

**Women Intellectuals and Communal Consciousness in Colonial North
India: A Study of Hindi Women's Journals (1909-1947)**

*A Thesis Submitted to the University of Hyderabad
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

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BY

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प्रतिष्ठित संस्थान
INSTITUTION OF EMINENCE
राष्ट्रीय अपेक्षाएँ, वैश्विक मानक
National Needs, Global Standards

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
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AUGUST, 2022



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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in the present thesis entitled **“Women Intellectuals and Communal Consciousness in Colonial North India: A Study of Hindi Women’s Journals”** is carried out under the supervision of **Dr. Y Swarupa R Shankar**, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in History from the University of Hyderabad, is an original work of mine and to the best of my knowledge no part of this dissertation has been submitted for the award of any research degree or diploma at any University. I also declare that this is a bonafide research work which is free from plagiarism. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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Parts of the thesis have been:

A. Published in the following publication:

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Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of coursework during the Ph.D. July-November, 2017.

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Chapter-One

Introduction and Historiography

The chapter ‘Introduction and Historiography’ provides a general introduction to the emergence of communalism and women’s print culture, especially women’s journalism in colonial India, with a discussion on the women’s journals found in Bengal, Maharashtra and Andhra regions in vernacular languages. This study of Hindi women’s journals examines the women’s understanding of Indian customs and practices, such as Sati practice, Child marriage, Widow remarriage, and *Purdah*, which were the central point of discussion in women’s journals. Historiography summarises books and articles on the problems of communalism and especially the communal understanding of Indian history in modern India. Many important works of prominent scholars have been reviewed, like Bipan Chandra, Gyandera Panday, Romila Thapar and others.

A number of scholars like Vasudha Dalmia, Sobna Nijhawan, Kamlesh Mohan, Francesca Orsini and Vir Bharat Talwar studied the various women’s journals published in Hindi during the colonial period. They have shown how the journals mirrored and contributed to the emergence of feminist consciousness in colonial North India. However, Francesca Orsini has reservations in calling these journals feminist, while Sobna Nijhawan rightly termed these journals feminist documents. While all of these are highly scholarly works in their own right, it is conspicuous that none of the scholars has said anything about the communal bias and understanding of Indian history present among Hindi feminists of colonial India. This is precisely where this thesis makes a departure, venturing to showcase and highlight the same.

Recent trends of Indian scholarship focused on the mutual concept of gender and nationalist identity. However, earlier research has been done on male fundamentalists, especially on the communal debate, pointing out the Hindus’ and Muslims’ rivaling ideas on religious superiority. Women became a central focus of this debate. Thus, the writings of the intellectual section focused on the male fundamentalist advocating the directive guidelines for women.

This study analyses the impact of communalism on Hindu women’s writings in Hindi women’s journals. It also presents their understanding of communalism and how it affected the women of both communities. On the one hand, discussion on practices such as the *Purdah* has become prevalent to describe their feminist approach; on the other

hand, women were ideologically motivated by male intellectuals and explained that it was the result of Muslim rule. The writings of intellectuals represented Muslims as an atrocious community; the narratives have spread that attacks of foreign invaders affected women's freedom. In some instances, women were involved in the political sphere and demanded their rights for freedom. At the same time, they were subjugated and became an agent of upholding beliefs of religious fundamentalism, especially Hindu widows, who were considered a saviour of the Hindu identity. This study will also focus on community consciousness among women concerning their involvement in the debate and organisational meetings dealing with women's issues.

During the mid-twentieth century, British orientalists determined the reviving growth of the nation by the social status of women in India. They criticised India as a backward nation, where women were treated as slaves of a man by being denied their fundamental rights under the burden of social practices and customs. Such discussions and criticisms led to underconfident behaviour among reformists and nationalists. As a result, intellectuals started to glorify the India's ancient past to compensate for the objection to Indian culture. These reformers were trying to determine women's position in the ancient past and advocating that they were more liberated than any other civilisation. However, they established serious concern about preserving religious sentiments by women's emancipation. Women carried this burden of upholding the religious beliefs and Hindu cultural values that subjugated them.

However, when women started to debate over ancient culture while maintaining spiritual awareness, they were trying to overcome their struggle but the notion that created women suffering blamed Muslim rule for women's pathetic condition. In this context, a large number of feminist writers emerged to emancipate women, but at the same time, they were developing their communal understanding among them. This is a severe gap in current feminist historiography that has prompted the foundation of the present study.

The communal understanding of Indian history presents women intellectuals of the colonial period, especially in Hindi regions awaiting scholars' attention. The print media literature, pamphlets, periodicals, newspaper and Hindi magazines played a significant role in the rising literary movement, which impacted the lives of Hindi women associated with the women's movement and literary activities. Their writings develop a communal understanding of the mainstream to make people aware of the other religious

community and the atrocities of the British government that lead to dissatisfaction against British rule and ‘others’.

The emergence of communal consciousness created distress in society. This study will primarily focus on the communal understanding of women intellectuals presented in their writings. They were focusing on their community group to understand their culture. It draws attention to primary sources of periodical pieces of literature published in Hindi between 1909 and 1947, which housed many women’s writings focused on ethnic identity. In this manner, middle-class, educated women were providing the views on other religious communities, such as Islam and Christianity, that dealt with the communal understanding of women.

1.1. Introduction of Communalism

Being ‘communal’ means being inclined towards religious practices and customs that suppress other communities to prove one’s superiority. It promotes one’s culture, religion, civilisation and identity. If we specify the term ‘ism’, it is an authoritative ideology of any community that upholds community culture in the form of communalism. It preferred customs and practices of other communities to make others follow them insistently. Communalism is inalienable from society because the idea of othering is deeply established among the people, whether Muslims or Hindus.

1.1.1. Emergence of Communalism:

The first evidence of communalism was traced to the modern ideology in the medieval past before colonial rule. Earlier, it was getting the attention of male thinkers; according to them, with the establishment of the Ottoman Sultanate, the communal era began, and the Muslim rule was the reason for establishing untrained Indian society. But the predominant nationalists and their ideology were establishing the traits of the ancient past to bring awareness among women to contribute to their nation. In this manner, the awareness of nationalism is misinterpreted by communalism that inculcates the idea of communal understanding among women. And their communal beliefs were parallelly flourishing in the nationalist movement.

As communal identity existed in the pre-colonial period, communalism and communal politics took shape and acquired divisive proportions in the British period. Imperialism sharply manifested ‘Divide and Rule’ policies, created artificial divisions and fostered collective organisation’s growth, resulting in communal politics.

Late in the nineteenth century, the national movement started to gain momentum. Nationalist leaders such as Moti Lal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Purushottam Das Tandon from the united provinces promoted the idea of true nationalism. At the same time, United Province became the central part of Muslim politics; Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khan and the other Muslim leader were leading the Anglo-Oriental movement from Aligarh. This movement aimed to reform Muslim society by modernising their education in English as a learning medium. He appealed to Muslims not to join the freedom movement in this manner; he encouraged the forces of communalism and the stage of separatism. The feelings of communal identity materialised in Indian culture by the British policy to nuanced collective consciousness during the colonial period.

Similarly, the anti-colonial movement of Congress compromised communal elements and pre-capitalist forms of consciousness. It witnessed a ground resistance to fundamentalism that knocked down sentiments of religious consciousness of Indian society. The incompleteness of the anti-feudal revolution shaped a condition of backwardness in which the communal ideology found fertile soil to grow.¹

Communalism resulted from British orientalist, such as J. S Mill, who compared the status of Indian women with those in the west during the colonial period. To deal with this situation, the enlightened section of society adopted a new role for women's potential and appealed to them to participate in the national movement. This section wanted their women to be a memsahib without discarding their identity of ideal Hindu women to stand parallel to western women. This initiative leads women towards modernity and progressive thoughts. But some sections of women of society were too rigid to promote their ancient culture. They were not ready to compromise in any situation.

In the nineteenth century male reformers proposed women's education as their central agenda to bring women's emancipation. They believed that educated middle-class women could play an important role in nation-building to civilise Indian society. Women's participation in the Hindi public sphere is reflected in female literature of the twentieth century. It resulted with a number of texts including communal bias and women's understanding of 'individual community consciousness' of one's perception

¹ Charu Gupta. "Censuses, Communalism, Gender and Identity: A Historical Perspective." *Economic and Political Weekly* (2004): 4302-4304.

about others, while in 'communal' understanding, its intensity relates to one's perception with others who are considered rivals.²

Individual identity is not just one's relationship with others. It is essentially a matter of being self-centred. This consciousness of belonging to this or that collectivity and being a member of an imagined community determines the form of this identity. According to Ghanshyam Saha, 'a cultural construct is a process of 'inclusion and exclusion of values and symbols defining 'we' and 'they' or 'us' and 'others'.³ He further believes that individual identity based on caste and religion reinforces communal consciousness.

Diversity of India defines India as a secular country, and the commencement of the constitution declared it the land of those who respect all religions. However, a group of people believed that India had been divided only based on religious faith. Similarly, the religious majorities always disagree with 'others' to prove that this nation is divided based on one community and its religious beliefs. According to the majoritarian, other minority communities denied India as their country and praised other countries where they are in the majority. This scenario brings society by the majoritarian to access the power of authority. Later, it shifted to condemning other religious communities by finding problems in their worshipping manners and living status. Their other activities defined them as anti-national and there emerged a strong feeling of communalism rooted in the idea of true nationalism.

Nevertheless, making India a secular country was only based on community consciousness in previous debates of nationalist movements. At the same time, community consciousness of the colonial period has been deep-rooted by the communal understanding of people through colonial literature and verbal speeches in political gatherings; framing communalism in diverse sources is directly connected with the role of colonial literature. It was essential because it acquainted readers with religious consciousness and cultural interests. This interest is visible in the present. Ignoring caste, communalism, and racism can harm society and can be the reason for unexpected losses of a community. The manipulative historical consciousness distinguishes between the community boundaries of ethnic groups, communal understanding of religious groups,

² Ghanshyam, Shah. "Identity, Communal Consciousness and Politics." *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 19, (1994): 1133–1140.

³ Ibid., 1135.

and individual awareness of language, culture, and spiritual domain. It also manipulates the historical consciousness that leads to women's social behaviour in society. The communal understanding among women became part of cultural consciousness during the national movement that concerned women's understanding on Indian History with the concept of 'othering.'⁴

1.1.2. Literature on Communalism

Romila Thapar in her work, *Communalism and Writings of Ancient Indian History*, 1970, examined the Ideology of modern Communalism; it seeks intellectuals' justification from the past where the Hindu communalists try to define an ideal Hindu society of the ancient period and the social evils of India is the result of the Muslim rule.

In his book, *Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Gyanendra Pandey stated, 'Communalism acquires its remarkable prominence in certain kinds of historical writings, beginning with the work of a conservative colonialist writer at the turn of centuries'.⁵ Communal understanding of Indian history, especially medieval Indian history –the so-called 'Muslim Rule'– laid the foundation of communal ideology.

In his book, *Communalism in Modern India*, Bipan Chandra argues, communalism is a product of colonialism and capital development. For economic stability, the new middle classes provided the social base of communalism. The control over the financial resources was dominated by the moneylender and merchants of middle-class Hindus. This middle-class merchant group was also involved in developing the national movement where the nationalists were involved in interpreting the definition of true a nationalist in the context of nationalism. But they failed to differentiate between nationalism and communalism. So, communalism resulted from false consciousness that inculcated feelings of bitterness. He further highlighted 'through the textbooks the communal view of history was spread widely, through poetry, drama, historical novels and short stories, newspapers and magazines, pamphlets and other religious books, orally through the public platform, classroom teaching and private discussion and conversation.

⁴ Othering is something done by the powerful majority, and those who become 'the other' are objects in a process of colonial interpellation. see. Jensen, Sune Qvotrup. "Othering, Identity Formation and Agency." *Qualitative Studies* 2, no. 2, (2011): 63-78.

⁵ Gyanendra, Pandey. *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*. Oxford University Press, 1990.

These virulent versions of collective history, propagated virtually as myths, were seldom written down despite their wide prevalence and are therefore difficult to document.

He further argued, 'even more than through the textbooks, the communal view of history widely spread through poetry, drama, historical novels and short stories, newspapers and magazines, pamphlets and books and, above all, orally through the public platform, classroom teaching and private discussion and conversation.'⁶ These kind of communicative platforms were creating myth about that past that was resulting communal consciousness. It was/is the false consciousness (of nationalism) of the historical process of the last 100 years.

In his book *Communalism- A Primer*, Bipan Chandra argues that society is divided into various religious communities whose interests differ and are opposed to each other. Although Hindus and Muslims were the poorest victims of communalism, people from different communities like Sikhs and Christians have also been affected.⁷

Charu Gupta in her article 'Censuses, Communalism, Gender and Identity'⁸ reasoned that mapping the census data in India to count the majority community and compare them with other minorities such as Muslims and Christians was the main reason to impart communal understanding. The foundation of the census diverted society towards the religious community. Census data only formed communal forces by identifying the number of majority comparisons with the minority. It resulted in the identity formation of the majority and minority concepts. It also created the idea of the superiority of religion in terms of the majority population. It has to be imposed on women as a conservator of the Aryan race.⁹

In her article, 'Communalism and Communal Violence in India,' Zoya Hasan argued that 'Muslim rule' in India is marked by emerging communalism. Muslim rulers and their discriminatory policies towards the Hindus affected the sentiments. 'Ulema' (Guardian of Islam), who demonstrated themselves as the protagonist, encouraged their sympathisers to uphold their self-identity by refusing 'others' beliefs.¹⁰ It was the self-

⁶ Bipan, Chandra. *Communalism in Modern India*. New Delhi: Har Anand Publications, 2008, 16-20.

⁷ Bipan, Chandra. *Communalism: A primer*. Anamika Pub & Distributors, 2004.

⁸ Charu, Gupta. "Censuses, Communalism, Gender and Identity: A Historical Perspective." *Economic and Political Weekly*, (2004): 4302-4304.

⁹ Ibid., 4302.

¹⁰ Zoya Khaliq Hasan. "Communalism and Communal Violence in India." *Social Scientist*, (1982): 25-39.

interest of the protagonists that excessively inculcated the feeling of communal consciousness among religious communities.

In her book, *Sexuality, Obscenity and Community* (2002), Gupta deals with the restructuring of patriarchy in colonial North India, especially in the united provinces. She emphasised Hindu masculinity or ideologues' concern for Hindu organisations. The changes that occur in their ideology are a matter of severe discussion. Her significant work, which required research, is the impact of the newly educated opinionated women's writing in female literature. It was an open platform to express women's views on their communal understanding and awareness of different social and cultural issues, such as women in public and domestic life, evolving the communal consciousness.

1.2. The Emergence of Vernacular Literature:

History is the self-consciousness of a nation that leads to human awareness of its internal and external existence. Similarly, self-consciousness includes social, political, and cultural activities resulting from historical events. That increases the value of historical events. The historical importance of literature includes events to validate human behaviour in past societies. But the traces of understanding history appeared in manipulative historical events that tend to be understood in language awareness and the nature of historical narratives that signified their subject. The language and literature contain self-consciousness that intends the feelings of inner awareness among the readers.

The Indian renaissance emerged from Bengal, and its impact on language, literature, culture, and individual was visible in colonial literature. Colonial literature significantly influenced the Hindi intellectuals that developed a historical consciousness and enthusiasm for a cultural celebration of particular communities that focused on protecting cultural identities and led to complexities of an authoritarian domain of unusual pressure among religious-ethnic groups. In this manner, the forced culture disordered narratives on other communities spread in Indian society.

The emergence of vernacular literature provided a literary platform to intellectuals that created an identity consciousness among middle-class, educated women to express the cultural superiority of Hindus during colonial rule. In this context, print literature such as religious texts, newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals, and journals engaged in conserving socio-economic, cultural, and political identity. Similarly, women's interaction with historical literature, manipulated by male writers, caused them to participate in writing where communal biases were presented in their writings. In this

context, communal understanding of women intellectuals is present in their essays in Hindi journals. Charu Gupta used women's journals as one of her source materials to examine, among others, how women responded to the male reform plan and expressed their views on the various issues concerning women.

In her book, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940*, Francesca Orsini elaborates a study on Hindi women's journals and their relationship between political and public spheres. She explained the history of print languages. She deals with how Hindi has been modified in print and standard Hindi has become a unifying language. One language adopted another language, evidence of uniting Indian culture with other communities and territories. However, the nationalisation of languages became a controversial existence, she explains.

Furthermore, she explained the importance of Persian as a court language and Hindi as a dialogue of inhabitants. She focused on the nineteenth-century movements, its struggle for national identity, and Hindi as a national language. John Gilchrist, an orientalist, popularised the language name 'Hindustani' as the combination of Hindi and Urdu. The encouragement of Indian heritage culture and language superiority nationalisation of languages became a controversial debate between Hindus and Muslims. Later, Orsini remarked that the nationalisation of the Hindi language started by analysing women's participation in the Hindi print media. She came across a Hindi political platform for women to participate in the national movement and discussed publication, strategies, audience, and the creation of the Hindi language and literature.

Orsini divided the Hindi belt into three dimensions, social, geographical, and linguistic. She stated territory of the Hindi belt was extended by the princely state, North-Western provinces, central provinces and united provinces. The United Provinces, including Benares and Allahabad, were considered the 'Heart of Hindi belt.'

It provides a perspective on cultural and socio-religious awareness among women in society. 'No country can be rebuilt until its cultural revivalism has not been done simultaneously; women had a special place in this cultural space'¹¹. Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay outlines that women can only rebuild cultural revivalism. This revivalism could not differentiate the communal consciousness and national awareness.

¹¹ Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay. *Chand*, November 1935,11.

1.2.1. Emergence of Hindi Journalism:

Journalism is one of the most modern phases of Hindi literature.¹² Hindi women's journalism appeared in the early twentieth century. This phase of literature included national awareness and identity formation among women. Women's journalism first began in presidential states such as Kolkata and Mumbai, and it was interlinked with the social reform movement.

The first women's magazine was *Bamabodhini*, 1863 (Bengali); it continued until 1906. Kailashkamini Datt managed this magazine and her husband Umeshchandar Datt was the editor of this magazine. Similarly, a Gujarati magazine, *Stree Bodh* (1857), was published in Mumbai and continued until 1950. Again, the Marathi magazine 'Subodh Patrika' came into existence in 1877; it was pioneered by Mori Vitthal Valvekar (member of Prarthna Samaj). 'Stree Patrika' (1860) magazine was published in Tamil. Similarly, the trend of emerging journalism widely expanded throughout the nation.

Bhartendu Harishchandra, a Benares native, pioneered women's participation in Hindi journalism by examining their issues in Hindi literature. *Balabodhini* (1874), the earliest example, was the first women-oriented Hindi magazine. It contributed to the leading legacy of forming Allahabad as a literary hub. From 1903 to 1921, the magazine was edited by Mahaveer Prasad Diwedi. The literary readers of the magazine were working-class educated and office bearers of the urban crowd Bhartendu Harishchandra¹³ was the first male Hindi writer who brought out the first women's journal, *Balabodhini*, in 1874.¹⁴ In his book, Sudhir Chandra brilliantly outlined the importance of Hindi magazines, published by Harish Chandra sets a new standard for Hindi journalism. He (Harishchandra) had always been keen to publish an essay on social issues such as men-women equality, widow remarriage, prostitution, child marriage or girl's education, and the matter of depressed classes appeared in this magazine. It also evidenced that the

¹² Ram Ratan Bhatnagar. *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism*. Allahabad: Abhyudaya Press, 1978.

¹³ Bhartendu Harishchandra belongs to mercantile background. During the 19th century he published a famous journal named *Kavivachan Sudha* from Banaras in August 15, 1867 and another journal named *Harish Chandra Chandrika* on August 15, 1873 as well as a monthly magazine *Balabodhini* on June 1, 1874. For more details, see, Vinod Kumar, and Shiv Narayan. "Colonial Policy and the Culture of Immigration: Citing the Social History of Varanasi in the Nineteenth Century." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 73, (2012): 888–97.

¹⁴ Vir Bharat Talwar. "Feminist Consciousness in Women's Journals in Hindi, 1910–20" in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid eds., *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989, 204–232.

women's issue was the first to grab space in the form of a Hindi women's journal by the initiative of a male writer. That was very handy and attractive to hold the women's attention. It identifies women's attention in the Hindi magazines to publish their issues in the early twentieth century.¹⁵

An influential Hindi women's journal, *Saraswati*, first appeared in 1899, edited by Shyamsundar Das (founder members of 'Nagri Pracharini Sabha'¹⁶). According to Sujata Mody, an influential organisation called Nagri Pracharini Sabha provided *Saraswati* its earliest official recognition but later discontinued because of conflicts between Diwedi and the organization's secretary, Shyam Sundar Das.¹⁷ It contributed to the leading legacy of forming Allahabad as a literary hub. From 1903 to 1921, the magazine was edited by Mahaveer Prasad Diwedi. The literary readers of the magazine were working-class educated and office bearers of the urban crowd.¹⁸

During the late nineteenth century, printing presses and the markets of Allahabad and Banaras were enormously increasing. They established the cultures of literary tradition, such as journalism and publishing of western literature. It was an era of Allahabad's socio-economic and political transition that led to the public domain for administrative services in the coming future. In 1898, many Hindi journals increased; twenty-eight journals were published in the northern region. Furthermore, at the beginning of the twentieth century, nearly twenty Hindi journals and seventy-three Urdu journals appeared in U.P. and Oudh provinces.¹⁹ During the first decade of the twentieth century, fifty-six journals were published in Hindi and eighty-two in Urdu. Hindi and Urdu journals reached their utmost height in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. Its numbers reached more than one hundred units in the early twentieth century.

