas, ab Kya raha, Zamanah Ulat Gya' (It is all up now; the world is turned upside down).<sup>12</sup>

The Bengali school was superintended by a mistress. During the year 1868 there was move to set up a girl school at Muzafarpur also. There was a Zanana School of Bengalis at Rajmahal.<sup>13</sup> The Salary of the mistress, a European lady was Rs. 50 a month. The ladies were taught fancy work. The school received an aid of Rs. 20 a month from the government. There was a Bengali girls school at Bhagalpur also.<sup>14</sup> In Darbhanga again the credit for opening the first girls school goes to the Bengali community of the place.<sup>15</sup> About

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Datta op.cit-Pg. 443

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Jha, JS, Beginning of Modern Education in Mithila -Pg. 138.

this time some girls schools were established in other parts of Bihar on the initiative of some English officers. These were supported either from the Reward Fund or by private subscription. In a report of 1875-76 Croft recorded the following about the state of female education; "The genuine desire (or reluctance) of the people about education of girls is shown by the number at school in boys pathshalas, about a dozen in every district, except Patna and Champaran. In Patna, however, there is some female education which does not appear on the returns. A tailor at Dinapur teaches 10 Musalman girls as he sits at work. At Lai, near the Bihata railway station an old woman teaches 30-40 girls Hindi. The people of that part are the most advanced in the district, and the Deputy and Sub-Inspector are convinced that 30(?) percent of the women of the Kayastha, Rajput, Brahman, and Baniya castes have some education; a few even read the Ramayana.

In Gaya some rich men teach their daughters to sign their names; some years ago a girl from Deo in this district passed the Vernacular scholarship examination. In Champaran many of the Kurmis about Bettiah (mostly servants of the Raj) teach their girls Kaithi, and even reading as far as the Ramayana;



they have applied for a school, which will be opened. A Khidmutgar (attendant) at Bettiah teaches 12 girls Hindi, Persian, the multiplication table, cooking and basket making."<sup>16</sup> In subsequent years also the increase in the number of schools and pupils continued, but till the close of the century female education of the school type had not taken firm root.<sup>17</sup> The conception of people regarding the duties of a woman did not allow much scope for it. The want of female teachers had made the situation more irksome.

Since Hindu and Mohamaddan girls educated in government classes found it difficult to take to teaching as a career. This is no doubt, because social custom and public opinion alike point to the home as the proper place for women and to marriage as the summum bonum.<sup>18</sup>

The female education among the Mohammadans were carried on by Atus or Parda\_Nashin ladies who did not stir out in public.<sup>19</sup> Zenana education in the Province is conducted by peripatetic teachers and by central gathering classes, the latter including certain classes for Mohammadan women of

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<sup>16</sup> K.K. Datta op.cit., pg.443.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pg. 444.

<sup>18</sup> Vth Quinquennial Review of the POE in Bihar & Orissa (1932-37), pg.117.

<sup>19</sup> S.N. Pandey: Education and Social Changes in Bihar, pg.27.

which the teachers are termed "Atus" first Quin Quennial review on POE (Bihar and Orissa) described the Atus in these terms: "The Atus worked in Patna and Tirhut divisions and the inspectress of schools considered that their work had improved considerably during the period 1912-1917."

In Patna city during this period (1906) there were 10-15 Atus who taught girls who went to them. There was a female Madarsa in Patna city opened by Mussamat Rasidan a literate lady, wife of Maulvi Mohammed Yehia, a pleader, even this Madarsa was closed after sometime.<sup>20</sup>

Due to scarcity of female teachers the existing girls schools had to be managed by old male teachers.<sup>21</sup> : " Government realised that it is desirable to replace these old men by women teachers as soon as this is practicable and in the mean time and untill women teachers of forthcoming to amalgamate inefficient girls schools with efficient boys schools, encouraging girls to attend these efficient schools for boys".<sup>22</sup>

Following this problem many girls' primary schools were closed down as it was not in accordance with the committees

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<sup>20</sup> Proceedings of Government of Bengal, General Department, (Education), May 1906, No. 1906, No. 70, pg.96-97.

<sup>21</sup> "The majority of girls' primary schools have been condemned by the District Inspectresses as inefficient and useless and their teachers as "old, lazy, uncertified men who have proved unfit for boys' schools." 5<sup>th</sup> Quinquennial Review of the POE in Bihar and Orissa, (1932-37), pg.116.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

stand (which was formed on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1914 to examine the whole question of female education in the province) that separate girls schools should be established whenever the number of girls in boys schools crossed 20, though it was not opposed to co-education.

Girls of tender age could be allowed to read in boys schools due to decrease in the number of schools for girls' from 2,971 in 1926 to 2,725 in 1930 and 2,695 in 1931 but the number of girls' attending them which was 71,329 in 1926 and 70,838 in 1930 now rose to 71,883 in 1931.<sup>23</sup> It shows that both local bodies and parents realised that at the primary stage it was seldom necessary to have separate schools for girls. There could be little objection from any but the most conservative parents to co-education if all the boys could be made to complete the lower primary stage by the age of 10.<sup>24</sup>

Co-education gradually gained popularity due to:

1. The public demand for female education in places where there was no school for girls.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> Quinquennial Review of the POE in Bihar and Orissa, (1927-32), pg.79.

2. The demand for superior teaching facilities and for selection for wider range of subjects offered by institutions for boys, especially in high schools and college.
3. The gradual relaxation of the Purdah system.<sup>25</sup> Thus we see in 1925 for the first time a girl student was admitted into the Patna college.<sup>26</sup>

It was the Ram Mohan Roy Seminar in the case of schools which took the lead in 1993 to start co-education on high school level. The idea came in the course of a casual discussion which Sris Chandra had with the then director of public instruction, C.E. Francus, about the paucity of girl schools and general difficulties of providing girls education.<sup>27</sup>

Inspite of terrific social opposition Sris Chandra (a Brahmo) admitted his two daughters in the school, however, co-education did not gain fast popularity and it was only in the mid forties that this school with 125 girls became the leading co-educational institution in the province.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Report on the POE in Bihar (1938-39).

<sup>26</sup> R.K. Sharma 'Nationalism, Social Reform and Indian Women.' (1981), pg.149.

<sup>27</sup> Sumanta Niyogi, Brhamo Samaj and Development of Education, pg.29.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

## Cost of Education

The direct expenditure on recognised schools for girls increased from Rs. 652, 381 in 1931 to Rs. 789, 105 in 1936.<sup>29</sup> During the five years (1932-37) the annual per capita cost of educating pupils in schools of all kinds for boys and in primary schools for girls was considerably reduced as will appear from the following table :-<sup>30</sup>

	Boy's Schools		Girl's Schools	
	1931-32	1936-37	1931-32	1936-37
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
High	45.02	40.8	73.3	74.4
Middle English	20.7	18.3	36.2	31.7
Middle Vernacular	16.0	14.1	23.3	23.6
Primary	6.5	6.3	7.3	6.9

This difference continued as long as the difference in average roll no. between a boys school and a girls school continued and qualified women teachers remained much more expensive than male teachers of the same qualification, other factors

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<sup>29</sup> Vth Quinquennial Review of the POE in Bihar (1932-37), pg.114.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

which added to it were the need for the provision of conveyance and the escorts for pupil.<sup>31</sup>

Education in general and girls education in particular continued to suffer from limited financial resources during the period. Girls education involved higher investment since not only were there separate schools to be set up but hostels had to be provided where the distance between home and school was not commutable, escorts had to be arranged to see girls home in areas where there were traditionally allowed to go outdoors; women teachers had to be trained because parents were reluctant to let their daughters come in contact with male teachers and lastly scholarships had to be provided as incentives so parents would forego the earnings and labour of their daughters or overcome traditional prejudices.