The upper and lower-middle-class section was involved in vending books to reduce their financial burden in Allahabad and Benares. Due to the flourishing print

¹⁵ Vasudha Dalmia, Sanjeev Kumar. *Balabodhini*. New Delhi: Rajkamal Publication, 2014.

¹⁶ Sujata S Mody. "Visual Strategies for Literary Authority in Modern Hindi." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 37, no. 3, (2014): 474-490.

¹⁷ Ibid., 483.

¹⁸ Krishna Kumar. "Quest for Self-Identity: Cultural Consciousness and Education in Hindi Region, 1880-1950." *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 23, (1990): 1247-55.

¹⁹ Gaeffke, Hans Peter Theodor. *Hindi Literature in the Twentieth Century*. Vol. 8. Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1978, 18.

industry, the British government banned several women's magazines from covering up rebellious voices. The British government restricted the printing presses to advocate the freedom of expression in vernacular languages to express dissent voices. Besides that, Hindi journalism confronted and continued the voiceless voices (especially women) in the state to provide a communicative platform to educated middle-class women. The printing press spread the idea of making a nation that was shaped in the Hindi magazine by literary activity and built a bridge between the public and private space of educated women through the literary platform.²⁰

1.2.2. Emergence of Hindi Women's Journals:

From 1909 to 1947, several Hindi women's journals were published in vernacular dialects and established public attention by specific comprehensible language among the educated community. The freedom movement, led by the male, opened the doors for women to participate in this movement. Women of the high status of eminent national leaders of the Nehru family first started participating in the national campaign, mainly because of the political atmosphere of their homes. Significantly, Pandita Ramabai, Rameshwari Nehru, Roop Kumari Nehru, etc., actively participated in the national movement. Therefore, women were feminising the public sphere during the colonial period. Women's committees, such as the *Prayag Mahila Samiti*, were formed to strengthen the freedom movement. But it was challenging for the lower-middle-class women to participate in the freedom struggle directly and communicate with them about the national occurrences. To make this movement more accessible, the women of the Nehru family found a new way; they started *Mahila Patrikarita* (women journalism) in 1909 by introducing *Stree Darpan* (the first Hindi women's magazine edited and managed by women) pioneered by the female Nehru family members. This periodical, which is regarded as the first women's monthly, highlighted women's rights and their active participation in the political movement.

It was considerably focused on critical issues related to women in Hindi journals. *Stree Darpan*, the first Hindi women's journal of 1909, was initially edited and managed by prominent women of the Nehru family – Rameshwari Nehru, Uma Rupkumari Nehru. In the beginning, these women patronised the magazine and also managed it. *Stree*

²⁰ Himani, Bannerji. "Fashioning a Self: Educational Proposals for and by Women in Popular Magazines in Colonial Bengal." *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 43 (1991): WS50–WS62.

Darpan was the most primitive periodical of Hindi print media with an easily accessible source edited by women. Another Hindi woman periodical *Grihalakshmi* was first published in 1909. Pandit Sudarshan Acharya and his wife, Smt. Gopal Devi dedicatedly worked for its publication. Consequently, *Kumari Darpan*, the additional copy of *Stree Darpan*, focused on girls.

Similarly, *Arya Mahila* was the third women's magazine printed in Benares. It was a mouthpiece of *Mahila Hitkarini Sabha*. The magazine primarily dealt with the socio-culture theme of ancient society and the value of ancient education on social change based on ancient principles. Religious education for women and liberty from social custom was the centre of discussion. Mrs Surathkumari Devi was a well-educated lady and O.B.E, K.H. Gold Medalist of Khairigarh. The place Khairigarh was in the Kheri district of Oudh. She was the editor of the journal. In 1885 Surathkumari Devi succeeded the title of 'Rani of Khairigarh'. Later, the periodical was operated and managed by Pandit Ramgovind Trivedi Vedantshashtri.

Similarly, *Chand* started its first publication in 1922 by Ramrakh Singh Sahgal and Shri Ramkrishna Mukund Laghate (B.A.).²¹. Their significant role as its editor was highly remarkable. Before publishing from Lahore provinces, Vidyavati Sahgal (wife of Ramrakh Singh Sahgal) was its manager. Later, it shifted to the Hindi heartland.

Chand introduced *Kanya Manoranjan*, which focused on the girls, such as what kind of education they should get and how they can contribute to the country. Earlier, the primary focus of the journals was to confine women to domestic and household knowledge. Later, this series started to concentrate on girls shifting to country conditions and nationalist domains to educate girls for the future generation. Later, this debate moved to make aware girls of the self-protection against abductors seducers.

Continuing with the customary ideas, the periodical *Grihalakshmi* puts an emphasis on women's domestic duties and the ideal homemaker (a well-educated modern Lakshmi). This periodical featured a significant number of writings on women's rights, education, and structural transformation, promoting discussion of the same values. To defend *Sanatana Dharma*, a female mission, *Arya Mahila*, a conscience religious periodical, connected women's feelings to nationalist themes. In *Chand*, the intersection

²¹ Ramrakh Singh Sahgal (1896-1952), a Khatri (Caste) Brahmin from Lahore, was a well-established figure of the Hindi literary and political sphere prior to launching. See, page no. 81, in Sobna Nijhawan. *Women and Girls in the Hindi Public Sphere: Periodical Literature in Colonial North India*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

of feminist and nationalist concerns emerged. It interpreted notions of moral responsibility and service in the nationalist vernacular of Seva-Dharma, establishing an honest connection between serving attitude, morality, and Indian femininity. According to Nijhawan, one might have wished for a more critical analysis of the basic enjoyment and an analysis of the impact of leisure reading and enjoyment in what still seems to be a constrictive conception of women's amusement. Nijhawan focused on the debate on girl child and womanhood, the domesticity of gender relations, and their emergence in public and private places. However, the issue of women's communal understanding remains untouched.

Nijhawan argues that after the rise of women's periodicals in Hindi literature, the debate on social reform transformed into nationalism. The Hindi journals provided a forum for more prominent women's community activities in a political transition. This literary platform made them aware of oppressive social and patriarchal structures to unbound and emancipate them by reading and writing. However, the lower-class women were not as conscious of the new idioms and communicative skills with strangers as middle-class women. Therefore, periodicals provided household perfection and broadened middle-class women's knowledge from domestic advice to national politics. The distributing controller circulating numerous Hindi women's journals in United Provinces during the second decade of the twentieth century. The smaller printing press or poorly printed low-quality periodicals focused on religious literature, methodology literature, poetry, and romance narratives. Later it was enlarged as the most affordable and constituted reading material and popular literature.²² The writing culture enabled women to obtain a platform to express their views and opinions widely. This platform provided drastic change in women's life which they demanded.

The sources of women's writings throw fresh light on obscure periods and cultures that women follow. Therefore, the trends in women's writings brought women intellectuals forward, and make them self-centered modernised women. However, the impact of women history writers brought otherwise obscure periods and cultures into the world is significant in reshaping Indian history writing. It influenced others contemporary women intellectuals to participate in literary activities. This print culture provided a

²² Francesca Orsini. *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920–1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*. Oxford University Press, 2009, 2–4.

venue to exchange information on household perfection and broadened women's knowledge from domestic advice to national politics as communal understanding.

Women intellectuals such as Mrs Sushila Devi Nigam, in her article, 'Achhut Aur Hindu Samaj' (Untouchable and Hindus society), discussed caste in Hindu society and questioned the communal terrain of the country. She explained that conversion into other religions promotes hate, so she opposed conversion and was concerned that all upper-caste Hindus are responsible for such loss. Hence the women were conscious of the community loss of Hindus. Similarly, Kumari Sarasvati Devi stated her views on conversion, such as *Ankh Kyu Hai Ab Talak Yon Dekhti? Kaan Kyu Sun Rahe Us Rag Ko? Jab Hamare Hi Hamare Samne, Thamte Hain Damne Islam Ko* (Why are our eyes still seeing? Why is our ear still listening that melody? It is excruciating when people of our community uphold (conversion in Islam).)²³ These statements reflect a strong note of communal consciousness among women writers of the early nineteenth century. So, the women's sentiments were closely associated with their understanding of communal bias reflected in their writings.

Vir Bharat Talwar identifies that women formed their organisations and groups for self-growth. Women such as Swarna Kumari Devi started an organisation in 1886 named 'The Ladies Association'. In 1892, Sarda Sadan, Pune was formed by Pandita Ramabai for women's emancipation. Similarly, Ramabaaai Ranade ran two organisations in Pune named 'Hindu Ladies Social and Literary Club' in 1902 and 'Seva Sadna' in 1909 to provide education and employment for women. According to Talwar, 'feminist consciousness' emerged in the manner of community forming through women's organisations that was highlighted in Hindi women's journals of early twentieth century. During the early twentieth century, a number of women's conferences were held in North India. These conferences focused on women's issues and their role in the national movement. Talwar identified women's criticism of males' self-centered behaviour and their privileged position as their dominant attitude toward women.

Francesca Orsini made a detailed study of Hindi women's journals that contested the argument of Talwar, stating that 'Hindi feminists were not combative like their Western counterparts. In his study, Talwar demonstrated how the journals such as *Stree Darpan* and *Chand* expanded the concerns of women beyond the domestic domain and

²³ *Chand*, May 1927, 71.

how women became part of the 'public' through the journals.²⁴ Shobhna Nijhawan studied how women and girls were engaged in the Hindi public sphere through periodical literature, especially women's and girls' journals. She was concerned about Mahadevi Varma wrote that women's empowerment would contribute to family, society, and nation. With the emergence of women as a political subject, Nijhawan ensures women's individuality and historical association with Indian nationalism. She addressed the issue of the entry of women into male-dominated public areas. The growth of the *Stree Upyogi Sahitya* (literature useful for women) thematically concentrated on household assistance to modern issues, analytical editorials, and news about the transnational women's movement served as a symbol of this change.

While all these scholars have brilliantly highlighted several forgotten voices, which questioned patriarchy and the various injustices meted out to women, they overlooked an essential aspect in the writings of the colonial Hindi women intellectuals, i.e., the strong presence of Hindu communal bias. It is only very recently that this aspect has begun to be highlighted by feminist historians. Shaik Mahboob Basha, in his article titled 'Against the Dominant Discourse Ideas of V. Saraswati, a Forgotten Feminist in Colonial Andhra', highlighted the forgotten voices of women of colonial Andhra²⁵. He focused on the attention of forgotten feminist V. Saraswati and her critique on Hindu male patriarchy, tradition, and customs that were ignored by scholars. She criticised Hindu social practices such as Sati, celebrated by upper-caste Hindus. However, it was the way to suffer for widows. Basha discusses the debate in the Telugu journal from the widow's perspective. Swarupa Rani Raypolu, in her work 'Women Social Change and Politics in Early Twentieth Century Telangana', discusses the women's movement of Telangana, where educated women formed their organisations to unite, and they were involved in armed struggle.²⁶ In her another work, *Women's Associations in Telangana*, she dealt with the History of Telangana, focused on social change in Telangana through political social and cultural perspective. She also focused on the contribution of Bhagya

²⁴Francesca Orsini. "Domesticity and Beyond: Hindi Women's Journals in the Early Twentieth Century." *South Asia Research* 19, (1999): 137-160.

²⁵Shaik Mahaboob Basha. "Against the Dominant Discourse Ideas of V. Saraswati, a Forgotten Feminist in Colonial Andhra." *Social Scientist*, (2021): 55-69.

²⁶ Swarupa Rani, Raypolu. *Women Social Change and Politics in Early 20th Century Telangana*. Ph.D. Diss. University of Hyderabad, 1997.

Reddy Verma (a prominent political leader of Telangana). He fought for the for social justice of untouchables and downtrodden community during early twentieth century.²⁷

Many Hindi women intellectuals passionately spoke and wrote with a Hindu communal understanding of medieval Indian history in the early twentieth century. A significant aspect of many Hindi reformists' understanding of the problem of *Purdah* practice is the attribution of its genesis to the so-called 'medieval Muslim rule' or 'Muslim invasions.' While some made only cursory remarks in this regard, others were treated the same in some detail. For example, in her article, 'Streeyan our Purdah' (Women and Purdah), Smt. Satyawati Devi stated that *Purdah* was not an ancient Indian custom. It became popular during Muslim rule²⁸. Those parts of the country that did not have Muslim rule or where such rule was weak did not have this practice at all. *Purdah* is most widely prevalent in the Hindi region, the stronghold of the Muslim rulers'. Another woman, Sauhagyawati 'Adhunik Purdah Pranali Tatha Usse Haniyan,' (Modern Purdah practice and Its Harmful Effects), Rajdulari Devi, 'Purdhe ki Visham Vedna', and Kumari Chandravati Devi 'Streeyan our Samajik Swatantrata.'²⁹ expressed similar views on the issue of the presence of the practice of *Purdah* among Hindus.

Similarly, women intellectuals explained the origin of child marriage, the tonsuring of widows and the denial of women's education that present in the form of communal bias. It enhances our understanding of colonial communal treat via women's print literature. Women's self-identity or community identity was experienced by compensating for freedom in a public place by preserving India's heritage culture. In favour of that, women express their views on criticising male chauvinism and gender biases in Hindu beliefs against women.

1.2.3. Review of Literature

Shobhna Nijhawan, in her book *Women and Girls in the Hindi Public Sphere*, extensively discusses women's periodicals. She concentrated on gender roles and cultural history in literature. The importance of magazines in the early colonial period and women's writings gives a systematic picture of archival Hindi literature. That is reflected in the report of

²⁷ Dr. R. Swarupa Rani. *Women's Association's in Telangana*. Hyderabad: Book links Corporation, 2003.

²⁸ Smt. Satyawati Devi. "Streian Aur Purdah." *Stree Darpan*, August 1918.

²⁹ *Stree Darpan*, December 1918.

thoughts. She also discusses the women intellectual's writings that deal with women's political and public life. This book discussed the feminist beliefs among Indian women and their domestic lives. She tried to deal with women's feminist thoughts. Both middle and elite-class women came out with modern ideas on political debate.

Furthermore, they created a comfort zone to express their views and ideas. These ideas resulted in a collective voice during social transactions and political emancipation. Mahadevi Verma in *Chand* 1931 explains the periodicals became more eventful for women to participate in language politics and domestic life. Women can also hamper or contribute to society. She discussed this domain of women's thinking and self-assertion.

Nizhawan focuses on women writers and their participation and emergence in the political subject through their writings. With the help of periodicals, women now have a mainstream alternative where men participate in the dialogue. The women's movement used women's voices as crucial tools, but males were still allowed to contribute as co-authors. Nizhawan investigated the connections between popular Hindi literature and women's journals. She included traditional and new genres in their column (Varta, Katha, and Romance). How did these periodicals work in the multifocal field of literary production? So the 'Sahitya Seva' service of literature was the new sphere for women's national activity.

In her book, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*, Charu Gupta explained the reconstruction of religious practices and patriarchy imposed on women in the later colonial period. She also concentrates on the emergence of Hindu organisations in an ideological form and their aggressive nature; she deals with the assertion of gender with the political and cultural identity. In this focus, the roots of nationalism and communalism widen; therefore, cultural identity becomes more important for the Hindu organisations—homogeneous, community identity updated by the patriarchy to control Hindu women. Gupta focused on the discursive management of the female body. The female body becomes the essential project to civilise and create a vibrant sectarian Hindu identity for the Hindu male counterparts. Hindu identity was imposed on women by their male counterparts in culture and political identity. So the essentiality of women's bodies becomes a part of these organisations. Social reform and changes have proposed modus operandi and women's status.

Charu Gupta presented views on the portrayal of women in Hindi women's literature. She focuses on the early twentieth-century literature, where Indian nationalists were projecting the concept of nationalism. She explains women's images in Hindi

literature, which describes women's ideas and metaphors. The literature about women stressed on the sexual function of women. Premchand placed women characters as a preliminary plan of his society. Leaders of the peasant community, anti-imperialist struggle, and nationalist movements were hegemonies of the women's movement. The voices of defiance of active women were brilliantly counteracted by the nationalist work—the absence of organised movement and the leader's rising voices being suppressed. So, the literature and writings of Premchand facilitated a memory and legacy of inspiration for the oppressed today.

In his work, *One Language Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth-Century in North India*, Christopher King mentions the Hindi movement as the motivating force behind Hindu communal consciousness in pre-independence India. He emphasises that the campaign “not only expressed but reinforced” a communal awareness that culminated in Pakistan's creation in 1947.

In his book *Gita Press and the Making of Hindu India*, Akshaya Mukul mentions the significant role of the printing press, such as ‘Geeta Press of Gorakhpur’ in popular mobilisation through substantial growth of religious books, booklets and pamphlets printed in large numbers by the press. But the objective of these kinds of presses was to organise a community by providing religious education to protect cultural values influenced by historical context. And this sacred text was the reason for creating Hindu communal consciousness.

In his book *Communalism in Modern India*, Bipin Chandra analyses the essential feature of communalism and its growth in modern India. He explained the roots, birth, development, and social function of communalism in colonial India. He focused on social, economic, political, and cultural aspects responsible for communalism and its growth. He examines the role of British imperial policy in fostering communalism which ultimately attained uncontrollable, monstrous proportions.

Paul R. Brass, in his book, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, discusses the issue of violence and the state. He studied five case studies on rural to urban violence between Hindus and Muslims. He explained the role of government, media, and society's existing power. Incidents like rape and theft of an idol became the reason for violence. He describes how this process ultimately implicates everyone in the perpetuation of violence.

In his book, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Paul Brass has deeply studied the politics behind languages such as Hindi and Urdu and the religious patterns

of India. And also focused on ethnic ideology and the role and Indian nationalist movements. the intergroup violence in northern India, the history of the communal riots during the last three decades of British rule, and the entire history of Aligarh in the post-independent period. He persuasively implies that the police, criminal elements, members of the Aligarh business community, and many continuous efforts produce communal violence in Uttar Pradesh. In this way, riots become vital historical markers in the struggle for political, economic, and social dominance.

In his work, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society*, Ashutosh Varshney argues that any multiethnic community will have incidents and issues involving ethnic conflict. The critical question is whether they lead to violence and deaths or whether the social and political system will control and resolve them. Therefore, his idea of society is the lack of death and violence, not the absence of conflict. He argues that any multiethnic society will have periods and issues of ethnic conflict: the critical question is whether these give rise to violence and deaths or are handled and resolved by the political and social system. He made the case that associational life, whether in the formal or informal sectors of the economy, is more important than everyday interaction and business organisations, trade unions, political parties, and professional societies, whether or not there are integrated neighbourhoods and everyday interactions.

Shubh Mathur, *The Everyday Life of Hindu Nationalism: An Ethnographic Account, 1990–1994*, criticises fascism as an abnormality and defines the cultural logic; the institutional power of Hindutva has become a part of everyday life. He examined the condition of Rajasthan during 1990-1994. It looks at the transformation of cultural meaning in everyday life, making political success and anti-minority violence in the Hindu right possible to draw attention to how political parties use public places.

In his work “Understanding Communalism” Asghar Ali Engineer discussed theoretical perspectives of communalism by placing the debate on ethnicity and other socio-economic parameters and adds to this the Muslim dimension in the South Asian discussions. Furthermore, closely premised on the assumption that communal conflict has economic reasons for secularism and Hindu-Muslim problems, syncretic approaches like Sufism can show the way forward. Communalism is not some oriental illness but a universal phenomenon.

In “Othering, Identity Formation and Agency”, Jensen examines the power of ‘other’ to describe their individuality formation among ethnic minorities considered inferior. First, the article draws the idea of the past. The article focuses on the community

identity and existence of the majority and others' subjectivity, which mentioned that the concept of othering formulates inferiority. This study concluded that the idea of othering is well suited for understanding the power structures and the historic symbolic meanings conditioning such identity formation but problematic in terms of agency.

1.4. Research Methodology

The problem of the study is to collect primary sources from archives. During the collection of data, most libraries are in a tragic condition. Every so often, the libraries cannot provide some valuable archival sources; quite a few available records, some have been damaged and lost, and not in the condition to get accurate data of all publishing years of journals.

The study dealt with a qualitative analysis of primary and secondary sources of Hindi, notably Hindi women's journals. Secondary sources and information from research have also been reviewed to relate to historical and contemporary contexts. The secondary sources included books, articles, journals, news reports, magazines, pamphlets, and government-published material such as Census Reports. The primary sources are collected from important libraries of North India, such as Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Marwadi Library, Delhi, State Archives of Allahabad and Lucknow, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan and Hindustani Academy, Allahabad, Bharti Bhawan Library, Allahabad. The research will be descriptive as well as explanatory in nature. In this research, women's communal consciousness will be described through their social interaction, views on the social system, women's education, widow question, and women's identity as individuals. It will also analyse the change in Indian society and the pattern of community consciousness. It includes several organisations and groups that were forming women during the colonial period.

1.5. Research Questions:

- What was the reason behind the communal writings of women in Hindi?
- What were the views on the social status of women in journals?
- Does the communal bias present in colonial feminists potentially frustrate the current aspirations for a standard 'sisterhood'?
- Is there any conscious effort to conceal such voices?
- Did these journals get a sense of communal consciousness, and did the discussion on social evils bother education?

- Why did the communal aspect not get highlighted by feminist historians?

1.6. Research Objectives:

- To study the influence of women's writings in colonial North India.
- To examine the communal bias present in women's writings and print literature of colonial north India.
- To understand the factors that compelled women intellectuals towards communal consciousness.

1.7. Chapters:

Chapter-I Introduction and Historiography

This chapter will discuss the socio-economic and cultural background of the women's literary movement in colonial north India. In this context, this study will look into the community understanding of women that led to communal consciousness among the Hindi women writers. Women intellectuals indicated the history of Muslim rule. They projected a communal sense among the intellectuals of colonial North India that mentioned in a large number of Hindi periodical literature was published in Hindi. From 1909–1947, it considerably focused on critical issues related to women in Hindi journals.

Chapter-II An Overview of Hindi Women's Journals in Colonial North India

This chapter deals with the emergence of Hindi periodicals that engaged women in literary activity and their appearance in the public sphere. Owing to the Hindi periodicals, women's scholarly activities turn them up as women intellectuals of the academic world. The history of women's involvement in journalism and the brief history of Hindi women's journals were edited and managed by women. This chapter will briefly discuss women's journals such as *Stree Darpan*, *Chand*, *Arya Mahila*, and *Grihalaksmi*.

Chapter-III Contesting the *Purdah* with a Communal Bias

The culture women were forced to follow was utterly based on their oppression. The middle-class, educated women jumped into the movements and projected their freedom by demanding their rights to

access the public space. Women started to debate social evils like *Purdah* that left them inside the house. The chapter will discuss women understanding of *Purdah* in the context of Muslim rule and also will include other aspects such as women's health, freedom, and barring of girls' educational opportunities. Furthermore, the women from the upper-middle class were raising their voices against the *Purdah* practice. However, the women were paying attention to religious and cultural customs and were trying to protect the *Purdah* and preserve Indian culture.

Chapter-IV The Question of Widowhood: Critiquing Gender Discrimination

This chapter discusses social evils such as child marriage and early widowhood. Child marriage affects the educational opportunities for girls. The historical background of widowhood comes under Sati and child marriage practices. Hindu social reformers and their organisations hesitated to continue this practice of widow remarriage. And also oppose such kinds of rules by saying that it is against their culture. The organisations such as 'Bharat Dharma Mahamandala' 1887 in Banaras favoured widow remarriage, but they advocated widow remarriage within the community. The chapter will also deal with the religious groups opposing widow remarriage.

Furthermore, it deals with how newly educated women Intellectuals asked for the removal of atrocities perpetrated on widows, but not remarriage. It will also discuss those women who advocated the remarriage of Child widows by citing the approval of Hindu scriptures. It includes those women who strongly opposed the widows' remarriage because an Act had been passed to stop child marriage and forced to stop widow remarriage. In the Sharda act (to stop child marriage), women discussed that it is because of the Muslims such kind of act imposing on Hindus that is harmful to Hindu culture. It further dealt with the upper caste Hindi women intellectuals who were against the Sharda Act; and the social reformers who supported the widow remarriage movement but were not faithful to the idea of widow remarriage to familiar compulsion and reformist commitments. Hence they refused to get married to a widow.

Chapter-V Debunking Superstitions and Orthodoxy

This chapter discusses the religious education of different religious communities that women intellectuals criticise in their writings and exposes the falseness of religious fundamentalism that made them suffer.

Chapter VII Conclusion

This chapter deals with the finding of the study.

Chapter-Two

An Overview of Hindi Women's Journals in Colonial North India

This chapter provides an overview of various Hindi women's journals such as *Balabodhini*, *Stree Darpan*, *Grihalakshmi*, *Arya Mahila*, *Chand*, etc. These magazines and journals are the primary sources of the thesis. In the present chapter, aspects such as their physical appearance, periodicity, subscribers, subscription rate, author-base, content, and their primary focus, etc., are discussed in detail. With a discussion of how these journals contributed to the consolidation and acceleration of the women's movement in colonial North India, the stage is set for exploring the communal bias present among women intellectuals in the following chapters. It also deals with the emergence of Hindi periodicals that engaged middle-class, educated women intellectuals in literary activity and their appearance in the intellectuals' world of the Hindi public sphere.

2.1. Hindi Women's Journals

Middle-class women's engagement in literary activities of Hindi periodicals provide a communicative platform for women. The presence of women's understanding in Hindi periodicals provided a literary platform to present their views on their identifiable situation that were direct in the history of Hindi women's journals. The popular politics of representation and self-awareness among the women's community emerged through a literary sphere that reflected women's writings and responses to colonial literature. However, the literary discourse created a print culture with the allocated idea of community consciousness. It widened women's critiques of a layer of gender discrimination. That resulted in the appearance of many Hindi women's journals edited and managed by women with the inspiration of male intellectuals.

2.2. Male Edited Hindi Women's Journal

2.2.1. *Balabodhini* (1874-1877): Bharatendu Harishchandra (a native of Benaras, known as the originator of modern Hindi literature) started his literary career at the age of seventy. He first published a literary magazine of Hindi by the name *Kavi Vachan Sudha* (1867). In 1872 it was converted into *Harishchandra Magazine*, later renamed *Harishchandra-Chandrika* (1873-1885). This magazine was the first expressive literature of Hindi. He was the pioneer of the first women's generic literature and launched

Balabodhini, a journalistic genre dealing with women's issues.¹ It became the first women-oriented printed work of the Hindi language. So, the history of women's involvement in journalism was initiated by Bhartendu Harishchandra. He began exploring women's questions through Hindi literature. *Balabodhini* (1874) was the earliest example and is Benaras's first women-oriented Hindi magazine. Its editor, Harishchandra², was the first Hindi male intellectual who gave women a path to participate in literary services. It was a monthly magazine containing ten pages. The first issue of this magazine was published in January 1874. It continued only for three years. There is not much information available on printed copies of the magazine. However, the number of copies of this magazine that were published during the time could not be identified, but the government bought its hundred copies. In February 1877, the magazine stopped its publication.³

2.3. Women Edited Hindi Women's Journals:

2.3.1 *Stree Darpan* (1909-1928), The first and foremost Hindi women's illustrated monthly journal was *Stree Darpan*. Each issue of the periodical contains seventy-two pages. The quality of its pages was excellent with fine print, and its yearly subscription was two rupees. The periodical was replacing its volumes every six months; therefore, its editor requested the subscribers to subscribe to it during or during the middle of the year. It cost five rupees to print the advertisement on the front cover, and the cost for printing the rest of the pages was four rupees.⁴

Stree Darpan was edited and managed by the women of the Nehru family. In 1909, the periodical started its publication by the accommodation of the Low Periodical Press of Allahabad. To get support from the intellectual community, the journal requested its authors to send their scripts to the press correspondence address, 'Allahabad Law

¹ Vasudha Dalmia. *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions. Bharatendu Hariśchandra and Nineteenth-Century Benaras*. Oxford University Press, 1997, 245.

² Bhartendu Harishchandra belonged to a mercantile background. During the nineteenth century from Benaras, he published the most famous journal named, *Kavivachan Sudha*, on August 15, 1867, and another journal named *Harish Chandra Chandrika*, on August 15, 1873, as well as a monthly magazine, *Balabodhini* on June 1, 1874. For more details, see Vinod Kumar and Shiv Narayan. "Colonial Policy and the Culture of Immigration: Citing the Social History of Varanasi in the Nineteenth Century." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 73, (2012): 888–97.

³ Vasudha, Dalmia, and Sanjeev Kumar. *Balabodhini*. New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2014, 5-14.

⁴ *Stree Darpan*. June 1910, inner cover.

Journal Press, 22, Gorge Town, Allahabad. Smt. Rameshwari Nehru⁵ was a ‘zenana-educated’⁶ Kashmiri Brahmin who took the responsibility of the chief editor of the magazine. The magazine was the mouthpiece of *Prayag Mahila Samiti*.⁷ However, Smt. Kamla Nehru took the responsibility of its manager. In the early phase of 1909, Prayag Mahila Samiti was launched by Rameshwari Nehru. This women’s Organisation was established for the local women of Allahabad. Another eminent woman of the Nehru family was Smt. Uma Nehru,⁸ wife of Shyam Lal Nehru (cousin brother of Jawaharlal Nehru). She started her writing in 1910. In 1923 she was elected as a member of the

⁵ According to Nijhawan, Smt. Rameshwari Nehru was a ‘zenana-educated’ Kashmiri Brahmin from Lahore. She married Brijlal Nehru in 1902; later, she moved to Allahabad with her husband in a politically prosperous family. Rameshwari Nehru stepped towards revolutionary decisions with the encouragement and support of her female family members and started her career as a chief editor of the magazine *Stree Darpan*. She also played a prominent role in society as a reformist and political activist. For more details, see, Shobna Nijhawan. *Women and Girls in The Hindi Public Sphere: Periodical Literature in Colonial North India*. Oxford University Press, 2011. 226-230.

⁶ The term ‘Zenana Educated’ refers to the separate women’s quarters in certain Hindu and Muslim families, usually in North India, where ‘Zenana Missionaries’ or female educators come to educate upper caste women. ‘Baptist Missionary Society’ provides education and medicine to enter in the private place of Indian women. Janaki Nair. “Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian womanhood in Englishwomen’s writings, 1813-1940.” *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 1, (1990): 8-34.

⁷ Prayag Mahila Samiti: In its editorial section, *Stree Darpan* discussed about the Prayag Mahila Samiti. It was established on 22 January, 1910 with the initiative of Smt. Dhanrajrani Sapru. She invited approximately 50 women to organise the event in its first inauguration. Smt. Kailashrani Vatal suggested the name of Nandrani Nehru to take the responsibility of the Head of the Samiti (committee). The Sabha had other branches in Lahore, Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, and Kolkata. Women from the recognised family participated in the formation process. Twenty women, including Kumari Kundan Devi Malviya (spouse Madan Mohan Malviya), Swarup Rani Nehru (spouse Motilal Nehru), took responsibility for the Samiti. The first day of every month was decided as Samiti’s meeting date. The first session was conducted in Shanti ashram, the wife of Prayagdas. The chief objectives of the Samiti were to gather women and discuss contemporary issues related to political incidents and their personal matters. Furthermore, the importance of narratives was discussed in the meetings. Borghi, Elena. “Feminism in Modern India: The Experience of the Nehru women (1900-1930).” PhD diss., 2015.

⁸ Uma Nehru was born in 1884 in a Kashmiri Brahmin family in Agra. She was known by her pet name Hukku. At the age of 17, she married Shyam Lal Nehru (Cousin Brother of Jawaharlal Lal Nehru). Uma was brilliant in expressing her viewpoint in the public address as well as the well-educated woman of the Nehru family. She was the author of women’s journals such as *Girhalakshmi* and *Chand*. The national leader Gandhi was influenced by her concern for women’s participation in the National movement. She participated in the national movement for freedom struggle. Coming from a prejudiced Nehru and upper-caste Brahmin family, she had broken the stereotype path through her writings to empower other women. She had a keen interest in women’s representation in public places and fought for women’s rights in the public sphere. Uma Nehru was a member of Rajya Sabha to address the demand for women’s rights in Parliament. Her participation in public places was considered an eminent Congress female politician in Allahabad during the freedom movement. Pragya Pathak, *Uma Nehru Aur Streeyon ke Adhikar*. New Delhi: Rajkamal Publication, 2020.

Allahabad municipality. In the same year, *Chand*⁹ published her achievement for being elected as a member of the Municipal Corporation of Allahabad. It remarks, 'It is a matter of great pleasure that Mrs Uma Nehru has been elected a member of the Allahabad Municipal Council.'¹⁰ Nijahwan described Talwar's opinion on Uma Nehru's contribution to the feminist movement. She carried out a detailed study of Uma Nehru's contribution to the feminist movement. In this manner, women started the public debate. They formed committees in the early twentieth century for their social welfare, such as 'Prayag Mahila Samiti'¹¹, mentioned in *Stree Darpan*.

Furthermore, Nijhawan provides detailed information about *Stree Darpan*. According to her, from 1923 onwards, Smt. Sumati Devi and Phoolkumari Mehrotra took the initiative to publish this periodical from Kanpur (a business hub), Coronation Press. Later, Rajaram Shukla took the responsibility of its editor. He served as editor in charge up to 1927. The publication shifted from Coronation Press to Eastern Press in the same year. He sincerely worked for the magazine during his tenure. Rajaram Shukla proved his responsibility to the readers. In June 1928, due to illness, Rajaram Shukla could not manage the accountability of printing a special issue of *Stree Darpan*, which was pre-announced. Perhaps the health condition of Rajaram Shukla affected the monthly publications. It resulted in the last available issue of this periodical dated June 1928.

While in its earlier period, June 1914 to October 1914, *Stree Darpan* was considered a helpful and ambitious piece of literature on its inner cover. The annual subscription to this magazine was two rupees and four annas. Each volume cost four annas; approximately one thousand subscribers were accessing it. The emergence of the nationalist movement and changes that occurred in international politics appeared in the content of *Stree Darpan*.

⁹ *Chand* was first published in the second decade of the twentieth century from Allahabad. The periodical was edited and managed by Ramrakh Singh Sahgal and his wife, Vidyavati Sahgal. Nijhawan *Women and Girls in the Hindi Public Sphere*, 81.

¹⁰ 'Yah Harsh ka Vishay Hai ki Smt. Uma Nehru Allahabad Municipality ki Sadasya Nirvachit Hui Hain.' This cheerful words were spread by the journal after electing Uma Nehru as a member of Allahabad municipality. See., 'Samchar Sangrah.' *Chand*. April 1923, 53.

¹¹ Sobna Nijhawa. *Women and Girls in the Hindi Public Sphere: Periodical Literature in Colonial North India*. Oxford University Press, 2011, 38.

Stree Darpan furnished a direction to women's rights. Orsini argued that 'It is the only journal which teaches women their rights along with their dharma' said the public in 1919, 'because husbands, brothers and fathers cannot encourage the country's welfare while treating women like animals'.¹² So, the women should play a part as a conscious community for their rights that possibly can occur by literary movement. In the year 1922, additional political information was carried out through its editorial column. In this section, the information related to the All Indian Women's Conference (AIWC), communal incidents, social issues and the encouraging stories of women activists of the national movement is discussed in the magazine.¹³ The Gandhian era has shown its primary concern with women serving the country, which is the real Dharma (duty or responsibility) of women rather than becoming ideal wives. Becoming an ideal patriot is more dutiful and remarkable than a perfect wife, which means serving their nation is superior to serving their husband.

Orsini remarked that *Stree Darpan* contained numerous articles that were useful for women. Its essays were concentrated on purdah practice, the stories of women's bravery in historical context, instruction for cleanliness, and women's physical fitness. The editorial pages directed the reader's attention to primary education, international and national achievements of women, meetings conducted by women activists, and their organisational information updated by the journal. It also discussed national and international politics, and the scenario explained international relations. The magazine paid attention to nearby states such as Punjab and Bengal to raise awareness of women's participation in national movements that tried to compare women with the Hindi belt. Through the emergence of periodicals, women got a platform to exchange their ideas and express their views with the class of women's intelligentsia.¹⁴

¹² Francesca Orsini. "Domesticity and Beyond: Hindi Women's Journals in the Early Twentieth Century." *South Asia Research* 19, no. 2 (1999):143-144.

¹³ Smt. Kumari Jagdambeswari Devi Sapru from Allahabad writings on the story of women's bravery. Rani Chanda Devi, mother of Maharaja Dileep Singh and the wife of Ranjeet Singh. After her husband's death, she bravely fought with the British government. Even after the custody of her son under the British government, she never bows her head in front of British officials.

¹⁴ Francesca Orsini. *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920-1940*, United Kingdom: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, (1996): 174-175.



Figure 1. Cover Page, *Stree Darpan*, March 1910.

In its initial phase, the advertisements of Hindi literature glorified the History of Vedic religion, and its philosophy was published in *Stree Darpan*. The periodical such as *Karma-Yogi* (the best magazine for Vedic religious philosophy) was the monthly periodical of Hindi published every *Ashtami* (eight-day of Hindi month) from Prayag by its editor Mr Sundar Lal Ji (B.A.). This monthly periodical fearlessly addressed the religious value and presented the nationalist approach through its advertisement. This advertisement decides the book's price for its subscribers. The person who subscribed to *Stree Darpan* can easily afford other books for less amount. The periodical *Stree Darpan* contained articles written by male and female authors on topics of various concerns. The writings of male authorship were different from female writers. Female authors deal with problems of women's daily lives and teach the story of morality in their articles.

In the issue of January 1910, six women on different topics appeared in the periodical: 'Prarthana' (Prayer) by Smt Rampyari (Allahabad), 'Dammpati Prem' (Couple Love) by Smt. Shri Vasanti (Banda), *Gumnam Chitthi* (Unknown Letter) by Girija Kumari Ghosh (Allahabad), 'Madras or Vhan ke Rahne Vale Log' (Madras and its Inhabitants) by Uma Nehru (Jalarpaet) (a place in Prayag), 'Saccha Paropkar' (Real alms-deeds) by Bhagbhari Handu (Madras), 'Shilp Siksha' (Craft education) by Savitri Devi (Lucknow), 'Vidhwa Vivah' (Widows marriage) by Ganga Devi (Allahabad). These

kinds of essays related to women's personal and public life were discussed in the magazines. That shows a way to reform women's condition. In her essay titled 'Tirtha Yatra' (Pilgrimage Travel) by Shri Munni Devi (Assam), she requested women to visit religious places for mental peace and reduce the burden of Household activity. Women across the country, including southern regions, participated in this literary movement through reading and writing. Hence, these literary activities of women made them aware of inter-state issues, and periodical information broadened their knowledge of neighbouring states. Apart from that, male authorship focused on accounts such as being an ideal wife titled '*Pati Dharma*' and stories of courageous women such as 'Rani Durgavati' to create a fierce quality in women. It was believed that this quality of women could protect their country from external destruction.

The magazine was promoting women's involvement in literary activity, and a column appeared concerned about women's education. The editor of the magazine announced a book titled *Stree Sikha* (women education), which was written by a female teacher for school girls of Dungarpur Rajputana. The book dealt with women's education and its benefits.¹⁵ The life stories of male reformers were covered at the beginning of *Stree Darpan*. Women such as Smt Kailash Rani Vatal in her essay, 'Manniya Pt. Madanmohan Malviya', discussed his biography.¹⁶ Many women intellectuals covered different issues related to becoming an ideal woman, such as *Pativrata Dharam Kya Hai* (what is the duty of a virtuous wife).¹⁷

¹⁵ The editor Rameshwari Nehru mentioned about the women's education. She said, 'In the issue of November, we discussed a book on 'women education' written by Smt Janki Bai, she wishes to publish that book the book price is one rupee. The women who send the money will get in one rupee. Still, no one sends the money to her because they do not provide the address. The woman who wants take the book can send the address to Smt Janki Bai, 'Adhyapikla Kanya Pathshala' (Educational institute for women) (Dungarpur Rajputana). *Stree Darpan*. January, 1910, 11.

¹⁶ Kailash Rani Vatal has written an article "Pt. Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Ji" in *Stree Darpan* in February 1910. She discussed the biography of Madan Mohan Malviya. He was an active leader of the United Provinces and was elected as the chairperson of the 24th Indian National Congress. She briefly introduced his birthplace, initial phase of his life, role as an editor, and his views on religious education where Malviya Ji advocated religious education for girls. He was part of the 'Sanatan Dharma Sabha' held in 1906 at Allahabad.

¹⁷ Putri (Daughter of) Babu Vikramjeet Singh, Kanpur, "Pativrta Dharam Kya Hai." *Stree Darpan*. February 1910.

The Periodical was advertising many matters to make women aware about Indian medicinal stuff such as *Lal Sharbat*,¹⁸ *Bhoothnath Oil*, *Bam Shankar (Attar)*.¹⁹ In its early phase, *Stree Darpan* provided a column name 'Swadeshi' to advertise Indian products. For such kind of advertisement, the periodicals charged five rupees for the front page, and inside the magazine, it cost four rupees. The advertisement of Indian products through a page named 'Swadeshi' appeared in the journal to constantly trace the inheritance to the Bengal Swadeshi movement of 1905. Coincidentally, the product was manufactured in Calcutta. Similarly, a portion of handicrafts and tutorials on stitching in *Stree Darpan* promoted Indian goods for mass-producing, with its clear intention to reject English imports.



Figure 2. Cover Page, *Stree Darpan*, July 1917.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, *Stree Darpan* appeared with a new theme seen in its front piece. As earlier, it is well-known that the front page of *Stree Darpan*

¹⁸ *Lal Sharbat* was a drinking beverage for children to good physical fitness, and will help in the digestion and cure in diseases related to the stomach. *Stree Darpan*, January 1910, 11.