The female education on Committee (1914) made changes and made provisions for optional subjects which were to be introduced from 1918.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "The provision of conveyances specially at secondary schools is still a difficult problem. At the Bankipur Girls School five large buses have been provided and the numbers in the school have increased accordingly but the expense of maintaining these buses is heavy and practically none of the parents who have conveyance of their own are willing to use them to send their girls to school." 3<sup>rd</sup> Quinquennial Review of POE in Bihar & Orissa (1922 -1927), pg. 97-98.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

It was in 1909 that the first mistress's training college, B.N.R. Training College was established at Patna with help of an endowment, made by Syed Badshah Nawab of Razvi of Patna city yielding an annual income of Rs. 7267. The Tikari Raj provided accommodation for it in its palace at Patna. Miss Parsons of the Indian Educational Service was appointed the first lady Principal in the college.<sup>33</sup> There was a pardanashin class attached to it, on which the following extracts from the lady principals report are of interest:-

“All students from outside Patna are resident in the hostels and even some who live in Patna City prefer living in the hostels to attending as day pupils. The food given them is good and plentiful and it is wonderful to see how much stronger and better they look after a few month's residence in the hotels. The life there improves them in every way, they learn to keep regular hours, to keep their rooms neat and clean to give and take. When the college was first opened, the Hindu students would not allow a Muhammadan student to even pass through their class room. Now they are good friends and often sit and work together, and if they happen to be going the same way, will travel together. They feel they must

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<sup>33</sup> K.K. Datta, op.cit., pg.444.

work together. They feel they must work together, without petty prejudices, if they mean to benefit their country. Hostel life has done a great deal of good for the women".

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"The lady doctor at the Duchess of Teck Hospital is now in medical charge of the hotels and as the Hospital itself is very close to us, many of the women attend there if they are ill. This arrangement was sanctioned in 1913, and has worked well. I had all the students medically examined last year and out of 26 women only one was physically fit. Purdah women as a class are certainly not robust".

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"Though the college was established in 1909 the hostel for Hindu students was built in 1912 only."<sup>34</sup>

During the year 1915-16 a commencement was made in the province with the higher education of women, I.A. classes<sup>35</sup> being opened against educating daughters.<sup>36</sup> Most parents were unwilling to invest in education which they viewed as wastage since the girls were unlikely to take up jobs and after marriage they had to go to other home.

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<sup>34</sup> First Quinquennial Review of POE in Bihar & Orissa, (1912-1917), pg.101.

<sup>35</sup> Intermediate of Arts, equal to 10+2.

<sup>36</sup> The likelihood of Educated Girls becoming less adjustable and even defiant, added to the reluctance of parents to send their daughters to school. In Chanana, op.cit., pg.55, 1983.



Curricular content has always been a key issue in women's education and continues to be so even now, although in a modified form. There was considerable public opinion in favour of such a differentiated curriculum and the Education Committee of 1882 supported this view while advising a cautious approach to its implementation.<sup>37</sup> The government grant-in-aid policy required conformity to the government established curriculum.

This policy did not allow innovation in subject matter, although private school could teach additional subjects if they wanted to offer special fields of study for girls.<sup>38</sup> In this process certain subjects emerged as "feminine" subjects (e.g. hygiene, domestic science, needlework, music, home science, etc), while others (e.g. physics, chemistry & mathematics) became 'masculine' subjects.<sup>39</sup>

But we come across an interesting experiment in the case of C.M.S. school at Pathra, near Godda (Santhal Paragana) which had an agricultural class attached to it, as reported by the Inspector of Schools of the Bhagalpur Division: "There are a few fields in which the girls grow rice and a garden in which they grow vegetables".<sup>40</sup> On this curricular change Miss

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Chanana, op.cit., 1983, pg.51.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> POE (Bihar & Orissa) 1918-1919, pg.17.

Honeyburne, Inspector of schools, commented that: "it appears that in many cases objection is made to sending girls away to school and there are no day schools in most small Santal villages, on the ground that when they leave they cannot manage their rice-fields and are too old to learn. I hope the experiment will prove successful".<sup>41</sup>

In connection with the Raven show Girls' School at Cuttack. The subjects taught were English, logic, History, Sanskrit and the vernacular.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> First Quinquennial Review Bihar & Orissa 1912-1917, pg.103.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pg.97.

## VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS:

### **Brahmo Samaj**

The Brahmo Movement, remained confined to Calcutta till 1843, when Devendra Nath Tagore with twenty associates formally joined the Brahmo Samaj and sent a number of preachers <sup>to</sup> of different parts of Bengal.<sup>43</sup>

Bhagalpur having the largest number of Bengali population among the districts of Bihar was the first to receive the Brahmo influence.

Even before Keshub Chandra Sen started a movement for emancipation of women and had the beginning of 1863 started the "Bhagalpur Mahila Samiti" as the first women's "Sabha" in Bengal and Bihar.<sup>44</sup>

The starting of the Mokshada Girls School, now a Higher Secondary School was one of the first activities of the Brahmos at Bhagalpur. The school was established in Jan 1866 by the late K.D. Ghose, father of Sri Aurobindo and a band of few other Brahmo youngmen as the Bhagalpur Girls' Institution. Out of eight girls who took admission in the first year Dr. (Mrs.) Kadambini Ganguli, the first graduate of India,

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<sup>43</sup> K.K. Datta (ed.) op.cit., pg.4.

<sup>44</sup> P.C. Raychoudhary: Bihar District Gazetteers: Bhagalpur, pg.119.

was one of the group. In about 1881 the Managing Committee purchased a small piece of land near the Srinagar Raj House the present G.M.S. Higher Secondary School. At this time Raja Saheb of Bhagalpur offered to build a building for the school if the committee agreed to change the name to Mokshada Girls' School after his mother's name. So, since then the name had been changed.

Meanwhile Gandhiji's stirred the people and women began to take to education more eagerly. In 1932 Gandhi's movement brought out in Bhagalpur a lady from purdah, Smt. Champakala Devi, wife of late Patel Babu, whose activities were a source of a great inspiration to the women of Bhagalpur and it also gave an impetus to women's school was affiliated to the Patna University for Matric.<sup>45</sup>

The three leading high schools, Ram Mohan Roy Seminary, the Bankipore Girls' High School and Rabindra Balika Vidyalaya and one middle school, the Aghore Prakash Shishu Sadan, are the living symbols of the dedication, sacrifice and service of the Brahmos of Bihar.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> All the details, from Centenary Celebration Souvenir of Mokshada Girls' School. (1868-1968) from the Secretary's Report.

<sup>46</sup> Sumanta Niyogi: Brahmo Movement in Bihar and Education, p.93.

The Bankipore Girls' High School was established in 1892 by Aghore Kamini Devi which became a nucleus for the spread of female education in Bihar.<sup>47</sup> Detailed history of this school I have traced in the last chapter as a case study.