¹⁹ A traditional practice in the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent to make oil perfume from flower essence, named *Attar* (oil perfume) in the Middle East and Indian subcontinent.

displays some beautiful borderlines. The journal was divided into eleven sections including critics and mistakes. (i) *Stree Jagat* (women's world): this part addresses the societal condition of Indian women, and how they can attain growth and advancement; (ii) *Stree Siksha* (women's education): this section counters that how a women should be educate and what education they should get; (iii) *Akhyaiika* (women's narrative): this part contained stories related to women; (iv) *Samajik* (women in society): this sections dealt problems that women face in society due to the following of customs and practice article such as 'Streeyan our Purdah' (Women and Purdah) by Satyavati Devi explained the uneasiness of women were going through; (v) *Kavita* (Poetry): primarily this part attempted to enhance the feeling of patriotism and women's responsibility towards society and their family; (vi) *Swasthya* (information realted to health): this part contained the information of home remedies related to health that lead to physical fitness; (vii) *Pauranik Katha* (Mythology): the part of mythology was glorifying the Indian religious value; (viii) *Jeevni* (Biography): this part was generally confined to life stories of women; (ix) *Vividh* (miscellaneous subject): with multiple subjects, this part covered the contemporary surrounding news; (x) *Samalochna* (criticism): after publishing varying material, the journal faced criticism which was published in this section; (xi) *Bhool Sudhar* (rectification of mistakes): last section consider the rectification of mistake that has mistakenly done in journal. However, later in the front piece of *Stree Darpan*, women become visible and see the figure of a female name with goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva's wife sitting in a praying position to attain knowledge. However, in 1917 *Stree Darpan* acquired a religious path; through the images of Hindu deities such as *Ganesha*, *Lakshmi* (Goddess of Wealth), *Saraswati* (Goddess of knowledge), *Hanuman*, and *Shiva* frequently appeared on the border of the pages.²⁰ It was an unobserved process to inject religious knowledge among readers. Many articles contained religious content that provided information about Hindu deities; journals inhabited the spiritual path, which provided a space for a religious transcript. The next period of the debate of language controversy was taking place in the journal, and the editorship was putting forward the words of national debates to its readers. 'Hindi should be a national language or not' such columns for debates occurred in journals. 'Does Hindi have the potential to become a national language'? Most of our countrymen do not doubt anything in this regard. Still,

²⁰ See. *Stree Darpan*, January/June 1917, 28, 14,146, 204.

the minister of the 'National Language Conference Office' of Calcutta writes that 'this opinion is praiseworthy, it is not controversial. Therefore, I request the committee to collect public opinion in your province and inform people that it is a good thing; we also urge our readers to give their opinion on this matter soon. Please send your consent' accordingly; the Journal also played a role in getting opinionated views of women to formulate Hindi as a national language.²¹

A large number of questions related to women's life were discussed in the public and defined their existence in the Hindi journals. Similarly, women started to participate in these discussions through their contribution through writing.

2.3.2. *Kumari Darpan* (1916-1920), *Kumari Darpan* was the addition of *Stree Darpan*. The prime concern of *Kumari Darpan* concentrated on girls' basic issues. In its early phase, Smt. Rameshwari Nehru managed *Kumari Darpan* (an additional feature of *Stree Darpan* useful for girls that presented a perspective from the perspective of teenage girls) as its chief editor. Its publications started in 1916 in Allahabad. It was a unique platform for women and girls to provide communicative space in literary form. Containing around ten pages, *Kumari Darpan* played a significant role in instilling an ethical path of character building among the women and girls community through essays related to moral conduct. Later, in march 1917, Smt. Roop Kumari Nehru (niece of Smt. Rameshwari Nehru and Smt. Kamla Nehru) undertakes its charge as a sub-editor. The front page of *Kumari Darpan* containing the heading *Balika Hitkari* (Useful for Girls) indicates that its content focuses on girl's issues and declares that it is an internal part of *Stree Darpan*. However, it also created an intense religious sentiment among the readers of *Kumari Darpan*. Hence, this supplement copy of *Stree Darpan* expressed Hindu deities' religious philosophy through the different divinity images which appeared on the edge of *Kumari Darpan*.

²¹ 'Kya Hindi hi Rashtra Bhasha Banne ki Yogyta Rakhti Hai, Is Samay Hamare Adhikansh Desh Vasi Is Sambandh Me Kuch Bhi Sandeh Nahi Rakhte, Par Kolkata Wale 'Rashtra Bhasha Sammelan Karyalay' Ke Mantri Mahashay Likhte Hain Ki 'Yah Sammatti Sarvatha Prashanshaniya Hai Bilkul Bhi Vivadashunya Nahi Hai Isi Abhipray Se Mai Committee Ki or Se Nivedan Karta Hu Ki Aap Kripa Kar Apne Praant Ki Janta Sammatti Sangrah Ka Karya Apne Upar le Aur Ham Logo Ko Usse Avagat Kare'. Achhi Baat Hai, Hamare Bhi Apne Pathak, Pathikaon Se Prarthana Hai Ki Ve Shighra Is Vishay Me Hamare Paas Apni Sammati Bhejne Ki Kripa Kare'. *Stree Darpan*. July 1918, 6.

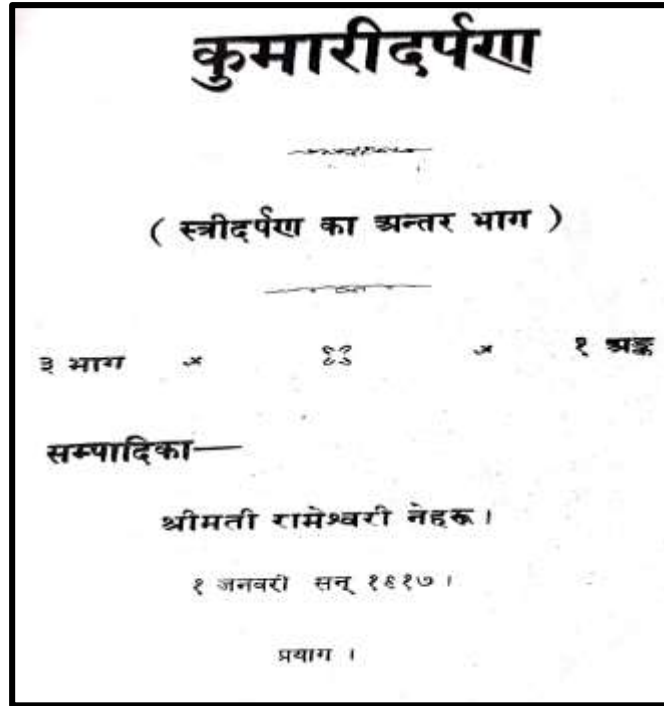


Figure 3. Cover Page, *Kumari Darpan*, January/February, 1917.

Kumari Darpan was divided into six parts (i) 'Prayers' was an appealing poem of Hindu girls to get the sympathy of God to access education and grant a free world to them. An article '*Iswar se Meri Vinti Prarthna*' (my request to God) by Smt Kumari Raj Rajeshwari Devi requested that she be in the trap of soreness and distress. She worried about her community's education. She justified that she was uneducated and uncivilised. With her innocent expression, she asked God to provide knowledge and wisdom. By adding another perspective, she believes that the understanding she developed was only by reading religious texts. It is the only way of self-realisation. (ii) 'Poetry' section deals with girls' daily routine with translated work of John Keats; as it was the period of the national movement, poetry reflected women and girls' patriotism in the coming year. Its poetry focused on the importance of education, stating that education is the only way to awaken untrained girls. Education can make girls morally righteous that connect their standard to learn '*Pativrata Dharma*' to become an ideal partner for their husbands. It is said that, after getting an education, girls could contribute to nation-building. That can make them nurturing mothers of their children. (iii) 'Fiction and short stories' contained novels and fairy-tales to attract and inculcate interest in reading among women and girls readers, mostly translated text entertained in Hindi literature from different languages such as Bengali and English. Hindi fairy tales such as *Komalta* (softness) by Smt. Vidyavati Nehru attracted the girls' readers. (iv) Adding to this, *Kumari Darpan* also

carried out geological and universal narrations to make girls aware of the surrounding motherland. Some sections of the articles, such as *Bhugole ki Kahani*²² (story of geography) by Smt. Prem Pyari Devi gives detailed information about the geographical condition of the Indian subcontinent. ‘Where is the country in which we live? Which corner of the world is this place? Come and see the map of the world.’²³ Its detailed information mapping the Indian territory and neighbouring land enhance India’s physical appearance to the female reader (v) The brainteaser section in *Kumari Darpan* was a fun part as brain exercises were published for the girls and women to grow intellectually. Women from the Nehru family especially Smt. Vidyawati Nehru²⁴ participated in the riddle challenge, and she won the challenge too. (vi) The ‘Editorial’ section contained informal communication imparted on readers’ everyday lives. *Kumari Darpan* encouraged women and girls to participate in article writings in simple and easy language for this additional part. They commanded them to submit those articles with their full addresses.²⁵

2.4. Grihalaksmi (1909-1929), *Grihalakshmi* means ‘Goddess of the House’. For Indians, *Laksmi* symbolises a goddess of wealth (property) who blesses the house with enormous prosperity. Similarly, *Grihalaksmi* (women of the house) were identified as male property. The male members of the family are considered guardians of the home. Moreover, as a wife of that person, she signifies a female guardian of the house, where she follows the path of her husband without any self-identity. It is imposed on her by society in the name of house management. She has to follow household responsibilities such as maintaining the house and caring for family members. The education introduced by social reformers in the journal geared up women with more responsibilities and supportive personalities.

²² *Kumari Darpan*. January/February 1917, 9-13.

²³ Jis Desh Me Ham Log Rahte Hain Vah Khan Hai? Duniya Ke Kis Kone Me Basa Hai? Ao Duniya Ka Naksha Dekhen, see. Smt. Rampyari Devi, *Bhugol Ki Kahani* (The Story of Geography), *Kumari Darpan*. February 1917,1.

²⁴ *Kumari Darpan*. April 1917, 31.

²⁵ Shobna Nijhawan. *Women and Girls in the Hindi Public Sphere: Periodical Literature in Colonial North India*. Oxford University Press, 2011, 104-107.

Nijhawani stated that 'Naming a women's periodical *Grihalakshmi* reflected the debates of the 'different yet dominated discourse; of colonial modernity, including efforts to construct model women along the lines of 'modern, but not the Western' women- a 'modern Lakshmi' so to say.'²⁶ The construction of 'modern Lakshmi' was based on women's education for household activity and trained them to be an 'Ideal modern housewife' associated with an English-educated madam. The English-educated Indian men mainly imposed this burden on women to become an ideal 'Indian madam' that can impress their society because they imitated English men themselves. The journal encouraged the growing 'ideal modern mother,' who influenced English culture, to propose a photograph of their child to exhibit in *Grihalakshmi*. The editorial board requested to publish a picture of a girl child or boy in the journal.²⁷ Also, the images of men and women were previously available in print in an earlier Issue of the journal. Therefore, they requested its reader to provide pictures of their 'courageous children, whether a girl or boy. This step of *Grihalakshmi* was inculcating the nurturing mother to become ideal mothers following the western idea of modernity and engaging them as Indian mothers set them busy to raise a healthy child compared with an English child. The male was trying to make Indian mothers like English mothers.

In a column, 'Grihalakshmi Ka Uphar,' (Gift of *Grihalakshmi*), the periodical was advertising 'Grihalakshmi-Granthamala'²⁸ publishing books on women's issues. The first book of the Grinthmala (series) was Grihani (Housewife). This volume contained 190 pages with a beautiful cover page. It cost 12 paise, but the *Grihalakshmi* customer can buy it at half the rate. The book educated women about self-identity and bonding with husbands and co-ordination with their husbands that women lost due to English-educated men. The book dealt with the problems women faced during their devoted ideal household work, how to manage their joint family, what to wear, her duty towards her husband, and how to be a perfect wife. The series of books such as *Choti Bahu*, *Lakshmi Bahu*, *Adarsh Bahu*, *Kanya Kaumudi*, *Sati Lakshmi*, *Adarsh Bahu Aur Bhai Bahen* was publishing from the *Grihalakshmi* Karyalaya (office) Allahabad. The *Grihalakshmi* focused

²⁶ Ibid., 49.

²⁷ See., *Grihalakshmi*. April 1913, 109-110.

²⁸ *Grihalakshmi Granthmala* (Book Series of *Grihalakshmi*). It provided the books related to advanced household education at a very less rate as a gift to *Grihalakshmi* customers. See., *Grihalakshmi*, April 1913, 1-5.

on women's responsibilities as nurturing mothers and caring wives. It was reflected in the preference theme of *Grihalaksmi* to publish in a piece of writing. Modern domesticity was entered into the private life of women. The necessity of becoming ideal-educated Indian women turns them up towards modernity. It transformed Indian women into Ideal modern women.

Grihalaksmi was the most popular women's Journal among the women's community in its early phase. Its initial phase increased its popularity among 4000 subscribers. In its Issue of 1911, very few pictures were fixed. In the late colonial period 1917, approximately two thousand subscribers were getting access; however, it reduced the popularity among its readership in the early phase of the 1920s; only 1000 subscribers could continue it. In 1924, the emerging period of the magazine enhanced its fame and reached 2000 subscribers. Nevertheless, in its last year (1929) of publication, the journal was operated by male Hindi writers in the name of Gopal Devi as its editor, which Hindi writers exercise for communication. Thakur Srinath Singh was its informal editor.²⁹

The content list of the magazine enclosed the policies for the subscribers of *Grihalakshmi* marked by editor Smt. Gopal Devi. The annual subscription charge, including postal expenditure, was rupees one. However, for six months the price was 50 paise. Gopal Devi notified people that the sample copy needed to get a subscription to the journal to grab hold of the upcoming issue. It was charged only one rupee. Its subscribers were directed to send the precise address to continue their future correspondence. At the beginning of the periodical, the editor said that articles related to political and religious conflict would not be published. However, later, the publication takes to the path of religious and political concern. For advertising any products by subscribers, the cost for a half-page was four rupees, and a single page worth rupees eight; to maintain its continuity, customers would have to fix a reasonable rate with office staff.

The conditions were placed by Gopal Devi at the beginning of the magazine.³⁰ She complained that most of the articles that arrive for publishing are not clear to understand. Therefore, she put the dictatorial condition on the editors and suggested the authors keep essay language undeciphered and essay understanding. Also, she said, 'there

²⁹ Shobna Nijhawan, *Women and Girls in the Hindi Public Sphere*, op. cit., 49.

³⁰ See, "Grihalaksmi Ke Niyam." *Grihalakshmi*, April 1913, 3.

should be double space between two lines to make us understand, and only one side of the paper should be scripted.³¹ The editor of *Grihalaksmi* gave these remarks to the writers.



Figure 4. Cover Page, *Grihalaksmi* March/April 1918.

In this picture, three women are sitting in Saree with covered heads. One is busy stitching clothes, the other is reading a book, a child is playing nearby, and the third woman is cooking. It appears that the woman who is stitching is the 'Grihalakshmi' (head of house), who is guiding other women.

The periodical *Grihalakshmi* was first published in 1909. Like *Stree Darapn*, it was an easily accessible source edited by women. Pandit Sudarshan Acharya and his wife, Smt. Gopal Devi committed to the publication of *Grihalaksmi*. In the early publication phase of *Grihalakshmi*, Sudarshan Press (Press name belonging to Pandit Sudarshan Acharya) took the liability to publish this journal. The press also published women's literature in Hindi, English, and Sanskrit. The journal contained sixty-four pages in length for a month.³² It has an editorial column to communicate with the surrounding news by the editorial board. From 1914 onwards, the Journal was publishing its frontispiece and other pictures in coloured form. In 1918, Pt. Sudarshan Acharya manager of *Grihalaksmi* published an apology request to its subscribers for its delayed publication titled 'Abki Bar Aur Kshama Kijiye' (again forgive for this time).³³ To uphold its continuity,

³¹ See., *Grihalaksmi*. April 1913, 109.

³² Ibid., 48.

³³ See., *Grihalaksmi*. April 1918, 2-3.

Grihalaksmi was getting donations from its subscribers. However, after nine years *Grihalaksmi* could not maintain its continuity for four months, which was later substituted by the combined issues of four months. The editor consigns her words to this loss by reimbursement of a prepaid amount to its subscribers by extending their subscription period and providing them with some books with an alternative option. *Grihalaksmi* was displayed in two colours.

In the Issue of 1911, *Grihalakshmi* published a poem by Sridhar Pathak, 'Shri Gorge Vandna', to praise him; it was the time when George V came to India.³⁴ This type of poem was making women aware of the surrounding world. The national and international news was spread by literary sources in poetry, essays, and articles to inform the public. A larger piece of writings and thematic papers such as *Abla Apeel* (Helpless women) by Tomarchand, *Pativrata Dharma* (loyalty towards Husband) by Devavata Devi, and *Mahila Mahatva* (women importance) by Devdutt Sharma Chaturvedi provided detailed information about women. It highlighted the precise needs of women, how they should perform their duty, and convinced women to raise their issues in society. *Grihalaksmi* delivered a platform to the women's community to address their position in the Vedic period and detailed travelling information about other countries and western women.

2.5. Chand (1922-1947) symbolises a sense of beauty. Unfortunately, its beauty is linked with women's romanticism, which identified beauty as an essence of attraction; accordingly, the word '*Chand*' attracted women and others among Hindi audiences. Consequently, a large number of women were drawn toward *Chand*; later, the periodical became popular among the women's community.

Chand started its first publication in 1922 by Ramrakh Singh Sahgal and Shri Ramkrishna Mukund Laghate (B.A.).³⁵ Their significant role as its editor was highly remarkable. Vidyavati Sahgal (wife of Ramrakh Singh Sahgal) initiated the responsibility of its manager. In its earlier phase, *Chand* was printed by the 'Standard Press' (Ramnath Bhavan) Allahabad. The owner of the printing press was Babu Vishambhar Nath Bhargav. Law Journal-press. K.P. Dar printed the journal at the Allahabad Law journal

³⁴ See., *Grihalaksmi*. April 1911, 465.

³⁵ Ibid.,81.

press and published content was picked up by Ramrakh Singh Sahgal (Editor) at the *Chand* office, 28 Elgin Road, Allahabad. Annually it cost six rupees; however, it was a monthly periodical, and the price for six months' costs three rupees. *Chand* contained eighty pages, but the special Issues carried more pages, and the yearly fixed price was six and a half rupees. During its publication years, *Chand* published around sixty-four numbers until now. It was published both in colour and black-white print. Its number of copies extended up to 15000. The journal evolved the political and social dialogue of women's social injustice and acquired domesticity in the early twentieth century. *Chand* was broadening that format in the Hindi public sphere for the women of the middle class.

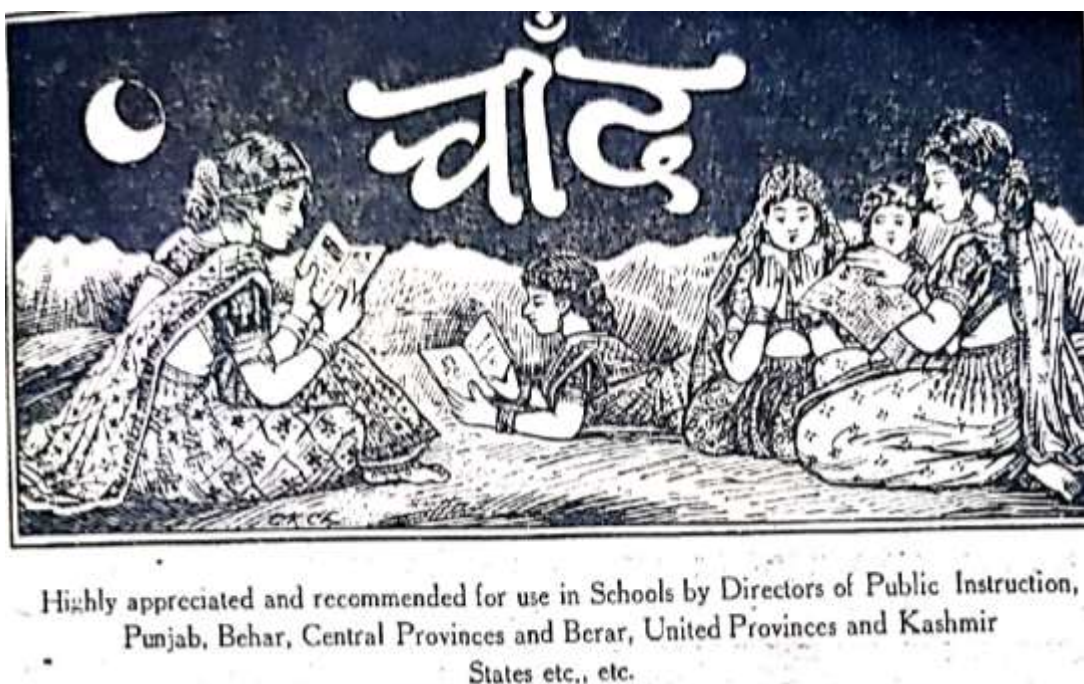


Figure 5. Cover Page, *Chand*, November 1923. Reading women in the night and creating their own space by breaking the pigeonhole of women with brainstorming ideas.

It focuses on women's issues during the social movement and political transition. Women of the elite and middle class acquire a local platform of collective identity and social connectivity. The women's writings provided new idioms and their perspectives to mainstream literary periodicals. To address the social injustice in the household and social realities towards women, *Chand* established its existence. In the early twentieth century, it identified reform in social evils and emphasised the necessity of various social issues, such as caste, religion, and political consciousness, although it considers women emancipated.

Chand advertises itself during its inauguration by introducing its objective; a particular page appeared during its early years to raise interest in male readership and increase its subscribers. An image of a symbolic Englishman forecasting as *Chand* to bring change in the life of Indian ladies. In its remarkable words, *Chand* contended,

I Teach Your Ladies, Household Economy, the art of Cooking, Music, Needlework, Nursery, Hygiene, Indian Medicines, the upbringing of Children and the social status of the evils of child marriage, Widow Marriage, Dowry system prevailing in all classes of people. Besides all these, I always contain a series of Literary, Social and Historical articles responsible. In short, let me tell you, I shall make your home happy if you care to subscribe to me. Just see me from top to bottom; what am I? Yet see what I can do for you. In case you are satisfied, send at once my annual subscriptions rs. 6-8 by Money order (to save extra V.P charges) to the manager, the *Chand* office Allahabad.³⁶

This content proclaims that *Chand* can construct self-controlling power in Hindu women through its relevant idea of domesticity, which will develop outstanding characteristics among women (a woman can cope up with English educated Indian man) to make their home happy. It will teach behavioural change in Indian women like ‘English educated madam.’ The content proclaims that Indian women are uneducated and uncivilised. In this context, the *Chand* dealt with the problem of Indian Ladies making Indian families happy by providing essential household education (Cooking, stitching, singing, gardening, childcare, social status of Hindu community) for women through male readership appealing to them to get its subscription. Talwar argued that in its later phase, the magazine lost its predefined path. Significantly, the making of Indian women into ideal housewives acquired the path to changing social attitudes toward achieving their denied rights in the context of the nationalist movement. So, women-only became the subject of male partiality.³⁷

Furthermore, the content of the pages followed problems of Hindu society such as child marriage, widow remarriage, and the dowry system prevailing in all classes. It also contained a series of many articles on literary and social issues responsible for intellectuals’ authorship. The sensible content of this page could result from the British criticism of Indian civilisation. Taking into the account British scholarship of James Mill

³⁶ Quoted as in original, *Chand*. April 1923.

³⁷ Vir Bharat Talwar. “Feminist Consciousness in Women’s Journals in Hindi, 1910–1920.” *Recasting women: Essays in Colonial History*, (1989): 275.

(a Scottish historian and philosopher) in his book 'The History of British India (1817)', Indians are barbarians and uncivilised and their women were considered a slave according to their established customs: (Hindu women) did not acquire any right to choose their destiny.

The women such as Mrs Sarla Bai Naik, M.A., Miss S Duara, M.A. B.T., Miss C.B. Pooviah, B.A. Miss Jyotirmayi Ganguli, M.A., Shrimati Chandra Prabha Devi, Mehrotra, Mangla Devi. Shrimati Sharda Kumai Devi, Mrs Sushila Devi Nigham B.A., and Kumari Vidyavati Seth were permanent writers in *Chand*. Similarly, poets such as Shrimati Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, and Srimati Mahadevi Verma were discussing the social condition of women.

The stories of courageous women such as Maharani Tara, Devi John, and Rani Lakshmibai styled their picture 'Ran Chandi Ke Bhesh me Rani Laksmibai'³⁸ served on the mapping to build women's courage. Men intellectuals were presenting the content of the heroic story of women, but their enemy was Muslim men such as La-Ilaha Khan, an Afghan Sardar who consider outsiders and dominating in-country, similarly if women intellectuals were presenting the stories of courageous women such as Devi John by Vidyavati Sahgal, stories on women with colonised France by the British. She focuses on the Christian community which changes women with her chastity as saints. She believes that Devi John, who was a true patriot of her country, got arrested by the British army on the battlefield and remained a prisoner for a prolonged time, and later on, the army burned her alive to make others afraid. Similar stories signify the patriotic feelings of our fellow citizens to save the country from the enemy. She made her enemy colonisers and Muslims rule who was responsible for making a slave of the Indians.

The story of Devi John signifies that the Christians or religious priests consider her a saint of their religion. Such a narrative contained motifs with the lessons of patriotism and purity of Indian women leading them towards self-respect by protecting religious values. Lastly, the article outlined the Devi John, 'we are hoping that the picture of burning Devi John will take women towards purity, self-reliance, patriotism, and encourage them to sacrifice their life for their nation.

Another section named *Griha Prabhandh* (House management) became recently visible in *Chand* to educate women about household techniques. The editor of *Chand*

³⁸ *Chand*. June 1924,185.

started to request its authors to provide information related to home remedies that can benefit female readers. Later, this section was renamed *Griha Vigyan* (Home Science) and added informative articles such as *Kapde Dhone ki Vidhi* (a technique of washing clothes) by women such as Kumari Sakuntala Devi ‘*Sabhya*’ (she used the word *Sabhya* to denote women as cultured and modern) regarding the soap making, washing clothes, etc.³⁹ This came under the counting of chemical expertise. In the nineteenth century, subjects such as Home Science which is based on learning household knowledge, became a leading subject for girls to educate them about home management, including cooking, stitching, first aid dressing, etc. It was supplemented in the school curriculum for girls in North India.

With its section on *Pak Siksha* (Cooking education), women were learning to cook various dishes to keep their families happy. They were learning the recipes of particular dishes to prepare in different methods. This section was also teaching women how to preserve edibles. That can be located under the budget management technique of household women.



Figure 6. *Chand*, June 1925. Women are busy reading and writing.

In this image, women are involved in reading and writing, which increased with the introduction of Hindi print media. The portrait of three women in sari with covered heads persuades them that they are all ideal educated women sitting at a table to write their views for the upcoming piece. One is reading, and the other two are busy writing. There is an inkpot with a pen, and a night lamp illustrates women's dedication to their

³⁹ *Chand*. May 1924, 45.

work that they work until night. Women's liberty started with their education and when they worked until night and expressed their formative words in the Hindi literature.

In 1925, Chandikaprasad Hridayesh joined the editorial board. Later in 1926, Nandkishor Tiwari extended his support to the journal. The combined issue of *Chand* was published in May-June in 1925. *Chand* brought a special issue to the Vaishya community was 'Vaishya Ank' in 1925. And the first issue of 1926 was published as a special number that contained 152 pages. It not only provided a platform to express women's views in literature, but it also provided liberty for women in public places to communicate with strangers. Equally, *Chand* proclaims that it presents women's liberty and raises the anti-male point of view. *Chand* also addresses women's problems as a social question and seeks it out as a social revolution

The editor of *Chand* was providing the pre-noticed information related to the content of the upcoming issue. The notes were providing information about how the forthcoming edition will be. Its content enclosed a request to writers in the following concern topic of *Chand* the defects of the modern education system, and how girls' future education system should be. *Chand* notified its authors that they would be pleased to express their views on the education theme.⁴⁰ In its initial phase, *Chand* introduced its back-to-back special issues, March 1923 *Holi Ank*, April 1923 *Vidhwa Ank*, August 1923 *Siksha Ank*, September 1923 *Bal Vivah*, November 1923 *Naveen Varsh ka Visheshank*, and in December 1923 *Mahila Ank*. A column was always there to notify the information about the upcoming issues. If there was any delay on the upcoming issue, the column 'Kshama Prarthna' (sympathetic appeal) requests its reader to not complete its pre-noticed assignment.⁴¹ The journal was dependent on other printing presses to attach the

⁴⁰ 'Lekkhon Se Nivedan, *Chand* Ke Agle Ank Me Vartman Siksha Paddhti Ke Dosh Dikhae Jayenge, Our Bhavishya Me Kanyaon Ki Siksha Paddhti Kaisi Ho, Is Vishay Par Vichar Kiya Javega. Lekkhon Se Hamari Saadar Prarthna Hai Ki Isi Vishay Par Ve Apne Vichar Prakat Karne Ki Kripa Karenge.' *Chand*. April 1923, 480.

⁴¹ The journal could not be published at its regular time due to extracting one special issue after another. We also gave the preliminary information regarding the journal distribution by the 25th to the readers through the postcard. If it had arrived on time, the letter would indeed have reached customers' service by the 25th of May. However, we could not get paintings on time due to two months of continuous illness of the painters of 'Messrs. Yue Ray and Sons' (Title of a printing company). He replied in several letters, the firm's operators have apologised to us for the delay. This forgiveness mercy is not ours but depends on our readers' gentleness, which is why the letter was delayed further in publication. Many pictures that are left incomplete could not be given due to hurry, so we hope that whatever we could present to the readers will be accepted by them wholeheartedly.' *Chand*. April 1923, 480.

picture and images. After facing printing issues, *Chand* opened its colour printing press in September 1926 named 'Fine Art Printing Cottage' at 28 Elgin road at Allahabad.



Figure 7. *Chand* reading woman, becoming community conscious and women sociability (June 1924)

Vinod Vatika (Love garden) focused on women's social interaction and community participation to interact with unfamiliar surroundings. This section advertised women's interest in their community gatherings. Women from middle-class families started to participate in the newly constructed literary world. They were free to discuss their everyday life, the politics of that time, and the news that they wanted to speak about in public and discuss their community problem. Sometimes these social gathering spaces become the hub of women leaders to conduct their meetings and convince other women to participate in national movements.



Figure 8. *Chand*, June 1924. A Mother with her children and a girl refining qualified tasks to children's care.

This picture depicts the construction of ideal womanhood; a girl is getting trained in household techniques by a woman in order to be suitable for the criteria of an ideal

woman. In July 1924, *Chand* advertised for its Shishu Ank (Children Issue, November 1924), published with 150 pages with both colours, black and white pictures. It costs 2 rupees and it was decided that good decorated colourful pictures would be provided. *Chand* self-declared that prominent intellectuals and renowned doctors would publish articles and essays in the coming issue to train women and benefit them for modus operandi to nurture motherhood. Similarly, its news section named 'Samachar Sangrah' includes numerous conversion and abduction stories of women and their bravery towards Muslims

In 1927, the publisher of *Chand* was Satyabhakt, and Nand Kishor Tiwari took the initiative of managing the editorship, and Sahgal remained as manager, and Later Premchandra was the editor of a particular substance of *Galpank* in 1927; Vidyavati remains as its Director. Pt. Nand Kishor Tiwari was the chief editor of Achhoot Ank⁴² which was published in 1927. Many other contemporary journals were updating about *Chand*. This special Issue of *Chand* is, moreover, concerned with the matter of untouchables. *Chand* (Achhoot Ank 1927) focuses on lower caste worries of surviving in society. The social and cultural identity itself was torturing them within the social strata.

Similarly, the effects of untouchability have resulted in conversion into other religious communities, whether to Islam, Christianity or Buddhism. The Hindi literary magazines contradicted the religious conversion that reflected on the criticism of different faiths to save their community. Women intellectuals were focusing on the religious transformation that occurred among the lower caste community. They presented writing about untouchability within the Hindu community. Moreover, issues related to conversion have appeared in their writing.

An editorial column titled 'Paap Ki Granthiyan' (Node of Sins) in Sampadkiya Vichar (editorial notes, 2-12), concentrated on the religious adaptation and how the conversion took place among the lower caste because of their utmost humiliation within Hinduism and liberty in other religions prepared a layout to embrace other faiths. The essay focused on the immorality of Hindus within their community.

⁴² Hindi magazine *Madhuri* commented on the special issue of *Chand* 1927, and it mentioned that it is effortless for *Chand* to publish any special issue that has published around ten special issues with 55 numbers. Vijaydatt Shridhar, *Bhartiya Patrikarita Kosh II*. New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 2008, 680-685.

In Hinduism, the practice of untouchability, and hatred towards the untouchables is an excessive sin, while in Islam, it was following harmony everyone is equal whether it is king or beggar.⁴³ This statement evidences that the intellectuals were justifying re-conversion, ensuring that Islam was misleading the lower caste Hindus. Similarly, Islam provides religious equality to lower caste Hindus. Therefore, the lower caste Hindus were embracing the other religion to practice equality. ‘As soon as you become a Muslim, your untouchability will be destroyed, and you are free to take water from the same wells as the higher caste Hindus get.’⁴⁴ Converting into Islam, the lower caste will be equal to upper-caste Hindus; they can benefit from all those upper caste people’s facilities. Similarly, middle-class intellectual women were conscious of religious identity and were saving religious distinctiveness. Their focus on conversion was only to save their community.

A newspaper named Bombay Chronicle published a story about the prohibited issue of *Chand* on Thursday, the 30th of May. This newspaper extended its empathy to *Chand* on the prohibition that the government imposed. The title of the story was ‘Stand by the Chand’. With its sympathetic words, the Chronicle criticised the British government for prohibiting other Hindi literary journals. Chronicle justifies that, It was one of the best magazines in the Hindi world, committed to women. The periodical was requesting that senior students and teachers remain as its regular customers.⁴⁵

‘Marwari Ank’ informed about the ‘Fansi Ank’⁴⁶ that was banned by the British government. On 19th September 1929, the story was originally published in ‘Aryamitra’ from Agra. The title of the news item was ‘Chand Par Sankat’. The information reported by *Chand*, a highly recognised publishing journal of *Chand* ‘Fansi Ank’ from Prayag, is

⁴³ Islam Sabko Bhai Samajhta Hai, Iske Dayre me Badshaha or Bhikmanga Ek hi Dastarkhwan Par Khate Peete or Namaz Ada Karte Hain. *Chand*, April 1927, 2.

⁴⁴ ‘Musalman Hote hi Tumhari Napakji Kafoor ho Jayegi, Aur Tum Badi Azadi se Unhi Kuon Se Usi Tarah Se Pani Bhar Sakte Ho, Jis Tarah Se Unchi Jati Ke Hindu Bharte Hain.’ Sampadkiya Vichar (Editorial Views), “Paap Ki Granthiyan” (Sin’s Nodus), *Chand*. April 1927. 2-12.

⁴⁵ The newspaper ‘Bombay Chronicle published a story on *Chand* prohibition, that has done by the British government. The motive of publishing the story was to expose the government atrocities on the printing press and editors and also to justify that *Chand* did not do any wrong activity. See., *Chand*. November 1929, 274.

⁴⁶ *Chand*, ‘Fansi Ank’, was banned by the British government. Shridhar, *Bhartiya Patrikarita Kosh Vol 2*, 682.

why. This issue exposed the British government and provided the news of those prisoners who were hanged by the British government inside the prison. So, the 'Fansi Ank' was banned by the government. Later, the government seized the other book 'Bharat me Angreji Rajya' and stopped its distribution in schools and colleges. The magazine was undergoing considerable loss. However, for writing against the government, the journal faced publication difficulties. In 1931, the journal was edited by Triveni Prasad B.A. during his prison days with his correspondence editor Bhubneshwar Mishra M.A. (Madhav).

Nevertheless, no one knows the crime of the magazine that banned it. *Chand* criticised English culture, and the National movement was promoted through the journal. Therefore, the British government never wished '*Chand*' to reach public height. Moreover, they prohibited it in educational institutions. Its editor produced it more remarkably despite facing financial loss. Furthermore, '*Aryamitra*' requested its readers to be members of *Chand* and contribute to its existence.⁴⁷

Chand was also publishing a dramatic series of stories to entertain its readers. The stories appear with a new episode in every issue to connect its readers to continue the suspense. Latkhori by G. P. Srivastava, 'Pagal Mahoday', 'Dil Jale ki Aag' and the story of the widows by Chatursen Shashtri was continued in the part.



Figure 9. Cover Page, *Chand*, October 1945.

⁴⁷ See, *Chand* 'Marwadi Ank', November 1929, 283.

(A woman wearing a saree is sitting in the moonlight. This image depicts a modern woman who is not covering her head thinking about the *Chand*)

In 1945, the editor of the Journal was Shri Satya Bhakt, and the Managing Editor was Shri N.G. Sahgal (Nandkishor Ji Sahjal), which cost 10 paise. The private life of women became different. The images of household activity changed to women spending their time reading. It was when English rule was concluding, and Indian capitalism dominated the journals by advertising cosmetics products. The phase of 1945 was about the advertisements in *Chand*, primarily focusing on materialist life, the products such as Hamam, Pears, Lifebuoy, Godrej soap, and Ponds cream, Talcum powder as well as food items such as Dalda, Indian Tea, advertising, and the space for promoting literature and other books and novels have vanished.

Women intellectuals of *Chand*- women such as Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay⁴⁸ in *Vidushi Ank* explain that *Chand* has always given the opportunity to women writers and has encouraged them in every situation to bring their expressive voices to the public. The *Chand* has been the most important and most loved journal of women to reveal the various stages of their life, so everyone will heartily welcome this Special Issue, I wish for its success.⁴⁹ Rajkumari Sahiba Amrit Kaur was an active female leader of the women's movement and also she was the chief member of the 'All India Women's Conference. She appreciated the *Vidushi Ank* and in this context urged the women that 'the responsibility of maintaining the character of the ideal and spiritual importance of life is also on us.'⁵⁰ In this matter, she was focused on the belief that women should be involved in spiritual activity. Similarly, Smt Uma Nehru is known for her writing and literary activity, and also for social and political participation. She focused on women's rights and social reforms in the Hindi heartland very early, when the women's movement had not even started in India, she wrote many articles on the necessary reforms in women's life.

⁴⁸ Smt. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay was a prominent leader of the youth movement in India. *Chand* 'Vidushi Ank', November 1935, 11.

⁴⁹ "Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay ka Sandesh." *Chand* 'Vidushi Ank', November 1935, 11.

⁵⁰ "Rajkumari Sahiba Amrit Kaur Ka Sandesh." *Chand* 'Vidushi Ank', November 1935, 11.

2.6. *Arya Mahila* (1917-1940): the term ‘Arya’ is considered as a higher position of a community particularly in upper-caste Hindu society. This superior identity includes religious, cultural and language superiority. The magazine was started by high caste Hindu women to address women's issues such as purdah practice, child marriage and widows’ problems in colonial north India.



Figure 10. Cover Page, *Arya Mahila*, Jan/Feb/March 1918.

The front page of *Arya Mahila* of 1918 (Samvat 1974) portrays a female goddess. The image represents the goddess of the Indian land ‘*Bharat Mata*’. The symbolism behind this image is that the Bharat Mata sitting posture next to a lion shows the bravery and power of Hindu women. She is sitting close to a river and mountains that illustrate the Himalayan territory (the sign of Indian terrain to protect from the outside). She has a trident in her hand to defeat the enemy. This identity refers to the image as ‘*Shri Jaganmatre Namah*’ (Praise to the world’s goddess) or goddess of the world. The goddess’s name appeared underneath ‘*Khairigadh Rajyeswari Bharat Dharm Laksmi*’ as a saviour of Bharat Dharma. This image is associated with the sacred motherland of Hindus, Bharat Mata.

Nevertheless, the image was signified by the editor of the magazine, Mrs Sarath Kumari Devi. It included the figure of goddess *Bharat Mata* and sacred deities with their devotees in order to make their readers aware of their deep-rooted religious values. The magazine had helpful writing by authors to make readers aware of Indian land. It was the same

period of national awakening through images of mother India; most importantly, the first world war phenomenon occurred that impacted globally. In 1927 a book titled *Mother India* was written by 'Catherin Mayo'.⁵¹ The book title was meant to induce foremost leading nationalist representations and the condition of Indian inhabitants. This book was the critique of Indian society and culture on the basis of the condition of the oppressed Hindu social structure. The book informed about the social evils of Indian society extensively affecting women's condition.⁵² The result of this book has been seen in the response against Mayo's 'Mother India' by intellectual groups through their latter work and books that were trying to project the ideal condition of the country. In her major work, 'Mother India Ka Jawab' (December 1927) Smt Chandravati Lakhnawal⁵³ responded, 'in this era of white people, blacks are considered zoo animals that are displayed to the public. This book (Mother India) is not for the native of India, it was written for the people of Europe'. Similarly, women such as Uma Nehru, and Carlania Sorabji have reacted against Mayo's 'Mother India'.

Arya Mahila was the third women-oriented magazine published in Benaras. The journal contained the value of education and social change for women based on ancient principles.⁵⁴ The policies of *Arya Mahila* were also discussed separately with its reader and writers community. It included eight guiding principles and laws for its readers in an editorial titled 'Shri Arya Mahila Ke Niyam' (Policies of *Arya Mahila*). Even after the completion of its six-year *Arya Mahila* decided to publish seven columns, which were covering different topics. The first column has only religious content, and the second column includes social and historical literature, which will be primarily focused on stories, novels and plays. The third column includes essays related to women's useful topics such as women's education, household women, the rule of nurturing mothers, and

⁵¹ She was an American journalist who brought out the most sensational stories of India with the support of British Officials and influential social groups of the United States.

⁵² Mrinalini, Sinha. "*Specters of Mother India*." Duke University Press, 2006.

⁵³ Chandravati Lakhnawal (1904-1969), was born in Bijnor in an Arya Samaj family. She completed her M.A. from Allahabad and married to the Vice-Chancellor of 'Gurukul Vishwavidyalay', Kangri. She taught in 'Mahadevi Kanya Pathshala', and also participated in the Civil Disobedience movement later she joined the 'Mahila Congress Committee of Dehradun.' Her first notable work was 'Mother India Ka Jawab', 1927. In this book, she criticised Mayo's book 'Mother India', and justified the pathetic condition of the country; at some point she agreed on Mayo's criticism. See., Orisini, 2009, 405-406.

⁵⁴ Vir Bharat, Talwar, "Feminist Consciousness in Women's Journals in Hindi, 1910-1920." *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, 1989, 271.

useful education for pregnant women. The fourth column will include the speeches of saints. The fifth column titled 'Mahila Jagat' will conclude with women-related issues that will also include news related to English women. Six columns discussed contemporary magazines and books. Column seven includes the editorial notes. The *Arya Mahila* was a mouthpiece of 'Shri Arya Mahila Hitkarini Mahaparishad'⁵⁵ *Arya Mahila* did not have a printing press to publish the edition; the magazine depended on other presses. The members of 'Mahaparishad' (Association) were getting complimentary access to the magazine. Besides that, it cost six rupees annually to the public.