Member of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj established Ram Mohan Roy Seminary in 1896. The idea of setting up the school first came in the mind of Shivnath Sastri. The school earned reputation for its high standard of teaching. In 1901 there were nearly 150 students. The Seminary's work was highly appreciated by the then Governor Sir John Woodburn and the Education Secretary, Richard Pedlar.<sup>48</sup>

Besides the Christian Missionaries, who formed the first mission school for Christian girls in 1853 and Zamindars and caste associations were active in the field of education.

Tayler, the Commissioner of Patna Division, called a meeting of the principal land lords of the four districts in his division with a view to secure the hearty and zealous aid and co-operation of the great land lords in all the four districts.<sup>49</sup>

Maharaja Laksmishwar Singh of Darbhanga who was one of the most important zamindars of the province in the second

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pg.96.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> P.C. Raychoudhary: Gaya Old Records (1958), pg.109.

half of the nineteenth century took keen interest in the spread of education in his estate.

Although he did not establish any girls school in his estate, he rendered help to those engaged in the work.<sup>50</sup>

The Tekari Ray of Gaya District provided the place for the formation of B.N.R. Training College in 1909.<sup>51</sup>

The caste Sabhas came into existence at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this annual report on the general administration for the year 1875-76 the commissioner of Patna made the following observations on public life of Patna. "In the city of Patna there existed throughout the year several societies which have their<sup>52</sup> object, the encouragement of learning.

The Kayastha Conference was the first to be organised on a large scale and to be held regularly. It was founded in 1887. They established schools and social clubs throughout the province. They also started "Putri-Pathshalas" for promotion of education among females.<sup>53</sup> They were the most literate caste in the were the most literate caste in the province, amongst the Kayasthas 657 males and 95 females or 385

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<sup>50</sup> J.S. Jha: Biography of an Indian Patriot, pg.137.

<sup>51</sup> P.C. Raychoudhary: Bihar District Gazetteers, Saran, pg.426.

<sup>52</sup> General Administration Report: Patna Division, para 139 (1875-76).

<sup>53</sup> Poonam Choudhary: Growth of Education in Bihar (1854-1937).

persons in every 1,000 are literate and they also stand first as regards literacy in English.<sup>54</sup>

Education had started spreading among Muslim woman during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indigenous forces, more than western influence were greatly responsible for these changes. There was rapid increase of education among Muslim girls as a result of general development of female education in Bihar between the two world wars. Kamla Nehru in her letter to Dr. Syed Mahmud put tremendous emphasis on the promotion of education among the daughters of Syed Mahmud and Muslim woman of Bihar.<sup>55</sup>

The constant endeavour of Kamla Nehru through her letter to Dr. Mahmud led to a new awareness about education among the Muslim girls of Bihar and leaders likes Syed Mahmud, Mazaharul Haque, Ali Imam, Hassan Imam, and others began to take interest in the promotion education among Muslim woman .<sup>56</sup>

Two prominent women of Bihar left sharp imprint of their works on the Muslim women of Bihar; the first was Rashidun Nisa (1855 1929). Who was influenced by the reforming

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<sup>54</sup> Census of India 1921, vol.VII, Bihar & Orissa, part 1, pg.201.

<sup>55</sup> K.K. Datta, op.cit., pg.426.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

novels of Nazir Ahmed. She wrote a social novel *Islah – Un - Nisa* (Feminist reform) in 1894 which stressed the value of education among women and condemned useless, expensive and strenuous social ceremonies and customs. In this novel, she showed how the life of ignorant girls are changed because of education. She also started a school for girls known as Rizvi High School, fund for which were provided by Nawab Rizvi of Patna.<sup>57</sup>

Another formidable Muslim social reformer was Rokeya Sakhawat Hussain (1879 – 1932) of Bhagalpur. She was born at Rangpur in Bengal in a landed aristocrat family. She was married to Khan Bahadur Sakhawat Hussain of Bhagalpur who gave her Rs. 10,000/- to open a school for girls. She set up this school soon after her husband's death but his relations were offended. Driven out of her home by her step-daughter, Begum Rokeya closed the school and moved to Calcutta where she opened another school Sakhawat Memorial Girls School in 1911.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Usha Chakraborty: *Condition of Bengali Women*, Calcutta, 1963, pg.142-148.

<sup>58</sup> Ghulam Murshid: *The Reluctante Debutante*, pg.136.



## **Change in the position of women**

1. **Inter-caste Marriage:** There came an awakening among the educated classes that no girl should be married without her consent and "Marriage Reform league (1931) was formed.<sup>59</sup>
  
2. **Birth Control :** A large section of population which did not have a full meal everyday was likely to respond to inducement-needed for birth control. It is interesting to know that in the year 1934, advertisements about birth control methods, were published in the searchlight. The advertisement mentioned birth control, rubber, medicines, appliances, caps and cheek pessary from Birth Control Research Home, 29, Telipara Lane, Calcutta and other places.<sup>60</sup>
  
3. **Abolition of Purdah:** Some attempts were made against the system on a small scale at the Indian National Congress Session held at Gaya in 1922. But the anti-purdah movement started seriously in 1927 when Sri Ramanandan Misra, a Khadi worker from Darbhanga gave a lead to it.<sup>61</sup> Under the auspices of Gandhi who did not

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<sup>59</sup> Savitri Saran, *op.cit.*, pg.196.

<sup>60</sup> Ram Sewak, *Bihar Between the Two World Wars*, pg.174.

<sup>61</sup> R.K. Sharma, *op.cit.*, pg.146.

man's anxiety about a woman's purity. He addressed a gathering at Darbhanga in 1925 and disheartened to see purdah women whose expression he could not see.<sup>62</sup>

A special resolution was introduced in the Bihar and Orissa legislative Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1921 to give the right of franchise to women but after a long discussion it was lost.<sup>63</sup> But in 1929 a resolution was passed by the council to give the right of franchise to women.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Mahila Samiti**

The Mahila Samiti was perhaps the only institution of its kind in the whole of Bihar. In 1919, it held its meetings regularly on the premises of the Girls school at Chapra and it had its own magazine, "The Mahila Darpan".<sup>65</sup>

In Jan 1929 a session of All India women's conference was held at Patna.

A Bihar Women's Constituent Conference was also organised. At one of its session, held on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1929. Resolutions were passed in support of the Sarda Act and against the purdah and dowry systems. it urged for special attention to the cause of women's education in the province.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

### **Bihar Council of Women**

The activities of the Bihar Council of Women were guided throughout the year 1936-37 were by lady Sifton as its president who was succeeded by Lady Hallet, the council continued to render excellent services to the cause of women and social improvement.<sup>67</sup> The national awakening, the ideals of democracy and equality before the law and had brought improvement in the position of women.

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<sup>67</sup> Ram Sewak, *op.cit.*, pg.262.

## Chapter – IV

### One Crusader, One Institution

In the state which was created on the linguistic basis (anti-Bengali), ironically it was the Bengali community, who took the lead in the field of women's education, whether it was the case of the first school of the province (in 1867 the first girls' school was tested at Patna by the Bengali community with the active co-operation of the principal of Patna college, Mc. Crindle. The name of Girish Chandra Ghose, Judge of the Small Causes court may specially be mentioned in this connection<sup>1</sup>) or the second one (Mokshada Girls' School was established in January 1868 by the late K.D. Ghose father of Sri Aurobindo and a band of few other Brahma young men as the Bhagalpur Girl's institution<sup>2</sup>) or the most prominent one, Bankipur girl's High school in 1892.