The magazine was available to its readers by prepaid service. It costs one rupee per copy. For public libraries, reading rooms and girls' schools, it charged half rate, three rupees. The editor has the full right to choose the content to publish or not. Furthermore, meritorious authors were rewarded by the magazine, and prominent writers with unique expertise were honoured with special prizes. If the editor was unable to identify the script, then the content of the draft was decoded from the office of *Arya Mahila* press. Its editor Surath Kumari Devi formed a 'Kashi Scholar Committee' to discuss books and criticisms that the authors mail to them. The essay and critics that qualified the committee criteria, get approval for publication by the committee. The magazine policies were precise, including the postal address that informed the authors' dispatch of a writing piece. The given address was 'Mahopadeshak Pandit Ramgovind Trivedi, Vedanshashtri, office of *Arya Mahila*, Shri Mahamandal Jagatganj Benaras.

This magazine began to be published from 1917 onwards. The place where it began its publication was known as Shri Mahamandal Bhavan, Jagatganj, Benaras. The office head of the *Arya Mahila* was Ramgovind Trivedi. Earlier it was a quarterly, later, in the 1930s, the magazine became a monthly piece. Mrs Surathkumari Devi was a well-educated lady and O.B.E, K.H. Gold Medalist of Khairigarh. The place Khairigarh was located in the Kheri district of Oudh. She was the editor of the Journal. In 1885 Surathkumari Devi had succeeded by the title Rani of Khairigarh. Periodical was operated

⁵⁵ 'Shri Arya Mahila Hitkarini Parishad', which was established to protect the harmony of the independent rights of men and women of Hindu society for the expansion of theology. One of its objective were to promote Hindi as the national language. To fulfil this objective, many rules have passed and the publication of *Arya Mahila* was one of the solutions. The objective of the magazine was to bring out the welfare of the Aryan race in the Hindi sphere. Therefore, the main duty of the Aryan men and the Aryan women was to follow the 'Sanatan Dharma'. The well-wishers of the Aryan race and the devotees of the motherland mandate for contributing to the work of this be helpful in its progress. *Arya Mahila*. 1918, 388.

and managed by Pandit Ramgovind Trivedi Vedantshashtri. In 1947 Smt Sundari Devi, M.A. B.T. was chief editor of the magazine, and Bhushan Shri Thakur Atma Prasad Singh succeeded him as sub-editor of the magazine. The objectives of this magazine exclusively focused on women's household activity. Education that is provided to women is all about formulating more proficient and skillful technique in-household modus operandi.

Arya Mahila was the mouthpiece of 'Sri Arya Mahila Hitkarini Mahaparishad'⁵⁶ (Association for Arya Women's Welfare). The head office of Mahaparishad was located in Benaras. Mahaparishad became legalised on the 14th of December, 1919, the 'Peace festival'⁵⁷ in remembrance of the Peace memorial. The Association was registered under the Act XXI of the Governor General of India in Council 1860. The act was for the Registration of literacy, and scientific and charitable trust. Two reputed noblemen of Kashi approved it under the regulation of the government act. The welfare of society is intended to protect 'Varnashrama Dharma' whether it is men or women, everyone must follow the prescribed religious practices. To follow the rituals and traditions of *Shastra* in an appropriate system, it is required to modify some reforms in practice that did not spell out clearly. It also referred to needed dutiful education for girls and women and involving widows of all ages. Its annual convention was held between 9-10 February 1924 in Queens College.⁵⁸ Radhacharan was unanimously elected as the leader of the

⁵⁶ This society was established with the objective to give equal independent rights and balancing religious values. And the prime objective was to include the old and new knowledge to promote Hindi as the national language. In order to promote religious education, the journal *Arya Mahila* came into the front. Many prominent scholars of Hindi literary movement were given the honor by 'Shri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal', a religious organization. Editorial Notes, *Arya Mahila*. 1918, 288.

⁵⁷ The peace festival was organized by 'Sri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal' every year in Kashi from December 14 to 18. Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant, 'Arya Mahile' (Arya Women). *Arya Mahila*. October/Nov/December/ 1919, 240.

⁵⁸ Three resolutions were passed in this annual convention.

(1) This convention unanimously requests to Hindu men and women make proper arrangements for religious education for Aryan women from their childhood in order to protect the specialities and importance of Aryan women. Aryan women should consider it, as their duty to fulfil this auspicious purpose of the indigenous people. This proposal was given by, Smt. Kishan Devi, to Smt. Vidyadevi.

(2) It urges Hindu socialists, Maharaja and well-to-do householders to understand the importance of the fasting of the widows of the Hindu race and make proper arrangements in their cities and villages for their protection. Proposer, Smt. Dharma Devi, Proponent, Smt. Ramdulari Devi.

assembly. Mrs Nistarini Devi explains the duties of *Arya Mahila*. The wife of Pandit Ramnarayan Ji Mishra (the Head Master of Central Hindu High School) delivered a lecture in a beautiful and harmonious dialect. This conference was attended by 100 to 150 women who participated in this meeting. And later this conference was led by president Narayani Devi. She delivers her speech at this annual conference. Narayani Devi concentrated on the reform of women's education and their social condition. Her worries about the loss of the ancient tradition of colonial modernity are reflected in her speech. According to her 'At this time our (women) community is in a declining phase, it is the responsibility of the Aryan women to modify it. Because our male community is busy with attending to political freedom, they cannot have focus on the social arrangements of women. And the male community which is focusing on this condition want to mould the society according to trending colonial modernity. These liberal reformists did not consider our old tradition.'⁵⁹

Shri Arya Mahila Hitkarini Mahaparishad has advertised the inauguration of a college named *Arya Mahila College*⁶⁰. Therefore, a request was made in favour of the editor to manage the college land in Kashipuri. She contributed a 50,000 amount to the land. The prime motive was to advertise the land to encourage community people to offer college funds grants and educate Hindu girls.⁶¹ *Arya Mahila College* focused on women's education to employ introverted women by protecting Hindu women's interests following *Varnashrama Dharma*.

Furthermore, it helped the dependent and helpless *Zenana* ladies, who were considered the most sufferers of a terrific injustice of Hindu society. The Journal also

(3) Due to modernity, it is necessary to change the social system as well, that is why this convention of Aryan women prays to their Aryan sisters to join each other with love and harmony in their respective villages and cities for the cause of religion and service to the country. Proposer, Mrs Nistarini Devi, the respondent, Mrs. Vidyadevi. *Arya Mahila*. 1923, 284-285.

⁵⁹ *Arya Mahila*, 1923, 280-281.

⁶⁰ 'Arya Mahila College' and its affiliations were getting funds from many prominent educated women and men. Arya Mahila Women's Hostels and widows' houses were donated by some eminent personalities and many trusts and individuals. Such as Shriman Dharmarajan, Babu Batuk Prasad, Benaras, 500 to 1000, Mahamaya Trust 300, Shri Bharat Dharam Mahamandal 100, Wife of Shri Kashi Ji Prasad Ji Lucknow 500, Mrs Vindeshwari Devi Lucknow 50, Parvati Ramsharan Das's girl Lahore. As a result, 'Arya Mahila Vidyalaya' established, and not only men but also women and girls were contributing.

⁶¹ Sobna, Nijhawan. *Women and girls in the Hindi Public Sphere: Periodical Literature in Colonial North India*. Oxford University Press, 2011, 66-67.

showed its concern towards reform in local practices that kept women's existence challenging. It instilled philanthropic, educational, socio-religious, and patriotic nature in Hindus, particularly in women. The Journal appointed educated women to maintain care for Hindu women of higher caste, whether a widow or girl child. Giving them spiritual lectures following *Varnashrama Dharma* also trained women to serve Hindu Society as religious preachers, teachers, and governesses. The society published religious and educational literature to enrich Hindu literature and the well-being of Hindu womanhood.⁶² The magazine self-proclaimed that content would be related to the social order and revival of *Sanatan Dharma* with significant subjects, including caste and women. The Journal adapted spiritual and educational teachings of reformed Hinduism and the philosophy on Aryan widowhood propounded by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). The Journal's editor Surath Kumari Devi was a follower of Swami Vivekananda. She aimed to go back to the ancient culture of ideal Hindu society and its principles, where the women were respected, and their opinion was recognised as valuable. In the early year of its publication, the Journal stressed on reviving Hindu culture and reviewing to discuss the women's concerns and emancipation. It was a phase when *Arya Mahila* investigated the glorious part of Indian History and the construction of tradition in which British orientalist have been interested since the 19th century. The 'Arya Mahila Vidyalaya' adopted the journal as its school magazine in the 1930s.

The issue of 1918 started with a note praising Jagannamata by its editor. There were many images and backgrounds about the history to publicise glorifying Brahmanism. Brahmins were counted as the nearest to God. Stories such as *Brahmantava Aur Badhshah Sikandar* celebrated in Indian History proclaim that Brahmins are the utmost class of Indian society. No other caste, other than Brahmins, can perform religious rituals in a precise manner.⁶³ The story of 'Sati Urmila' by Babu Hardwar Prasad Jalan justifies the faithfulness of Urmila towards her husband. It also pronounces that she played an essential role as an ideal wife to make her husband comfortable for his further activity.⁶⁴ Articles related to women's education also included and discussed how education should

⁶² See., 'Mahaparishad', *Arya Mahila*. October/Nov/December, 1919, 235-37.

⁶³ See., *Arya Mahila*. 1918, 302-311.

⁶⁴ Babu Harparsad Jalan. "Sati Urmila" (faithful Urmila), *Arya Mahila*. February/ March/ April 1918, 329-321.

be for Arya women. Education for Hindu women determines their impression of saving the culture of the Hindu religion. Education for Arya women should control their sexual desire and spread sacred love to their family members. She should remove selfishness from her behaviour, broaden her feelings towards the people, and reject cruelty from her nature by inculcating genuine kindness. Principally it was all about the behavioural change in Arya women. The education section projects that only this manner of education can emancipate the Hindu community.

Furthermore, it also can save the emotions of the Aryan race. In the article *Vartaman Samajik Durdasha* (present social condition) by Smt Shivkumari Devi, queen of Narsingharh, in her poem, she wrote History of glorified Indian inhabitants. It also discusses the cause of the endangerment of religion. In addition to this, the Journal addresses the promotion of Hindu Panchang (Hindu Calendar), and astrological study included astrology to define the presumed information about human affairs and terrestrial events. The duty of women to serve religious literature was introduced by contributing matter on the same to literary academia. It was similar to working for society through social reform, promoting education, and giving sermons on spiritual values. The Journal also explained that women of the Hindi region should primarily focus on literature unlike earlier Hindu women who did not pay attention. The Journal's content was discussing the promotion of Hindi and not formulating its retirement. In the periodical, Hindi was considered the mother tongue of Hindus; therefore, the prime responsibility of women was to save the existence of Hindi. Virtuous stories such as '*Dhruva Tapasya*' (Dhruva's Austerity) related to Hindu Gods was also given space in the Journal and aimed to perform actual religious duties towards the religion. Nijhawan argued that the magazine had never been an exclusive religious periodical because the poetry included the left-oriented ideology of Upadhyay Singh's *Hariaudh* and another article by a leftist writer named Satabhakt on women's involvement in *Sahithya Seva* on national criticism.⁶⁵

The section of the editorial note discusses the content related to international events. It was gracious about the Aryan race and the ancient religion of *Santana Dharma* (eternal Duties of Hinduism). The magazine stressed on upholding family relations through discussions about religious festivals such as Bhaiya Doyaj (A festival to celebrate

⁶⁵ Sobna, Nijhawan. *Women and Girls in the Hindi Public Sphere: Periodical Literature in Colonial North India*. Oxford University Press, 2011:68.

brother worship). This magazine also discussed how to treat a guest. There is a saying that '*Athithi Devo Bhava*' (Guest termed as God). According to Santana Dharma, the Guest is akin to God. The magazine also contained novel stories and brought events of conversion to the attention of Hindus. Articles related to cow protection, women's education, control over female sexuality, characteristics of Ideal women, and religious text related to women's law such as Manusmriti are discussed in the magazine.

Arya Mahila, in 1924, was more focused on the idea of virtuous women becoming faithful toward their husbands, which later switched to an essential duty toward society. In its editorial column, which was also the last portion named '*Sampadkiya Vaktavya*' (Editorial statement), *Arya Mahila* completed its six years and entered the seventh year, notified to the readers that made them aware of its plan, such as switching quarterly to a monthly magazine from Vaisakh (April/May). The editor also informed about the price drop of money from six rupees to three rupees. The Issue of Vaisakh/Jyestha (April/May/June) was occupied by male authorship. Only a single article in Sanskrit by Srimati Shyama Devi titled '*Manoabhilsaha*' explained that Hindu women are in danger and that only their God can save their lives from the darkness and raise hope. As a final part, a portion of home remedies was used for medicinal purposes called Gharelu Dawaiyan (Home Medicine). This section was helpful for women in taking care of their families during a medical emergency. An article titled '*Mahila Jagat*' (Women's World, 'importance of women') by Parvati Devi Shukla related to careful management of her household activity for her husband and son conveys that it is only through work that women should get pleasure. She begins the article with a tagline that cooking food only depends on women. According to her declaration, every season, there are changes in the food habits of human beings. With the caring concern for their family's health, women should be more aware of their food habits. So the burden of cooking always came over the woman, whether or not she could afford maids. There is another notorious article that discussed women's matters titled '*Nari ki Atma*.' The author of the article is unrecognised. However, at the bottom of the article, a name listed '*Venkateswar Se*' is more confusing, whether it is an individual name or identifying a particular place. The first line of the article states that '*Nari Purush Ke Barabar Nahi Hai*' (women are not equal to men). The entire article discusses the loyalty of women towards their men. And states that women should obey their male partners.

The Journal also included the essential subject of women's health, such as pregnancy issues and menstruation. These all subjects are included in the section of 'Mahila Jagat' of *Arya Mahila*. Later on, the coming Hindi month 'Ashaadh' June/July of 1924 journal started its monthly publication. An article penned by Shrimati Damodari Devi Kapoor titled '*Arya Mahila Sangthan*' provides information on women's education and its importance. An essay appeared in the magazine by Babu Nariram Agrawal. The title of the piece was 'Baccho Ke Rog Aur Unko Door Karne Ke Upay.' It included the information related to children's fitness and disease and the cure that they faced in their childhood.⁶⁶



Figure 11. *Arya Mahila*, 'Sampadkiy Tippani', April 1931.

It seems like the magazine editor, a woman, is sitting in an elegant position in a well-furnished room. Her study table is highly modern. She is writing something. The room surrounding is decorated with books and a calendar; a dustbin is there to keep waste.



Figure 12. *Arya Mahila* 'Smpadkiya Tippani', May 1931.

⁶⁶ See., *Arya Mahila*. June/July 1924, 76-77.

The image of two women illustrates that they are busy in literary activity. It signifies the creativity of women. It was a platform to express their inner voice from a private place to the public. In 1932, this page appeared with a different title, named Sahitya Lochan. The content of the section glorified the History of India.

The magazine further added a section named 'Mahila Sansar.' This section communicates with women about their private space. Following the content, an article published on the declaiming atrocity made-up with women titled Nari Atyachar (crime against women). The article claimed that Hindu women are not safe in the country. They are at threat because of Muslims and British rule. Muslim men are abducting Hindu women. Furthermore, Hindu men are not able to save their women.

Similarly, the content of this part of the magazine dealt with women's questions. It proclaims that the male of other communities is the pitiless villain, and the Hindu men are not enough to save Hindu women. A large number of Articles and stories on this matter present communal thought to the magazine reader.



Figure 13. Cover Page, *Arya Mahila*, January 1930.

In 1930, *Arya Mahila* completed its ten years of publication. However, some changes appeared on its front page. The magazine adopted the path of *Griha Laksmi* and *Chand* to declare itself women-centric. A woman is with her four children sitting in the courtyard. She is busy stitching clothes, and her children are engaged in their activities nearby. One boy is playing with toys, and the other is involved in reading. However, the girl seems too shy, not performing any action; she looks at her mother to learn how to stitch. In its January 1930 edition, *Arya Mahila* published a news report related to *Chand* titled 'Chand Ka Ghor Apmaan' (Abuse of *Chand*). This news report put a remark on *Chand* because of its radical opinion regarding women's issues. The *Arya Mahila* termed it dirty literature. The editor of *Arya Mahila* was provoking *Chand*, especially *Marwari*

Ank. Arya Mahila published a news article about the editor of *Chand*. A constant conflict has appeared between *Arya Mahila* and *Chand* in their content. This news report is justified by a story related to the editor of *Chand* Ram Rakh Singh Sahgal. The editor narrated a story about a gentleman story who beat Ramrakh Singh Sahgal because of criticising *Marwari* culture in *Marwari Ank*. To justify his word, he mentioned a newspaper report of the incident and said that the court fined ten rupees for the gentleman. So, this mockery was faced by *Chand* from *Arya Mahila*.

In the same year, the magazine was opposing the Sharda Act. A brahmin community, *Kanyakubj*, supported the bill. This community also faced criticism from the magazine.



Figure 14. *Arya Mahila*, 'Baal Vihar', April 1931.

Also, a section named Bal Vihar was feature in the magazine. This feature consists of helpful literature for children's entertainment. The image was previously showing partiality between male and female children. A mother is sitting with her children, and her son is playing with artillery and hunting a tiger; another is playing with a small child and taking on his back, symbolising muscle men. In a corner, a girl is sitting and playing with a doll. So this inequity can be seen in women's literature. That later impacted women through a creation of gender roles.

The title has been changed, and it was *Bal Sansar*, where women were glorified in the story of Mahabharata. Dhira Devi wrote the story; the essay titled 'Mahabharat ki Katha' encouraged children towards masculine power and made them conscious of masculinity to develop a powerful potential in man in society.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ See., *Arya Mahila*. August/November, 1947.



Figure 15. *Arya Mahila*, 'Samaj Shrot' April 1931.

The new section added 'Samaj Shrot' (Society Source) to make readers aware of women's social evils and family lives. Through the stories published, the journal communicated many social issues to spread the words related to women's personal lives. This section proclaimed the Purdah practice. 'An ideal woman is covering her head with a saree. She is standing near the window and waiting for her husband. However, he is busy with another woman who is a free and independent educated woman. She considers herself a culpable woman who is not bothered about a decent Hindu society and a disloyal, unfaithful woman towards it. She is not fulfilling the criteria of an ideal Hindu woman in society; her deeds define her honesty towards society. If women are getting an education, they are going away from the Ideal Hindu manner. They are considered to be immoral women. A segment appeared in the name of Nari Nikunj that contained several essays related to women.



Figure 16. *Arya Mahila*, 'Vaigyanik Jagat', May 1931.

Arya Mahila added a section named 'Vagyanik Jagat' (scientific world). It provided information about the world's new inventions and encouraged women to participate in science and education. In this image, a woman with proper equipment inside the lab is experimenting with chemicals. Two faces of the *Arya Mahila* appeared in the magazine (i) education is compulsory for Hindu women only if they work to preserve the culture. (ii) if they fail to preserve culture, they should be denied education.

A section such as *Pakshala* (The Kitchen) appeared in the magazine to provide cooking tips and Kitchen management skills. *Arya Mahila* published its special issue *Grahank* (which contained information related to house management) in April 1930. On its editorial page, the magazine advertises its upcoming issue *Striank* (women's issue) to be published in July 1930.



Figure 17. *Arya Mahila*, 'Hamari Daak', May 1931.

A portion like 'Hamari Dak', similar to 'Chitthi Patri' of *Chand*, was added in *Arya Mahila*. A postman came to a lady to deliver the post. Next, the magazine included 'Sangeet Sudha' to make its readers aware of Indian music.

In the year 1940, Pt. Ramesh Dutt Pandey was the magazine's editor, and Dr. Atma Prasad Singh took responsibility as its co-editor. The magazine's front page illustrates that 'an ideal Hindu woman is worshipping a plant called Tulsi (used for worship and also medicinal purposes). According to Hindu tradition, the plant Tulsi symbolises prosperity and happiness to the household of those who follow this tradition. The plant is only essential for medicinal purposes, so the essential natural plant became part of worship. A lady was worshipping the plant, identified as Yasoda (the ideal mother of Lord Krishna); her son was standing nearby, identified as Bal Krishna. The magazine described its women-centric objectives with this publishing image: women have to be perfect mothers, ideal housewives, and great examples of chastity.

2.7. Conclusion

The new literary era of Hindi literature impacted women's life through women's journals and set a communicative platform for newly educated women. By participating in literary platforms, women expressed their views on subjugated patriarchal norms that are

interlinked with social and cultural values. Intellectuals' class questioned the past through the historical events that made them conscious of the current scenario. Women started a confrontation with the patriarchal writings and cultural questions. In the beginning of the twentieth century, women participated in reading and writing activities, and they started to publish journals that were managed and edited by themselves. These are all women's journals concerning women's issues to encourage them to participate in the public sphere. It makes women more visible and courageous to speak against social evils that adversely affect them. But the misinterpretation of history takes them toward a different perspective on the concept of othering.

Chapter- Three

Contesting the Purdah with a Communal Bias

The practice of *Purdah* has been rooted in India for a very long time. There exist multiple opinions on the origin of this practice. Most women intellectuals wrote that the practice of *Purdah* is a Muslim invention in India to safeguard the modesty of Hindu women from the abducting ‘Musalman’. This is why *Purdah* was imposed on Hindu women, which had multiple debilitating effects. However, few opine that *Purdah* is not a Muslim invention but an ancient Indian practice. Therefore, it needs to continue, and the desire to eradicate *Purdah* will not protect the Hindu culture. Other issues discussed in the context of *Purdah* entail the issues concerning women's health, seclusion and underconfident behaviour. It also includes the denial of voting rights to women during the suffrage movement because it was believed that providing them with voting rights was baseless when their activities were mostly restricted to the domestic sphere. Women's understanding of *Purdah* has appeared in the context of religious and cultural perspectives. This chapter highlights the views of women intellectuals on the issue of *Purdah*. It will also address the communal understanding of women on this practice, and its impact on education, health and voting rights.

This discussion on *Purdah* in Hindi women's journals focused on its advantages and disadvantages in the early twentieth century. Some views highlight its positive impact on women's lives, while a few others highlight how it barred their social progress by affecting educational opportunities for girls. This chapter is divided into two parts (i) people who favoured the *Purdah*. And (ii) those who have opposed the *Purdah*. Both the arguments are centred around ‘Muslim rule’. The chapter will discuss the views of traditionalist groups, including middle-class, educated men and women who were validating *Purdah* practice. The groups of traditionalist intellectuals defended the *Purdah* by focusing on cultural values and citing the example of the ancient past, where they believed that the *Purdah* existed in ancient Indian culture.

It is well known that newly educated middle-class women of the twentieth century began to become aware and demanded their individual growth in public spaces. Nineteenth-century was a period of social transformation where the literary interest groups demonstrated women's self-identity through Hindi literature in the northern parts of colonial India. The literary transformation is endowed with communicative space for

women in the public sphere. Consequently, the Hindi women's magazines of the early twentieth-century provided a confined account of women's social life. The questions against ancient law and custom were raised in periodical literature to discuss issues like *Purdah*.

The women's question concentrated on the oppression of society and threatened women's liberty. For centuries, women were treated as the ominous subject of a social milieu; therefore, social order and religious customs moderately programmed women to believe they were inferior to men. Women were forced to follow cultural practices based on this line of thought. At the time when the whole region was fighting for the political privilege of the country, middle-class, educated women started an alternative route to convey their ideas through a literary movement. They validated their self-determination by demanding equal access to public space in the magazines of the early twentieth century. The ongoing world feminist movement also influenced the belief of these women, and the number of women participants increased in the literary movement. Therefore, the demand for women's rights was voiced, which led to the feminist movement in India. The emergence of women's journalism concentrated on women's struggle against the patriarchal structure. This resistance was flourishing under the umbrella of print culture.

Discussion over *Purdah* confined its hold on the literary sphere in the mainstream. Many women intellectuals encountered the issue of *Purdah* practice in their writings in Hindi magazines. Later, it became the primary discursive matter among prominent Hindi women's journals. This debate on *Purdah* resulted from male anxiety about keeping women indoors or forcing enslavement. This led to a number of questions. Was it a fair idea to liberate women from such kind of practice? Was it the genuine desire of male reformers? Was the moral pressure on men that led them to participate in this debate in the Hindi public sphere? After women joined the liberation movement, they deliberately desired to release themselves from *Purdah* and strongly condemned the *Purdah* practice and debated it in Hindi magazines.

'Muslim' invasions forced Hindus to keep their women inside the houses to protect them from 'abduction'. These narratives were presented by both male and female intellectuals. However, coming to the second decade of the twentieth century, this debate of the mainstream on *Purdah* significantly appeared in Hindi women's magazines. It was 'intellectuals' belief that Muslim rule forced Hindu women to practice *Purdah*. This

practice prohibited women's gatherings within the community because they were restricted to participating in public gatherings.

Furthermore, women were uncomfortable leaving such practice because they had accepted and embraced it as a part of their culture. This practice became the vanguard for women's social life and economic dependency on men. These practices and ideas were also intricately women in patriarchy.

Moreover, *Purdah* was an instigator of other problems for women. It coerced women to stay inside the house. *Purdah* became a 'Jail' for women; by restricting themselves inside the house under the men's observation, they became the victim of double oppression. Their seclusion turned their house into a '*Jail*' to control women. One is by practising the *Purdah*, and another is by locking them inside doors that began to affect their health. In this context, women lost their social freedom and individual growth. They suffered from many diseases such as tuberculosis and malnutrition, which became a critical debate in journals. Such a restricted environment did not allow women to work without restraint. Inside the house, women had to work under men's control and follow their commands. Even this environment of their house-made them a slave to men. And this practice increased male dependency and under confident behaviour of women.

In the early twentieth century, the debate on the *Purdah* was the central issue of discussion, and many articles were written about it. In strong favour of *Purdah*, fundamentalists believe it will save women from colonial modernity that had already crept into Indian men. The changing patterns in men's clothing style became visible; they imitated English men. What if the women also get influenced by western culture? This fear of the Indian moderates was visible in their opinionated writings and public gatherings. On the other hand, some of them were real emancipators of women's rights. They strongly opposed the *Purdah* practice of making women free from all restrictions.

This debate on *Purdah* was the idea of monitoring, controlling and conducting the life of women. The discussions presented that the *Purdah* and accusations from the religious perspective resulted from male anxiety to control women. The favouring or opposing of this practice generally calls attention to the patriarchy in Indian society. A few journals openly spoke about how *Purdah* had resulted because of Muslim invasions. Such collective discourse against Muslim rule in journals resulted in an extreme dislike for Muslims.

However, discussing colonial modernity, the educated class of men wanted women to be memsahib to signify their (men's) personal attitude and be keen on western

culture. They tried to provide recognition for their women among the civilised of the west. For them, it was a matter of pride and superiority in comparison to the western culture. They wanted to make themselves considered as civilised among the British. In this matter, women were treated like dummy dolls by imitating English culture to influence their counterparts. It was the men intellectuals who were imprecise in the matter of favouring *Purdah*.

Religious reformers tried to control religious conversion. Women were thought to have a significant role in upholding religion and its practices. Just like an educated woman who can educate the whole family, a woman who is conscious of religion inculcates the ideas of religion into others in the family. If a woman observes *Purdah*, she will encourage other women in the family to do the same. Those who saw this as a restriction felt it controlled their freedom, and they were under the male authority's control. Hereafter, the possibilities of an association with public interaction could be fewer than that control the religious conversion. *Purdah* was the only reason that could detach English memsahib with Hindu women. With that, communication between them can be lesser. And the chances of religious conversion to Christianity can be negligible. So, by boycotting *Zenana*, education was at its peak because these women could access women's private places where they tried to imitate English women and follow the path of western culture that made them guilty of Hindu religion. Women threaten the Hindu culture by practising the culture of the west. Furthermore, the chances of conversion to Christianity will increase. Hindu women will lose their true ideal identity.

Considering this, men feared that women would be the decision-makers, exercise the power of decision-making in their family, and their male counterparts would lose control over women. It was also one of the reasons for supporting the *Purdah* practice. The scenario of leaving *Purdah* was breaking the path of patriarchy. The remaining discussion on *Purdah* was a great consciousness among the colonisers. *Zenana* is a secluded part of the house used by the upper-class women who practise *Purdah*. However, the colonists decided to control the access to *Zenana*. They sent people to educate the zenana women and also for medicinal purposes. By seeing 'others', the women became more critical of the *Purdah* practice.

Most importantly, all women could not access education. Only women from upper-middle-class families could go to school. So, the voices were raised only by the upper class. Elimination of the *Purdah* system was assumed to be a way of solving multiple problems. It restricts them from raising their voices. Women might not disclose

their dissatisfaction through their dependency. By observing *Purdah*, women could not get access to education. This led to economic dependency on men. It was a social norm that women only practice privately. In some parts of north India, *Purdah* is still followed very strictly. Women depend on their husbands and sons and cannot meet their everyday needs. They cannot go outside alone.

According to social structure, women have always needed the assistance of male family members, the father, husband or son. This condition emerged because of the idea that women were treated as property of the male. 'According to the Manu, women need control because they are dishonest; they are eager for men's relationships and the flippant nature that made them unfaithful towards their family life; hence they are carefully protected under the norms of *Purdah*.'¹ But such kinds of laws make women powerless and helpless. Even powerful women spend their lives in distress. This practice devastated their confidence inside the houses. By observing *Purdah*, women believe that they protect their innocence and purity for their ideal religion. However, they were unaware that these are all characteristics of patriarchal structures designed by men to control women. Men played religious cards in matters of practicing *Purdah*. On one side, Muslim rule was accounted for the its origin and on the other side, ancient origin. Men were diverting this discussion of women's freedom by giving it a religious perspective. Despite the diversion, women took this matter as a fierce debate and participated in it.

Women's bodies are veiled by fashioning clothes. Conservative groups represent a game of reserve, shyness, denial and celebration of pleasure. The structure of social control, a system of inclusion and exclusion, reflecting social hierarchies and moral boundaries.² Control over the clothing of women resulted in control over their sexuality. Women denied celebrating leisure and substance pleasure in public places. They were bound under social and cultural values that follow the moral boundaries regarding sexual division. *Purdah* resulted as a shield over the women's bodies and affected their identity and control within the house by strengthening patriarchy.³

¹ Susan S. Wadley. "Women and the Hindu Tradition." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3, no. 1 (1977):117.

² Charu Gupta. "Intimate Desires: Dalit Women and Religious Conversions in Colonial India." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 73, no. 3 (2014): 661-687.

³ Charu Gupta. "*Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India*" Orient Blackswan, 2001, 140-141.

In the Hindi region, All India Hindu Mahasabha actively participated in the religious reform movement and attempted to define a dress code for Hindus in the Hindi region. They tried to control religious conversion through fashioning women's clothes. The dress code for women was primarily directed to control their passion, pleasure, and sexuality—many articles on ornaments convince women that it was a waste of their husband's money.

3.1 Purdah Practice in Colonial Period

A column in the Hindi magazine titled '*Purdah*' explained how it is practised among Rajasthani women.

Women used to take light clothes as *Purdah*. Women must follow such conditions during their visit to the Bikaner railway station; the carriage should be covered. They don't need to cover their body. So women were practising *Purdah*, and their daily activities involved continuing the practice. *Purdah* in the Oswal community of Jodhpur has a different perspective. If women of a noble family go out, then it is necessary to call a dozen women from neighbouring families. They have to cover their bodies with a large cloth held by two serving maids. While walking in the market, they make sounds with anklets. It happens during the day, except if they will go at night.⁴

The well-educated family follows this tradition even where *Purdah* is followed strictly.⁵ Some Marwari social reformers raised their voices against the *Purdah* practice.



Figure 18. *Chand* (Marwari Issue), November 1929, 125.

⁴ *Chand*, November 1927, 72.

⁵ See., *Chand*, November 1927, 72.

*Social reformers Raibahadur Seth Shivratri Ji Mehta and his wife, Saraswati Devi Ji Mehta.*⁶

However, in the 1920s, a period of freedom struggle started with the announcement of donating women's ornaments to the movement for financial assistance. It was one of the ways for women to come out of their homes and contribute to the freedom movement. This discussion on ornaments occurred in journals. In the Gandhian era, discussion over leaving *Purdah* and women's participation in nation building activities was debated at its peak. In his magazine *Hindi Navjeevan*, he discussed the *Purdah* and appealed to the women to leave *Purdah* and participate in the national movement.

Pandita Ramabai, a prominent woman intellectual in her book, *The High Caste Hindu Women*, mentioned the *Purdah*, as a confinement of women's personal growth and appealed to women to get an education while native women's teachings were more critical.

Why should any exception to this law be made for the *Purdah* women? Closely confined to the four walls of their house, deprived throughout their lives of the opportunity to breathe healthy fresh air or to drink in the wholesome sunshine, they become weaker and weaker from generation to generation, their physical statues dwarfed, their spirits crushed under the weight of social prejudices and superstitions, and their minds starved from absolute lack of literary food and of opportunity to observe the world. Thus fettered, in ninety cases out of a hundred, at the least calculation, they grow to be selfish slaves to their petty individual interests, indifferent to the welfare of their immediate neighbours, much more to their nation's wellbeing.⁷

Male reformers, such as Rajaram Mohan Roy⁸ (1772-1833), Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891), Jyotibharao Phule (1827-1890) and Kundukuri Verishlingam⁹ focused on the miserable condition of women. They took the initiative to bring change in women's lives, where they requested for improving social and individual conditions of women.

⁶ Well-known Marwari social reformer Rai Bahadur Seth Shivratri Ji Mehta. He was the Honorary Magistrate of the Karachi Court. Sitting beside his wife, Saubhagyavati Saraswati Devi Mehta. She was the first woman to strike the *Purdah* system in the Marwari society of Karachi.

⁷ Pandita Ramabai Saraswati. *The High Caste Hindu Women*. Philadelphia, 1887, 96.

⁸ Rajaram Mohan Roy, first oppose the idol worship, to validate his activity he translated Vedic literature in vernacular language such as Bangali.

⁹ Kundukuri verishlingam, raised his voice in the southern part of India. His movement was for women education and widow remarriage. And also the movement started to stop Devdasi practice. Sambhunath, *Samajik Kranti Ke Dashtavej*, New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 2004, 22.

The era of Rajarammohan Roy was focused on the abolition of the Sati practice and widow remarriage. This period is considered the era of the Indian renaissance, where he deliberately initiated the social reform movement. To promote women's freedom from social domination, he refused the concept of polygamy and child marriage. However, when it comes to women's vision and social reform, they acquired the path of male reformers. Women started to discuss men's ideas and understand their issues from male perspectives. Women considered their freedom in an earlier phase of the social reform movement, but they also participated in the men's idea of thinking. Many anonymous women social reformers appeared in Hindi women's magazines, working behind the mainstream.

Charu Gupta argued that the orthodox Hindus opposed *Purdah*. On one side, they rejected the *Purdah* while on the other side, they defended *Purdah* as the essential safeguard to save women's dignity.¹⁰ *Purdah*, to observe control over women's individuality aimed to build an ideal civilised society, power over women's life was trending.

3.2. History of *Purdah*

An article by Shyam Kumari Nehru¹¹ titled *Purdah*, explains the History of *Purdah* and how it came into existence in society. Nehru, believes that *Purdah* is an origin of Muslim period. According to her, practising equality and equal rights between men and women are the only solution to get rid of the *Purdah* practice. It was only society's pride that disappeared when people discontinued the *Purdah* practice. Explaining its historical background, she justified that, in the Indian subcontinent, Muslim rule introduced the *Purdah* practice. People have been practising this custom since Muslims invaded India. She also points out an explanation on *Purdah* practice that is cited in the Quran of stanza

¹⁰ Charu Gupta. *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India*. Orient Blackswan, 2005, 143.

¹¹ Shyam Kumari Nehru was the d/o Roopkumari Nehru and belongs to the Nehru family. She was born on 20th October 1904. She married Abdul Jamil Khan. Editor (Mahadevi Verma) of *Vidushi Ank*, briefly introduced social activities of Shyam Kumari Nehru. According to her, Shyam Kumari Nehru holds an important place among modern educated women of the province. She was an advocate in Allahabad High Court. At the same time, she was active in women's movement to make women conscious about their social condition. Shyam Kumari Nehru was in favour of advocating Hindi as her primary language. Smt, Shyam Kumari Nehru, 'Purdah', *Chand*, November 1935, 136-139.

24 verses 31. She clarifies that the women who follow Islam need to practice *Purdah* by covering their bodies, and they should not show off their ornaments.

Similarly, in verse 30, men are suggested not to stare at women, and men should also cover their bodies to ease access to the outer world. It justified that this rule makes women's lives easy in a public place where there was no restriction to access the areas. Column 33, verse 51 outlined that they[women] should carry an additional cloth to cover the body whenever they are going out. She also explained that the law was framed because women were not much aware of protecting their bodies. So, the extra fabric can hide or cover their bodies from evil eyes. Later it was transformed into a Burqa. The following column no. 24 of verse 60 defines that there is no extra effort to continue *Purdah* after puberty or adulthood. Women can wear decent clothes that can cover their bodies. It justified that the Indian population always observed this practice in their habitual manner to cover their body decently. She concludes that there is no relation between religion and *Purdah*. So it is not proven that *Purdah* was forced by Muslim rule.

An article titled 'Sabhyta ki Kasauti' (Test of Civilisation) by Smt. Rajrani Devi emphasises that if anyone wants to see the actual calibre of civilisation, it must observe the state of that civilisation. She also glorified India's ancient past. According to her, Indians were more prosperous in every skill. She mentioned the Manusmirti's verses which was the oldest rule book of Hindus. According to her, religious texts of Hindus played a significant role in balancing Indian society, especially the rule that was made for women.

She further said for the husband, it is directed that 'The person who is very keen to protect his wife will protect his society and family and his religion.'¹² Here, she meant that men should protect their family and wife; which is their actual duty towards their religion and society. This rule was interpreted to impose more restrictions on women.

Another verse of Manusmriti she discusses that 'it is all underneath the wife serving if a person faithfully conducts religious duty towards his ancestors and children.'¹³ She justifies that every happiness comes from the respect of women. The article concentrated on nurturing women as potential mothers who give birth to a healthy child.

¹² Smt. Rajrani Devi, 'Sabhyata ki Kasauti' (Criteria of Civilization), *Chand*, January-February 1924, 247-249.

¹³ Ibid.,247

In her article 'Purdah Kyun Kiya Jaye' (Why to observe *Purdah*) Rajragi Devi Visharad, glorified India's ancient past in her writings. She believes that there was no custom of *Purdah* practice; it was Muslim rule that forced Indians to practice the norm of *Purdah*. She exemplified the historical events of Ramayana and Mahabharata to justify her words on the glorious past of India. Including the abduction story of Sita in her article, she believed that 'when Ravana came to abduct Sita, and she was not carrying any veil, remarked that women did not have *Purdah* practice in the ancient time. Mocking inside the family about women is not good even if women enjoyed it in Indian society, such as Bhabhi teasing her brother-in-law (Dever) for fun. However, this practice of mocking women still continues in the northern part of India.¹⁴ She criticised the modern practice of *Purdah* that nowadays it is not like ancient period. It has lost its true identity.

People think *Purdah* was protecting women from this prankish behaviour of their family members. Because of this, women are not ready to break the customs of *Purdah*. She condemned the practice of observing *Purdah* and believed that women are more active without *Purdah*. Discarding *Purdah* will be an excellent decision for women to raise their voices against the atrocities that occurred to them. She also mentioned in her article that *Purdah* destroys the physical and mental status of women. The reason behind the deterioration is the *Purdah*. Women cannot feed themselves properly because of it. Women observe *Purdah* not only in front of strangers but in front of their family members. They wear it to public places and shopping streets where they communicate with vendors. If women discard *Purdah*, they will get liberty. Women were losing their health, she remarked. The absence of *Purdah* in society makes women's condition better. They can participate in every social activity.

Ramsaroop Bhalotiya published his article titled 'Marwari Samaj me Purdah'. The paper establishes a view that a person covers their body with *Bhagwa* clothes and does the sinful activity. For example, a *Sadhu* (Sage) might be involved in the killing, abducting and robbery behind their innocent face. Besides that, they are securing their chastity in the name of a Hermit and pure soul. Similarly, women are doing sinful deeds behind the *Purdah* Bhalotiya stated. According to him, using *Purdah* in public makes women consider themselves pure and ideal. It is also said that if they live with *Purdah*, they will remain innocent and unaware of their worldly-minded environment. It also

¹⁴ Smt. Rajragi Devi Visharad, 'Purdah Kyun Kiya Jaye' (Why Observe *Purdah*), *Chand*, January-February 1924, 252-254.

accused women wearing *Purdah* of luring the men, which makes women a victim of men's desires leading to eve-teasing, rape and abduction. It argued that the women were leading society towards wrongful deeds and corrupting the Marwari community with *Purdah*.

An extensive discussion on social evils such as *Purdah* practice concentrated on women's miserable condition. These issues, such as child marriage and *Purdah*, presented a distressing situation for women. These social customs were interlinked; child marriage affected the educational opportunities for girls, and *Purdah* practice did not allow women to go out to get an education. This is the kind of situation that women face because of social evils.

3.3. Female Intellectuals Supporting *Purdah*:

Purdah was considered a necessary safeguard for women's chastity and dignity against other men by conventions and traditions. Later, the patriarchal system appeared to restrict women's rights and public freedom. They were enslaved in their own spaces. This seclusion of women was appreciated by female intellectuals who supported *Purdah*.

In the editorial notes of *Arya Mahila*, its editor Narayani Devi published an essay titled 'Purdah' criticising the moderates who demanded to remove this practice. She believes that *Purdah* should exist in Indian society to protect Hindu culture because it was a part of the ancient past. She stated,

In India, women's dignity is more important, so they are kept under the *Purdah*. According to Hindu scriptures, a woman who is under the evil eye of men loses her loyalty toward her husband, and wicked men may be persuaded by seeing a beautiful woman. So it is a reason for practising *Purdah*.¹⁵

Female Intellectuals who agreed with the existence of *Purdah* in ancient text and denied its origin from Muslim rule agreed to observe this practice proudly. She further said that 'there are many such examples available in the ancient text. It can never be said that this practice came up during the Muslims rule.'¹⁶ She is not defending Muslim rule but she strategically glorifies the Hindu culture in her agenda of favouring *Purdah*. In this manner, women were constructing the patriarchy in their private space. By imagining the reason behind discarding *Purdah*, she comments that

¹⁵ Editorial notes, Narayani Devi, 'Purdah', *Arya Mahila*, February 1929, 627-628.