In Patna the individual endeavour of Mrs. Aghor Kamini Devi (mother of Dr. B.C. Roy the first Chief Minister of Bengal) bore fruit and she founded the first girls' high school of the province in 1892, with much strain and struggle. From 1877

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<sup>1</sup> Datta, K.K., Comprehensive History of Bihar, 1976, pg.442.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pg.443.

onwards, the Brahma Samaj in Patna was dominated by P.C. Roy and his wife Mrs. Aghore Kamini Devi. Sivanath Sastri rightly calls him “the soul of Bankipur Samaj”.<sup>3</sup>

P.C. Roy came over to Bihar in 1874 in the service of the government as Relief superintendent of Famine and was posted at Motihari,<sup>4</sup> soon he was transferred to Patna. By 1881 Mrs. P.C. Roy had been convinced that a change in the status of women was urgently called for and for this they should be educated.<sup>5</sup> She decided to open a school for girls in Patna. She realised that she was not adequately equipped to run an educational institution, because of lack of proper training. It speaks volumes for the coverage, determination and dedication of Mrs. Aghore Kamini Devi that inspite of being the mother of five children, she joined Isabell Thoburn’s famous women’s college at Lucknow – now run by Christian missionaries in 1891.<sup>6</sup> She stayed in the hostel for one complete session, lived the life of an ordinary hosteler, submitted to the discipline, rules and regulations of the place and created an extremely good

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<sup>3</sup> Sastri Sivanath: History of Brahma Samaj, p.527.

<sup>4</sup> P.C. Roy, Aghor Prakash (Calcutta 1922), pg.50.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pg.41.

<sup>6</sup> Niyogi, Sumanta, - “The Brahma Samaj Movt. & Dev. Of Edu. Janaki, Patna, pg.36.

impression. Finding her an elderly lady, Principal Thoburn paid special attention to her and always insisted upon exempting her from many bindings and obligations. But she never sought concessions and considered herself equal to other students much younger to her. At the college, the environment was absolutely alien to her with young Christian and Anglo-Indian girls who dominated the school rolls. But even in such strange environment she carried on her studies and learnt not only the kinder-garten system, but also gained fairly good command over English & Hindi.<sup>7</sup> She came back after a stay of nine months on 15 Dec. 1891 and opened the Bankipore Girl's school with ten girls at her rented bungalow in a beautiful surrounding at the bank of the Ganges. This bungalow belonged to one Englishman Stephen Boilard. The income of the school was only 48 Rs. per month. It was run mainly on donations, that too were irregular.<sup>8</sup> The initial local response was of complete indifference. People would not send their daughters or sisters, as they were unwilling to expose their faces to public gaze. But Aghore Kamini never lost heart. Ten small girls at the outset!

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<sup>7</sup> Niyogi, op.cit., pg.37.

<sup>8</sup> Gopal, Surendra, - "Brahmos and Social Reform in Bihar", in Swami Vedantananda (ed.), Patna, 1983, pg.70.

Even these girls had to be brought from their homes. When parents showed unwillingness to send their daughters to the school because it would violate the pardah system, Aghore Kamini opened a hostel inside her house – Chhatri Niwas<sup>9</sup> - so that girls would not give up their education.

Aghore Kamini enthusiastically visited the houses of prominent Brahmos and Bengalis in search of donations which was not forthcoming. She made friends with the mothers and gradually convinced them of the need for girls' education, gradually, this process of socialisation yielded result. Many mothers agreed to send their girls to her school. This house-visit and work of persuasion was one of the items in her daily schedule. Some houses had to be visited numerous times and it needed a lot of patience and tolerance to do such work.<sup>10</sup> Some parents agreed to send their daughters on the condition that girls will be taught more of cooking than the three 'R's. Taking into consideration the social conservatism, Prakash Chandra also suggested to her to lay more emphasis on cooking. But Aghore Kamini did not yield to this pressure too. She replied.

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<sup>9</sup> Roy, op.cit., pg.68.

<sup>10</sup> Roy, op.cit., pg.145.

“What is there in cooking? I can teach the girls cooking in fifteen days. But what is needed more is the knowledge of arithmetic, geography and hygiene which would enlighten them and free them from permanent habitation in the kitchen.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, these were the words coming from a Brahmo reformer of the late nineteenth century. It not only exuded the reformist zeal but also reflected the rebellious character of the Brahmo struggle against traditionalism. Education of girls was not all a likable propositions in the contemporary Bihari society. The age-old traditionalism granting women an inferior status and confining them within the house was too rigidly based to be shaken. There had also been a shortage of teachers and this meant extremely heavy work for her.

The house along with the Roy family and children came to be called, “Paribar” that is, family. She taught in the afternoon after heavy family work and spent the evening in looking after the records and files regarding the school management.<sup>12</sup> Prakash Chandra often expressed surprise how she could manage so much of work. He believed that all human beings

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.144.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.143.



possess inexhaustible source of energy and therefore Aghore Kamini too as a sincere individual must be capable of doing a great work. By March 1892, fifteen Bihar girls also attended the school. Girls also came from outside the province. Besides Prakash Chandra and Guruprasad, two very sincere Brahmo missionaries Amritalal Bose and Brajagopal Niyogi helped her in various ways.

The subjects taught were arithmetic, geography and language. But Aghore Kamini had one problem. There was no teacher available to teach geography. She too did not have geography in her college course at Lucknow. Therefore she tried to get over the problem herself. Prakash Chandra, who humorously called himself her 'Pardhan Mantri' or chief adviser, suggested her some readings on geography. She collected some books and did serious reading. After acquainting herself well with the subject she taught the girls very well.<sup>13</sup> She further improved her teaching ability by reading books other than her own subjects. Prayer and physical exercise had also been in the daily routine. She got so involved with the girls that during tiffin

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.144.

break she used to play with the girls and taught them several games. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's lyric 'Bande Matram' was often sung in the prayer. She was able to give her love and affection to the girls and she greatly endeared her-self to the girls. They regarded her as their mother and called her 'Majjee'.<sup>14</sup> The very utterance of the word used to fill the hearts of children with reverence.<sup>15</sup> She attended the school and took classes even when she was ill. Often she went without eating as the food could not be prepared in time. She set such a good example of regularity and punctuality that other teachers also rarely remained absent and worked with full devotion in spite of the poor salary.<sup>16</sup> The daily routine of Aghore Kamini gives an indication of her activities and engagements throughout the day. Her day began with prayer and sermons very early in the morning. Then she looked after her children and the school kids, who used to reside with her in an adjoining boarding house. After completing their bath and breakfast she used to prepare for the school and simultaneously arranged for Prakash Chandra's departure to office. She remained engaged in school

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.145.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.144.

activities till 3 o'clock, with a lunch break between twelve o'clock and one in the afternoon. During this time attention was paid to the education of the children. After the school she got engaged in various activities connected with the children for example, stitching their clothes, giving the dirty linen to the washerman, making quilt and shoes for them and so on. In the evening the children were helped in preparation of their lessons. Another compulsory involvement in the evening was attending to the sick and the diseased ones. This spirit of earning for the sick was an important quality of her character. In the holidays and Sundays an additional work during the evening was meeting friends and visiting some Brahma as well as non Brahma families. She was not free even after dinner. She made estimates of the day's expenses and recorded other financial accounts, like payment of salary to the teachers and so on. So the entire day kept her engaged in the activities concerning the school.

One Sindhi gentleman Hiranand Jethwani was so impressed by the school that he brought his two daughters from far away Sind and put them in Aghore Kamini's care. *The Indian spectator*, the leading Calcutta newspaper reported on 2 April 1893:-

“By far the most notable institution, however, at Bankipore, is an unpretentious Boarding House, managed by a Brahmo lady and her two daughters. Mrs. Prakash Chandra Rai is the wife of a gentleman who holds a respectable government appointment, and who is in well-to-do circumstances. At the age of 35 she and her husband took the vow of Brahmacharya, and both have religiously observed it up-to-date. With her husband’s full consent, Mrs. Rai (Perhaps I should spell, ‘Ray’) went with her two daughters to Lucknow to study at Miss Thoburn’s Institution there. One of the daughters is now 24, the other is much younger. The elder is married, but continues to live with her parents, and to help them in their beneficent works. The younger girl is a pearl. She is unmarried, and looks after the children in the Boarding House with a little mother’s care; and sets there the example of true sisterly love and self-sacrifice. Mrs. Ray speaks English fluently, and is well-read.

Early in the morning the children in her home offer their prayers in their own simple way for no set prayers are used, and no compulsion is put upon their tender conscience. Each of the elder boarders is in charge of one or two of the younger, and each keeps a small diary in which she notes down every day her

failings and blackshidings if any. The boarders attend the female school conducted under Mrs. Ray's supervision, and are helped in their studies at home by her and her daughters. The whole cost of education and boarding amounts to Rs. 7/- and odd per month. The children look bright and lively and the lesson of purity, self-help and self-sacrifice, taught to them by example and precept, are likely to have an enduring influence on their after life. The Boarding is not kept for profit, indeed, the amount charged to the boarders is much less than the actual cost. The deficit is made up by Mr. Ray who takes the deepest interest in the work of his wife and daughters."<sup>17</sup>

This is indeed a moving picture of a family fully devoted to the cause of education and upliftment. As year passed on, the struggle also increased. Finance proved to be the greatest hurdle. The maintenance of the boarding house, education of children and their caring during illness entailed a lot of expenditure. But she never gave up the hope and carried on with the school. She often used to forego her one time meal in order to feed the kids.<sup>18</sup> Prakash Chandra often mentioned

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<sup>17</sup> The Indian Spectator, 2 April 1893.

<sup>18</sup> Prakash Chandra Roy, op.cit., p.162.

about the financial crisis in managing the school. But he was scolded by Aghore Kamini, "Why do you often complain about the lack of money? It reflects lack of faith in God's work."<sup>19</sup>

So with lot of strain and stress the girls; school continued. A favourite song of Aghore Kamini had been Rabindranath Tagore's:

"Tomaro Pataka jare dao,  
Tare bahibare dao shakati." (In Bangla)

Undoubtedly, she carried the banner of female emancipation with tremendous strength bestowed upon her by the blessings of God.

By 1896, the school became so well-known that the then Chief Secretary, William Bolten, came to visit it. He was highly impressed by the school. He went straight to Aghore Kamini and said, "I am very pleased to see the school. In England this sort of work is generally done by unmarried or widowed women. How could you manage to do this with family and children?"<sup>20</sup> Immediately he ordered the liberal sanction of grants. He also proposed the government takeover of the school, subject to the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.399.

approval of the Managing Committee. This marked the end of the tremendous financial crisis the school was facing.

The struggle against tradition and convention reflected another aspect of the problem. Even if the financial crisis ended, the element of social resistance still continued. At every step Aghore Kamini and Prakash Chandra had to confront opposition of the orthodox religious elites, even for trivial matters. Once, for example, a storm of protest was raised when a girl appeared on the stage and presented a recitation.<sup>21</sup> However, Aghore Kamini remained unperturbed. She evinced the Brahma character of struggling against the old and traditional order. She wrote in her diary, "However strong the opposition is I am not going to give up my struggle. This is my pledge".<sup>22</sup> This indeed reflected the truly rebellious character of Aghore Kamini.

The school's Managing Committee decided to hand over the school to the government in March, 1896. This was done mainly to avoid the financial problems the school was facing during

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

private control. By a strange coincidence, the government decided to comply with the request of the Managing Committee and after a few days Aghore Kamini Devi passed away. Her diary records, on 31 March 1896, "Today the Managing Committee of the school has decided to hand over the school to the government. When the school was started there had been only five girls in the list. I depended on prayers to the Almighty. Owing to the prayers the school has forty girls today. Some new teachers have joined in and we are on the verge of retirement. Now the school has a lot of money, it is now rich."<sup>23</sup> This proves that by March 1896, the school was in a favourable financial position. This was all the result of her untiring effort. The lamp of learning that she lighted continues to illuminate thousands of homes.

But the government did not take over the control of the school immediately. In fact, it took several years for the government to take control of the school. During this period, the school was managed mainly due to the efforts of Prakash Chandra Roy. It was he who called upon a devoted Brahmo Samaj member Brajagopal Niyogi to take charge as the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



Headmaster of the school and superintendent of the boarding house.

Prakash Chandra was the master as well as the mentor of Brajagopal. Therefore, on his request, the latter, who was then staying at Gaya and involved with the Samaj activities of the Gaya Brahmo Samaj, came to Patna in February 1982.<sup>24</sup> It was till then managed by Bidhan Mandali. On Prakash Chandra's request, Brajagopal came from Gaya to manage the school. At that time, the school was located at the Sabjibagh area across the present Ashoke Rajpath, very close to the Civil Court at Adalat. It was, in fact, located in the compound of the Adalat. The school itself had a compound. The school had a strong one-storeyed pukka building. The quarters of the Principal was located in one corner of the compound. Brajagopal stayed here for four years. He was a great fighter for the cause of female education. The experiences he gained and the efforts he made for the proper education of women and girls were later applied by him in the foundation of Calcutta's famous Victoria Institution, which became the symbol of women's march towards

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<sup>24</sup> Niranjan Niyogi, Sadhan O, Seva: Braja Gopal Niyogir Jiban Alekhya, in Niyogi, op.cit., pg.44.

freedom and progress in the early twentieth century Bengal. Under his supervision the school showed improvement and underwent expansion. It is recorded that mainly the girls from middle class Bengali families and some rich Bihari families attended the school because there was no other girls' school except St. Joseph's Convent which mainly the girls of British and European families attended.<sup>25</sup>

Though this school was the premier institution for the education of girls in Bihar, mainly Bengali girls attended this school in the beginning. In 1906 the average number of girls in the school was 50, all of them were Bengalis.<sup>26</sup> Since the institution was under the Brahma Samaj it could not attract the Bihari population. Moreover the commissioner of Patna was not satisfied with the management of this school. The Director of Public Instruction, while discussing female education in Bihar remarked, It has not been doing good work since its establishment." So, a middle English school for pardanashin girls was sanctioned.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> S.N. Pandey: Education & Social Change in Bihar, pg.28.

<sup>27</sup> Proceedings of Govt. of Bengal, General Department (Education) April 1906, Nos. 8-9, pg.60-61.

This apathy for a Brahma school was obvious since the Biharis felt repelled at the personal conduct of some of the Brahmans (Aghore Kamini was one of them), who had taken to drinking and flaunting their disregard of all caste taboos, in interdiving intercaste marriages, taking out their women-folk in the open etc. Even some of the contemporary Europeans with all their desire for modernisation of the Indians disliked the conduct of these Brahmans.<sup>28</sup> Hence if the Biharis ignored the faith and did not send their daughters to this school, one can understand it.

However, the continued Aghore Kamini Devi's efforts to attract girls in larger number from Bihari families.<sup>29</sup> It bore fruit and the number of girls coming from Bihari families gradually increased. For encouraging female education among Bihari girls, Brajagopal also used Hindi as the medium of instruction. However, female education was not yet encouraged in the

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<sup>28</sup> "It is true that some few members of the Brahma Samaj – that is the new Deist religion – have thrown off the trammels of caste openly and are glad to frequent the European society; and many of them, unfortunately, in consequence of the removal of caste restraint, have become dissolute and drunken and their society is not desirable." An ex-civilian, "Like in the Mofussil or the civilian in Lower Bengal (London n.d.) 147 in S. Gopal, op.cit., pg.48.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

conservative Bihari families. Of course, Brajagopal did not give up the efforts and on account of his genuine involvement, the number of girls on the school rolls was increasing, and in this way the Bankipore Girls' School played a pioneering role in the sphere of female education in Bihar.

Though the formal connection with the Brahma Samaj was ended with the government take-over, the informal connection continued till the middle of the twentieth century. In the first three decades of the present century more than half of the teachers of the school were Brahmos. Some lady teachers also came from Bengal. Several Brahma ladies worked with tremendous devotion and unceasing energy to make it a great institution of learning for women. Prominent among these ladies were Banolata Dey, Muktikana Bose, Amarabala Pal, Shobhana Niyogi, Sushama Sen Gupta and Shova Das. Banolata Dey, served as the Lady Principal of the school for a long time and under her leadership the school attained remarkable progress. Her principalship was crucial because that witnessed the gradual transformation of the school as a top-ranking high school for girls. Presently, the school with its majestic building

opposite Golghar on the beautiful bank of the Ganges is definitely the largest girls' school in the state.

In her ideas and attitude Aghore Kamini was incredibly ahead of her time. In that age of diehard conservatism particularly in respect of the status of women, she fought for the liberation of woman from the age old bondage in a tradition bound society. She openly advocated widow-remarriage and inter-caste marriage.<sup>30</sup> She went against the convention of a caste ridden society when she arranged the marriage of her eldest daughter Susharbasini, with a young school teacher Brindavan sur who belonged to a lower caste.<sup>31</sup> The orthodox Hindu opinion reacted sharply and "Bihar Bandhu", a Hindi Journal in 1894 sharply criticised them.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the event provoked some Brahmos to renounce Brahmoism, but she remained firm.<sup>33</sup> A sympathiser even threatened to "horse-whip "P.C. Roy for having dared to marry his daughter to a man of a different caste. Even his mother left his house out of protest.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Roy op.cit., p.69.

<sup>31</sup> Bhattacharya, Sutapa - "The Brahma Samaj Movement in Bihar: A Study of its Socio-religious Dimensions", An unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, P.U. Patna, 1983.

<sup>32</sup> Bihar Bandhu, 7 Aug., 1894.

<sup>33</sup> Roy, op.cit., p.53.

<sup>34</sup> Roy op.cit., pg.69.

Aghore Kamini on the question of purdah showed a defiant attitude, she decided to discard purdah and sought to sit with the men folk during their prayers.<sup>35</sup> From Patna she went to Hilsa in an open carriage without covering her face.<sup>36</sup> Of course she was ridiculed, but did not budge. She thereafter regularly led groups of Brahmors both male and female to Rajgir and other places.<sup>37</sup> In Rajgir the Brahmo girls sang Kirtan<sup>38</sup> in the market place. She repeated this a no. of times. She even put girls on the stage when a dramatic performance was organised to celebrate Maghotsav.<sup>39</sup> For her courage in defying purdah Mrs. Roy was vehemently criticised by her contemporaries. At one point some detractor even compared her conduct with that of "women of the street."<sup>40</sup>

P.C. Roy records that Aghore Kamini proceeded on the Brahmo belief that the "God is our father and all men and women are brothers and sisters, enjoying His equal protection and the benevolence of His Will. Every member of the Samaj

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pg.41.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pg.79.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pg.70.

<sup>38</sup> Devotion Song in praise of god.

<sup>39</sup> Roy op.cit., pg.76.

<sup>40</sup> Roy, op.cit., 183.

whether male or female has equal rights,<sup>41</sup> according to Aghore Kamini. This idea was ingrained in her mind and her life was one of continuous struggle for emancipation of women. The founding of the girl's school at Bankipore was an endeavour with this noble objective in her mind.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pg.266.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.90.

**One institution:- First college of the province.**

“Even as late as 1940” Mother Theodosia (second principle of Patna Women’s college) explains, “Women’s education had not made such great strides in India, as it did after India’s independence. In Bihar the situation was even less advanced. In fact, although in some states, a grave concern was shown for women’s higher education, Bihar lagged far behind in this respect.”

The Bishop of Patna, Dr. B.J. Sullivan S.J., was looking out for religious women who would take in hand the higher education of girls. Thus begins the early chronicler of the first institution of the higher education for the women of Bihar. The Bishop invited sisters of St. Joseph’s from Calicut to found the college, led by Mother Josephine and Mother Clarissa.

Both of them came first in October 1939 and the finally on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1940, taking great pains of the journey from Mangalore. Bishop Sullivan put his home at the disposal of the college and took care of every little things sisters needed and saw every bit of the initial work formation of the Governing Body of the new college, drafting of the application to the Syndicate, getting the Senate to pass the approval of the Syndicate and of



the initial staff. So that when the pioneer sisters arrived they were already professors of Patna Women's College.

The first meeting of the Governing body of the college was held on 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1940. It gave an opportunity for the publicity of the ideals, aims & plans concerning the English system of education on higher level. The principal's report was published in all the local papers. The inauguration was held on 1 July 1940. The small group gathered in the library which had first batch of 12 students. An address was read by one of the first students on the roll, Chinmaya Dasgupta. Before the end of July, the number had risen to 25 on 20<sup>th</sup> July, the government sanction for the opening of the college was received.

Affiliation was granted for the following subjects: Hindi, Bengali, French, English, Economics, Logic, Domestic Science, Education, History, Geography, Vernacular Composition (Hindi & Bengali) and Alternative English.

From the start, stress was laid on library work & extra-curricular activities. Debates, games editing the magazines were encouraged among the girls.

The college hostel began as a house for lady students of various colleges – 4 of P.W.C. students, 1 from Science College &

9 from B.N.R. Training College. In March 1941 B.A. classes were affiliated to the college. Mother Clarissa and Sister Benedicta visited Lady Irwin College, Delhi and Muslim University, Aligarh to get an idea of the equipment needed for domestic Science and Geography.

The death of Rabindranath Tagore on 8 August 1941 was the occasion for a spurt of activities that brought important men to the college as chief quest and gave a boost to the image of the college.

The exams for the first batch of intermediate students began on 22 February 1942 out of 16 students, Chinmaya Das Gupta bagged a first Division which no lady had secured for the last twenty years in the province and the college success percentage was 69 per cent while the University had only 49 per cent.

In 1942 college was caught up in the civil Disobedience movement and it was closed for 3 months.

Taking stock of the financial state of the college mother Theodosia appealed to the Governor, Sir Thomas Rutherford, for a grants both recurring and non-recurring. In 1944 Mother Theodosia was awarded the Silver Kaiser-I-Hind medal for her

valuable services in the field of education, both in Madras presidency and in Bihar. In 1945, a great spurt in the college life took place, numbers increased, influenced no doubt by the brilliant results of the previous year. Mother Theodosia was nominated to the Bihar council of women.

For the sisters a very special event was their interview with Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi, when he gave them a ten minutes interview in 1948 and Mother Theodosia was nominated as a member of the Syndicate, the first woman in the annals of the University to be so honoured. About this time too the college was honoured by a visit from Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the nightingale of India.

Towards the middle of the year 1948 it became imperative despite paucity of funds to introduce science into the curriculum. In July 1940 it was started and the college moved to the new building on Bayley Road, opposite Patna High Court.

In 1949 All India University commission visited Patna and found the college activities satisfactory. The legislative Patna University Act of 1952 transferred every college with its buildings, land, equipment and staff (teaching and non-teaching) to the administration of the University and on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1952

Patna women's college became a constituent college of Patna University and over the years produced jewels like Captain Durba Banerjee, the first women pilot of India with the greatest number of flight hours in the world a record of the woman pilot, Mr. Tarkeshwari Sinha the first ex-student to become a member of parliament, Ms. Anuradha Mansingh, the IAS topper from the college and Ms. Manjari Jaruhar the first IPS Officer from this college.

(As narrated to me by Sr. Lucile ex-principal of the college and references from the Souvenir published at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the college in 1990).

## **Conclusion**

The emergence of socio-religious reform movements in the nineteenth century was a pan-Indian phenomenon, but at the time, Bihar, in the shadow of Bengal, was still fighting for its legitimate position as a separate state, so the intelligentsia of Bihar still in the awe of Bengal reformists could not perceive changes, required to the specific needs of the state.

Since women occupied a crucial position in society as mothers and wives their social status became the gauge of civilized society. But the point that emerges is the limited extent to which education spread among women. The major problem with regard to women's education was the conservative attitude of the orthodox Hindus and Mussalmans. Moreover the problem of non-availability of properly trained women teachers, the short school going period of four to five years, the universal practice of early marriages of girls, non-existence of separate schools for girls and above all the indifferent attitude of the parents and the fear of widowhood due to education and insufficient fund

allocated by the government for the same purpose made the whole problem extremely complex as evident from the following:

“The progress in female education is still slow the reasons being (i) the difficulties imposed by the prevalent social customs i.e., the Purdah system and early marriages; (ii) the scarcity of trained women teachers due partly to social customs which stand in the way of women when they wish to be trained or to accept posts after training except in their own villages, and partly to the lack of suitable quarters and the low rates of pay offered; (iii) the conveyance problem; and (iv) the general unwillingness on the part of parents to pay anything towards the education of their girls.”<sup>1</sup>

However, while one school of thought regarded education as the magic panacea for all ills afflicting women, other viewpoints have increasingly problematized the impact of education, regarding it as a process not of liberalization but of the reification of stereotypes.

In looking at the various catalytic processes such as social changes and education that helped to radicalize (if not wholly

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<sup>1</sup> Third quinquennial Review of the POE in Bihar & Orissa (1922-27), pg.96.

ameliorate) the traditional self-image of women, one must not overlook the contribution of political consciousness and activism both in the heady days of the nationalist movement and in the post-independence period.

Reformers rarely claimed to do more than loosen up older discipline a little, they would in fact, flaunt their limited charter as highly controlled and soberly responsible measures. The orthodoxy however saw in each venture a definitive beginning of the end.<sup>2</sup>

While we should not dismiss the movement for women's education in Bihar, neither should we expect a sweeping or revolutionary social change to emerge from it. Indeed women's education in Bihar in the early twentieth century was more symptomatic of social change than causative. Men wanted education for their women in order to make their own lives more harmonious, to make better wives, better mothers, and sought to shape a curriculum that would include a practical knowledge of household skills, as evident from the Report on POE for the year 1922-1927 "Young girls presumably are sent to school in

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<sup>2</sup> Sarkar, T. Words To Win, pg.70, 1999.

order that they may grow up to be good wives and mothers and learn at least a minimum of such subjects as sewing & hygiene.”<sup>3</sup>

Women who went on to earn BAs and MAs often did so as enhancements to their marriage value and as ornaments to their families’ status and honour.

On the subject of the curriculum, the Hartog report noted the dilemma faced by all those who would educate women: ‘two aims’ that in most countries’ are not always reconciled. The first is to make women’s education equal to that of men’s and the second to prepare women for married life, while giving them a liberal education.

“At the primary level”, said the report, “most provinces considered the needs of girls by including courses in household management, nature study, drawing, music, embroidery hygiene. There is not a single higher middle school in which girls are not devoting some portion of their time to work which is outside their ordinary curriculum: First-aid, nursing, gardening, plays, fancy needle-work, paper flower making, mass literacy, painting, music, weaving, basket and matmaking, pottery

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<sup>3</sup> Third quinquennial Review of the POE in Bihar & Orissa (1922-27), pg.99.



painting, cooking and many domestic arts. Schools frequently contribute the musical part of the programme at social, political and religious meetings.”<sup>4</sup> But at secondary and higher levels the curriculum was less flexible and the most women’s schools and colleges emphasised the first aim-equality to men’s education (as in the case of Patna Women’s College where a range of subjects were taught). The committee did not say so but given the structure of the examination system and the prestige of degrees, this was hardly surprising.

Indeed their report seemed to accept that a woman would either be as professionally qualified as a man in order to become an educator or that she would marry:

“There is a necessity that India should produce women who after receiving the highest academic education are capable of inspecting and advising in the planning of women’s education of all grades. On the other hand, the fact must be kept in view that the overwhelming majority of Indian girls are destined for married life.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Report on the POE in Bihar for the year (1938-39), pg.56.

<sup>5</sup> Hartog com. Report, pp.172-174.

British educational policy seemed fixed upon the model of separate spheres. The British authorities seemed incapable of imagining that there might be women in India who would combine marriage and professional activity as these were in their own country – or, conversely, that there might be women who had the means to achieve higher education for the love of learning and -as a mark of prestige, who would then stay at home, serving society in voluntary ways. The urban middle class of Bihar had fewer resources and smaller households but women still had an important role to play in “status production.”<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile the British authorities seemed mainly concerned with teaching those ‘destined for married life a modicum of domestic science and how to play the harmonium. In the end, reformers and educational authorities alike left to women themselves the job of reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable aims of their education in the course of their everyday lives, which was not expected to generate its own dynamics. However in some cases, especially in urban areas,

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<sup>6</sup> Hanna Papanek ‘Class and Gender in Education Employment Linkages’, pp.320-1. “Comparative Education Review”, 23, 3 August (1985).

the intellectual awakening and economic independence of women, made possible by education may have shown the seeds of subsequent challenges to prevailing social norms and values. Some women and even men, have questioned the traditional male-dominated structure of gender roles and society. Perhaps their ideas were mere aberration, then again, perhaps they were the logical outcome of the process that occurs whenever you begin to educate, individuals, a process that is expected to produce a reforming of family & societal roles.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FEMALE EDUCATION COMMITTEE, 1914**

In June 1994 a Committee was appointed by Government to examine the whole question of female education.

1. They recommended that Intermediate classes for private candidates should be opened in connection with the Girls' High School at Bankipore and Cuttack, that if the number of girls at either of these centres rose to 10 the question of seeking affiliation to the Intermediate standard should be taken up.
2. They wished to see power reserved to the Headmistress of every school, advised where necessary by the School Committee, to execute pupils whole admission would be likely for social or other reasons to be prejudicial to the progress of the school.
3. They desired Advisory Committee to be formed wherever possible for girls' Primary schools and considered that in rural areas Government should cease to maintain or aid directly schools, the management of such schools being left entirely to the local bodies concerned.

4. They were in favour of Government assuming the entire control of female education in Municipalities, but this recommendation was not accepted by the Local Government, who considered that Municipalities as well as District Boards should be held responsible for the primary education of both and girls in their areas.
5. They considered that where peripatetic teachers were employed fees should be charged and that care should be taken that such teacher should not be allowed to compete with pardanashin schools, and that where schools of the latter class were in existence the peripatetic teachers should confine their attention to married women.
6. They did not wish to discourage co-education but considered that if funds a separate girls' school should be established whenever the number of girls in a boys' school reaches 20.
7. They wished to see conveyances provided at all secondary schools and also wished that enquiries should be made as to how far such facilities were necessary for primary schools, but they considered that a small fee might reasonably be charged for the use of school conveyances and were inclined to regard favorably be charged a system

of providing reserved carriages for the exclusive use of those children whose parents were ready to provide a considerable share of their cost.

8. They thought that one quarter of the total number of Lower Primary Scholarship should be reserved for girls together with a certain number of Upper Primary and Middle Scholarships in districts where qualified candidates were likely to be forthcoming.
9. They desired a School of Embroidery to be established at Patna and a Lace School at Cuttack and considered that a considerable increase was necessary in the staff of Inspectresses and Assistant Inspectresses.
10. They wished to see a survey made of the places where Training Classes of different grades could be established with a reasonable prospect of success, and they prepared a draft curriculum for use in Girls' Middle and Primary Schools.



**Table-1****EDUCATION BY CASTE**

Caste	No. per 1,000 Literature Persons			Number per 10,000 Literate in English Persons		
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
Kayastha	332	603	56	551	1072	19
Brahman	168	317	18	81	156	6
Babhan	102	187	14	16	31	-
Kalwar	100	201	3	20	40	1
Rajput	91	176	6	23	44	-
Kurmi	30	60	1	4	8	-
Teli	39	77	2	4	7	-
Koiri	22	43	1	3	5	-
Jolaha	20	41	2	7	14	2
Kahar	17	34	2	7	15	-
Tanti	16	32	1	3	6	-
Hajam	14	27	1	7	9	5
Lohar	14	27	1	3	5	-
Goura	14	27	1	1	3	-
Kumhar	13	26	1	3	6	-
Dhanuk	13	27	1	1	2	-
Goala (Ahir)	12	24	1	2	4	-
Dhobi	8	17	1	1	2	-
Munda (animist)	5	10	1	2	3	-
Santhal (animist)	5	8	1	1	1	-
Santhal (Hindu)	4	7	-	-	1	-
Dusadh	4	7	-	-	1	-
Mushahar	1	2	-	-	1	-

**Table-2****Number of Literate per mile**

	1911		1901		All ages progress of Education since 1901-1911
	M.	F.	M.	F.	
Bihar & Oriss	76	4	63	4	
India	106	10	98	7	
Bengal	140	1	127	8	

**Table-3****EDUCATION BY CASTE****Castes Number per 1,000 Aged 5 and over who were literate**

1	1921			1911		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
2	3	4	5	6	7	
Babhan	139	249	23	114	210	16
Brahman	180	339	21	190	358	20
Kayastha	385	657	95	175	680	63
Rajput	124	231	10	103	197	6
Kurmi	44	85	3	35	68	1
Koiri	29	57	2	25	59	1
Chamar	5	10	1	4	8	3
Teli	54	106	3	45	89	2
Goala	15	29	7	23	49	3

1. Census of India, 1921, vol. VII, (Bihar and Orissa), Report Subsidiary Table VI, p.204.

Table V. — Race or creed of female scholars receiving general education in Bihar and Orissa for the official year 1931-32.

	Euro- peans and Anglo- Indians.	Indian Chris- tians.	HINDUS.		Muham- madans.	Bod- dhishts.	Parsis.	Sikhs.	Others.	Total.	Number of pupils from rural areas.		
			Higher castes.	Others.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
Total Population ...	5,643	166,124	13,934,263	1,582,975	2,152,102	366	96	2,031	1,038,985	18,833,565	...	Total population.	
<b>SCHOOL EDUCATION.</b>													
Primary	Classes. I	341	6,951	52,266	1,776	16,989	...	61	1,378	79,763	69,058	Primary Classes. I.	
	II	102	1,604	14,931	419	3,982	...	14	246	21,298	17,625	II.	
	III	73	1,295	8,671	120	2,065	...	0	129	12,364	9,759	III.	
	IV	96	809	1,535	8	83	...	11	30	2,573	1,421	IV.	
	V	68	591	670	2	49	...	1	21	1,602	786	V.	
* Middle	VI	49	369	250	...	4	...	...	3	675	221	* Middle VI.	
	VII	28	253	152	1	2	...	...	...	436	146	VII.	
* High	VIII	19	81	71	...	1	...	...	...	172	29	* High VIII.	
	IX	8	45	52	...	...	...	...	...	103	6	IX.	
	X	3	24	20	...	...	...	...	...	47	4	X.	
	XI	2	16	18	...	...	...	...	...	36	2	XI.	
TOTALS ...	789	12,038	78,836	2,326	23,175	...	4	96	1,807	119,071	99,957	TOTALS.	
<b>UNIVERSITY AND INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION.</b>													
Intermediate Classes ...	{ 1st year ...	...	3	1	...	...	...	...	...	4	...	Intermediate Classes ... { 1st year.	
	{ 2nd year ...	...	1	2	...	...	...	...	...	8	1	{ 2nd year.	
Degree ...	{ 1st year ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	...	Degree ... { 1st year.	
	{ 2nd year ...	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	{ 2nd year.	
	{ 3rd year ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	{ 3rd year.	
Post-Graduate ...	{ 1st year ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Post-Graduate ... { 1st year.	
	{ 2nd year ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	{ 2nd year.	
Research Students	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Research students.	
TOTALS ...	...	5	4	...	...	...	...	...	...	9	1	TOTALS.	
Scholars in recognized institutions ...	...	789	12,043	78,840	2,326	23,175	...	4	96	1,807	119,090	99,958	Scholars in recognised institutions.
Number of scholars in unrecognized institutions.	...	...	971	3,719	92	1,659	...	...	...	157	6,598	5,783	Number of scholars in unrecognized institutions.
GRAND TOTALS ...	789	13,014	82,559	2,418	24,834	...	4	96	1,964	125,678	105,714	GRAND TOTALS.	

\* Lines could not be drawn as the middle and high departments begin from

Classes VII and IX, respectively, in European schools.