¹⁶ Ibid., 627.

Purdah indicates the dignity of women. And women who observe *Purdah* believe it is a protector of their honour. The Begum of Bhopal carried *Purdah* throughout her life; at the end she was discarded. But observing *Purdah* was her own choice but did she accept to live in the *Purdah* due to the fear of cruelty of any man.¹⁷

She believes that no one forced women to observe the *Purdah*; women are observing it because they honour their culture.

An article titled 'Purdue ki Chal', an anonymous woman wrote this essay in English newspapers, translated by a woman named Shri Sharda in *Grihalakshmi*. The essay explained the *Purdah* and its debate on Muslim rule. She believes that Indian society should come together to abolish the practice. A discussion on *Purdah* that happened in magazines about the connection of Muslim rule with *Purdah*, she denied to justify her words 'There is no such thing written in Muslim religious books, based on which it can be said that Muslims brought this practice'.¹⁸ 'Women should make every effort to protect this *Purdah* practice so that the Indian women society remains no less than the women of other civilised countries.'¹⁹ She believes that the myth of observing *Purdah* by Indian women is that if they discard the practice, they are not faithful ideal Indian women. They still are not ready to quit the *Purdah*, so it is not good to force them to remove the restriction. They feel hesitant to take it off. By giving the example of Begum of Bhopal, she justifies that only upper-class women were trying to remove the practice and not many from the lower-class. She was also making readers aware of the cultural consciousness that Islam never forced women to follow such kind of practice.

3.4. Women Opposing *Purdah*

There was a discussion among those who opposed the *Purdah* and believed it was only a solution to save the glorious past of Indian culture. Accordingly, the *Purdah* can preserve the identity of true Aryans. It was a period of conversion and reconversion due to the exploitation of the oppressed. The oppressed society could not follow the strict rules and practices of Hindus. So they acquired the path of other religions such as Christianity and Islam. So, discarding *Purdah* became part of the discussion among Hindus to protect their

¹⁷ Ibid.,627.

¹⁸ Shri Sharda, 'Purdhe Ki Chal' (*Purdah's Trend*), *Grihalakshmi*, March- April 1920,40.

¹⁹ Ibid.,40.

culture and identity, and the condemnation of other cultures started in the Hindi literary world.

Nazar Kala Bhandari, in her article 'Purdah', explained its disastrous results. She is more focused on women's health. She brilliantly highlighted the women's health condition and the dishonesty of women behind the *Purdah*. She stated

There must have been hardly any time when the need for *Purdah* has been felt in the society; it is not the purpose of this article to decide when this practice became prevalent. Even if we believe that this practice started in ancient times, then it will have to be believed that at that time, it would not be the form which we see today. Because there is no mention of *Purdah* in ancient texts, its supporters will have to believe that the present form of *Purdah* has become accepted due to the Muslim period. Muslims' rule was full of atrocity and obscenity. Hindu mothers were in danger. They cannot go out alone. In this situation, the only way to protect our religion is by not allowing them out of the house. And women of the upper class can lock themselves inside the house. But for, the middle class started going out in the group, and it became essential to be in the group.²⁰

Hence, she believes that the middle-class women who were financially prosperous were attacked by 'Muslims'; therefore, their presence in the group became necessary. She remarked,

Under the *Purdah*, more misconduct is happening in society. There is no link between the *Purdah* and the ideal behaviour of women. The ideal behaviour depends on the purity of heart and simplicity. If our heart is pure and feelings are simple, then without *Purdah*, we can be pure. Besides that, if we have a desire for wrong deeds, then under the *Purdah*, we can never be Ideal women.²¹

By criticising the intellectuals, who believed that *Purdah* is the reason for women's ideal character, it dealt with women's ideal behaviour, she believed that *Purdah* could never define a woman's character. It should be removed from society. It cannot emancipate women.

In her article 'Purdah Uth Kar Hi Rahega'²² (Veil will unveil), 'Mahrajkumari' Lalita Devi (Vardvan) discusses her freedom and experience, how she resisted to leave

²⁰ In her article, she mentioned that 'it is unbelievable that women feel uncomfortable after unveiling in front of their women family members, so it is impossible they will leave the *Purdah* in front of men. Even they cannot speak in front of female members of the family. In some places, they spend their whole life without seeing the face of their sister-in-law and mother-in-law. Similarly, these women feel free during the marriage ceremony and joyful occasion; they are not careful about the consciousness of *Purdah*. Nazar Kala Bhandari, 'Purdah', *Chand* February 1933, 461-463.

²¹ Bhandari, 'Purdah', 463.

²² 'Mahrajkumari' Lalita Devi, 'Purdah Uth Kar Hi Rahega', *Chand*, August 1931, 461-63.

Purdah. She never observed *Purdah* besides that she spent her life like English women who were never under such kind of restrictions and received all the comfort. By comparing her life with a woman who follows the *Purdah* and the other who does not observe, she discussed her experience. According to her, women who observed *Purdah* never experienced any disturbance in their life because they were habituated to the *Purdah* practice. These women never resisted relieving this problem and easily accepted it by keeping the practice.

She further said,

It is true that in India, men favour *Purdah* practice and are the head of the family. So, before reforming/removing *Purdah*, it is necessary to educate them [men]. Even women under the restriction of *Purdah* can do several things by intimidating others, but they cannot do anything on their own. For every step, they follow men. It is the responsibility of women to use their freedom excellently so fathers of other girls can be influenced by these women and can provide similar obsolete freedom to their daughters.²³

She believes that educated women only can play an essential role in abolishing such practices. In favour of removing *Purdah* practice, she believes that

‘After lifting the *Purdah*, numbers of women-reformers will increase to emancipate women’s condition whatever the men directed. Like, English countries in India, there are problems related to children and women that women only can solve.’²⁴

According to Lalita Devi, education is the only solution to remove *Purdah* from society.

3.5. Male Intellectuals Supporting *Purdah*:

Vrindavan Das Ji Bajaj in his article titled ‘Purdeh Ki Samasya’ (Problem of *Purdah*) supported the *Purdah* practice. This essay was published in the special section of ‘Chand’ ‘Vividh Vishay’ (miscellaneous subjects). He quoted the lines of Akbar.²⁵ He believes that it is not the duty of a woman to be imprisoned within the four walls. They should have self-respect. He discusses the debate on the existence of *Purdah*. According to him, conservative Hindus claim that *Purdah* is a part of their culture of ancient society. He interprets some examples of Ramayana and argues that it was not a part of ancient culture. He explains important lines of the Ramayana.

²³ Lalita Devi, ‘*Purdah Uth Kar Rahega*’, 463.

²⁴ Ibid., 463.

²⁵ Farz Aurat Par Nahi Char Diwari Ki Kaid! Ho Agar Jabte Nazar Ki Aur Khuddari Ki Kaid. ‘Maha Kavi Akbar’ Vrindavan Das Ji Bajaj, ‘*Purdhe Ki Samasya*’, *Chand*, July 1931, 311.

Naham Janami Kaiyure, Naham Janami Kundle; Nupure Twabhi Janami, Nitayam Padabhivantnat,

Not even know about the Shoulder Cuff, nor Earring, I only can recognise anklets, because during her walk I have seen it.²⁶

With this explanation he explains why Lakshmana was unable to identify the ornaments of Sita. It was because of *Purdah*. But the author mentioned that there is no evidence that *Purdah* existed in ancient society. However, he focused on the Ramayana's verses that it was a dignified culture of Hindu society that allowed Lakshmana to not go beyond the Hindu culture. In ancient society, *Purdah* was a part of women's dignity. He stated, during the period of Ramayana, women were not like modern women. According to him, some intellectuals projected that it was a forceful imposition of Muslim rule over Hindus. He tried to defend himself by linking *Purdah* with Muslim rule. Similarly, he glorified ancient culture by using the verses of Ramayana.

Purdah is a representation of respect and dignity for women, as Mangla Nand Singh noted in his article 'Dehati Streeyon me *Purdah* Aur Shishtachar' (*Purdah and Manners in Village Women*). He focused on *Purdah* as a component of women's social honour. He argues that *Purdah* took the form of an old custom that women obeyed in honour of themselves. He rejects the idea that women ought to stop practising *Purdah*.

Fortunately, women are appearing in this society, who understand *purdah* as a social evil and try to throw it off, but the commitment and development are seen less in it. There is more fickleness and lust. In this reform, there is an imitation of foreign civilisation and it is impossible to bring reform by copying foreign civilisation. Without achieving our ideal civilization, we cannot achieve our goals. Therefore, I request these sisters not keep their reforms on the basis of foreign rule but they should follow the Aryan civilisation so that they can become ideal housewives.²⁷

Women should demand their reform and improvement on the basis of ancient civilisation, not on the basis of modernity. He was against modernity and advocated that women should carry their ancient customs.

3.6. *Purdah* in Religious Text

To convince women to continue the *Purdah*, male intellectuals gave the example of ancient texts such as the Vedas. To deny the evidence of *Purdah* in the ancient text, in

²⁶ Vrindavan Das Ji Bajaj, 'Purdeh Ki Samasya' (Problem of *Purdah*), *Chand*, July 1931, 311.

²⁷ Manglanand Singh, 'Dehati Streeyon me *Purdah* Aur Shishtachar' (*Purdah and Manners in Village Women*), *Chand*, April 1933, 593-596.

his article '*Vedon me Purdah*', (Purdah in Vedas) Ganesh Dutt Sharma 'Vidhyavachaspati' said that 'there is no evidence of *Purdah* in Rig Veda'.²⁸ 'The Sanatan dharma is against the *Purdah* among Hindus, after reading texts like Ramayana and Mahabharata, it is known that in those days there was no custom of *Purdah*'.²⁹ So the discussion over the *Purdah* was only based on the interest in supporting and opposing the *Purdah*.

The *Purdah* practice diminished the rights and quality of life of women. Lower social groups and depressed classes were excluded from *Purdah* practice. Women from lower castes who worked for a living didn't follow rigorous *Purdah* as strictly as women from higher castes did. He stated

There are women who observe this practice. (a) Bhadra (b) Abhadra. The women who belong to the second category come under the Manihar (Bangle seller), Dhobi (Laundry), Kahar³⁰ (water carrier), and beggars never observe this practice. However, the women who belong to the upper caste of Bhadra Mahila (Civilised women) always carried this custom in insignificant manner. Furthermore, the reason behind not carrying *Purdah* lower caste women is because they are uneducated. *Purdah* proposed by civilised people.³¹

Accordingly, only educated women know the manners and responsibilities of safeguarding *Purdah* to protect true Hindu culture. He elaborated that lower caste women never observe *Purdah* in a dignified manner in front of others. The reason behind this is that they were uneducated. Some intellectuals signified that *Purdah* exists in society due to lack of education, and some are trying to prove that *Purdah* existed among educated people. He believes that if women get educated, they will leave *Purdah*; this will be their emancipation. However, some intellectuals anticipated that after getting an education, women will be aware of the genuine civil manners of Hindus, and they will observe this practice to protect their religious norms. In his concluding words, he states, 'If anyone

²⁸ Ganesh Datt Sharma Vidyavachaspati, '*Vedon Mein Purdah*' (Purdah in Vedas), *Chand*, February 1929, 651-653.

²⁹ Vachaspati, '*Vedon Mein Purdah*', (Purdah in Vedas), 651.

³⁰ The 'Kahar' community is found in the northern part of India, especially in Bihar, UP, Punjab, and Haryana. the Basic work of this community during occasions such as marriage functions etc they carried water for upper caste people.

³¹ Singh, '*Dehati Streeyon Me Purdah Aur Shishtachar*' (Purdah and Manners in Village Women), 594.

who is civilised and cultured can have a conversation, there is no loss in this activity. Even women will learn many things and can get good mental and physical health.’³²

3.7. Denial of *Purdah* in Religious Text

Smt. Rani Phoolkuvri Sahiba in her article titled ‘Asia Ka Nari Jagran, -Tab or Ab’, explains the condition of women in ancient times. She believes that in ancient society women were getting more liberty and enjoying their rights in society. She believes that restricting practices like *Purdah* were not practiced.

In our country, one lakh veiled women die every year due to restrictions inside the house. and they are lacking clean air and sunlight. This painful story of a country where the synonyms of the word *Purdah* do not exist even in Sanskrit.³³

Similarly, Smt. Rajdulari Devi has given an example of Rama and Sita’s forest exile to the parents who were forcing their daughters to follow such practice in the name of Sita’s virtuousness.

During the exile of Rama, the story of Sita is not hidden from our parents, who forced their daughters to continue *Purdah* practice. During that time[‘Ramayana Age’], if there was *Purdah* existed then Sita could not go with Rama, she could not serve her husband, could not accept Lakshman as her son, by facing many difficulties, it was not possible for her to play a role of an ideal wife to serve her husband in his difficult time.³⁴

She tried to prove that *Purdah* does not exist in religious texts by using Ramayana as an example. She presented Sita as an ideal wife who was loyal to her husband and served him pleasantly without losing her dignity.

Similarly, in her essay *Purdah*, Smt. Satyavati Devi Mishra denied the existence of *Purdah* in ancient texts. Satyavati Devi said

It is a matter of thinking when there used to be ‘open marriages’ (Swayamvar³⁵), then did there was *Purdah*? If Sita Ji was in exile for fourteen years, then did there was *Purdah*? Damayanti reached her maternal home after suffering many sorrows, then did there was *Purdah*? Was the *purdah* prevalent during the time of Ashoka or Chandragupta? Absolutely not!.³⁶

³² Ibid.,596

³³ Smt Rani Phoolkuvri ‘Asia Ka Nari Jagran Tab or Ab’, *Chand*, November 1935, 12.

³⁴ Rajdulari Devi, ‘Purdhe Ki Visham Vedna’, *Stree Darpan*, 1918, 303.

³⁵ In ancient India, the practice of choosing a partner, from among a list of suitors, by a girl of marriageable age.

³⁶ Smt. Satyavati Devi Mishra. ‘Pardah’ (Veil), *Stree Darpan*, February 1910, 88.

By giving the example of ancient narratives she justified that *Purdah* does not exist in ancient society. She focused on Indian women and their freedom from such kinds of evil practices as part of the upper caste community women follow the custom and are keen to discard the rule.

Another woman Smt. Mahadevi said

When Sita Ji went to the forest exile with Shri Ramachandra ji; the sages and villagers who visited her saw both Sita and Rama. If it is said that when Sita was in the forest, where is the *Purdah* to be placed on such an occasion? Then, take the example of Sita's swayamvar where thousands of kings and queens were sitting for marriage ceremonies.

This explanation can reveal with Hindi poetry (chaupai³⁷.)³⁸

Smt Mahadevi believes that in ancient texts existence of *Purdah* was not there. And women were treated as equal to men.

An article by 'Shriyut'³⁹ Ramchandra Gupta, titled 'Stree Jati me Sudhar Kaise Ho Sakta' (How to reform women community). In his essay, he divided women's reform into three-parts; educational reform, health reform, and Social reform. He included removing *Purdah* practice in social reform. According to him, reform in *Purdah* practice is more critical than educational reform and health reform. He also believes that *Purdah* practice was not followed in India before Muslim rule.

3.8. *Purdah* Practice Impact Educational Opportunities of Girls:

In the literary era of the twentieth century, women intellectuals stressed the benefits of education in Hindi women's magazines. Middle-class intellectuals were discussing these problems through stories and novels and merely discussed their struggles in society. Later, it became an example for others to survive with or without *Purdah*.

Many discussions on women's condition and reform in their life have taken place. When women intellectually liberated their world and fought for the reform in women's education. Education aimed to educate women only to manage a house. Hindi women's journals discuss the issues such as the age of consent, child marriage, and widows' remarriage. Discussion over *Purdah* and its impact on women's social life was at its peak in Hindi literature. Bhartendu Harishchandra, Swami Dayanand Saraswati stressed

³⁷ Hindi poetry that contains four verses.

³⁸ Smt. Mahadevi. 'Purdah' (Veil), *Stree Darpan*, 1 June 1910, 287-299. for this reference see., page no. 297.

³⁹ The word 'Shriyut' is used for offering a special respect to the person.

women's education through Hindi literature. The literary movement of the northern region engendered women's education through Hindi literature. Bhartendu Harishchandr was the first male Hindi writer who edited the first Hindi woman's journal named *Balabodhini*. The Journal contains countless pieces of evidence that include contradictions in Bhartendu's attitudes.⁴⁰ There are numerous opportunities for freedom that women lose because of *Purdah*.

3.9. *Purdah* and Muslim Rule

The progressive intellectuals opposed the *Purdah* practice. According to them, *Purdah* was responsible for women's distressing condition. They believed that it was a result of Muslim rule. *Purdah* was introduced in India to protect Hindu women from Muslim invaders. It is an important debate where women intellectuals favour that *Purdah* had not existed in ancient society, and they glorify the ancient past. In ancient society, women's condition was honoured and untroubled.⁴¹ In her article 'Purdhe Ki Visham Vedna' (Uneven Pain of *Purdah*), Smt Raj Dulari Devi discussed that

Dear Mothers, today there is so much grief with the fact that this *Purdah* practice had been imposed since Yavana (Muslims) rule laid its foundation of Muslims rule. The hardness of prison shackles had not locked women's feet, then who had taken our rights to participate in such a conference? We were completely incapable of participating in the social reform committee?⁴²

She believes that due to the Muslim rule women's boundaries have been confined and they are put under the *Purdah*. She mentions that *Purdah* is responsible for women not attending social gatherings and conferences.

An article by Smt. Satyawati Devi '*Streeyan or Purdah*' explains the history of *Purdah* and its problems. She stated,

Ever since the appearance of the Muslims in our country, the *Purdah* practice became more prevalent due to their atrocities. However, religion is a part of state legislation, and there is no possibility of an incident like before. However, so much must be considered regarding whether the Indian land year in the presentation should be pure.⁴³

⁴⁰ Vasudha, Dalmia. *The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions: Bhāratendu Hariśchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras*. , USA: Oxford University Press, 1997, 129.

⁴¹ Smt Saraswati Devi, '*Streeyan or Purdah*', focuses on *Purdah*. According to her, the commencement of the 'Muslim' rule introduced *Purdah* practice in India. *Stree Darpan*, July 1917.

⁴² Smt. Rajdulari Devi, '*Purdhe Ki Visham Vedna*' (Pain of Veil), *Stree Darpan*, December 1918, 301.

⁴³ Smt. Satyawati Devi, '*Sriyan or Purdah*' (Women and Veil), *Stree Darpan*, July 1917, 33-40.

She opposed the *Purdah* and stressed saving Hindu culture by denying this practice.

In her article 'Streeyan Aur Samajik Swatantrta', Kumari Chandravati Gupta (17yrs) discussed that men imposed *Purdah* practice to protect our women from wicked 'Muslims' Moreover, she blamed Muslim rule was the reason that introduced such custom in India.

She stated,

Earlier our country was not even aware of the name of '*Purdah*'. After the commencement of Muslims, this custom appeared because they started abducting our women and young girls, to protect our women this custom was introduced. This practice was strictly followed in those countries in which Muslims ruled for a long time.⁴⁴

She believes that wherever Muslims ruled, they abducted the women and girls. To protect themselves, women started to hide in *Purdah*. As she was the youngest writer who discussed about *Purdah* and Muslim rule, she was honoured with the literary award called 'Vishnarayan Dar Padak'. She suggested women should discard *Purdah* and they should get an education equal to men. In this context, the movements for breaking stereotypes and practices such as *Purdah* took place in a different part of the country.

Earlier the nature of *Purdah* was based on women's shyness and dignity, after losing it, etiquette is worthless. But due to Muslim atrocities, artificiality has come into it, and *Purdah* mislaid its essence, *Purdah* in the modern period is an example of it.⁴⁵

She projected that the *Purdah* system is not dignified as in ancient times. The *Purdah* lost its actual essence due to Muslim rule.

Smt. Mahadevi delivered a lecture on women's issues such as women's education, *Purdah*, widow's home, and child care. In her speech to the *Prantik Mahila Parishad* (State Women Committee), she brilliantly put her views on *Purdah*. According to her, 'leaving *Purdah* for women is a very serious matter because women cannot live with *Purdah* and without *Purdah*'.⁴⁶ She also agreed that Muslim rule was responsible to propose *Purdah* before that there was no such evidence of *Purdah* practice. Before the Muslim rule, *Purdah* practice there was no such type of *Purdah* did exist in the society.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Kumari Chandravati Gupta, 'Streeyan Aur Samajik Swatantrta', *Stree Darpan*, 1918, 307-308. For this essay she was honoured with 'Vishanarayan Dar Padak'.

⁴⁵ Singh, 'Dehati Streeyon me *Purdah* Aur Shishtachar' (*Purdah* and Manners in Village Women), 593.

⁴⁶ Smt Mahadevi, 'Prantik Mahila Parsihad', retrieved from Garima Srivastav, *Stree Darpan* (Edited), Ananya Prakashan, 2018, 189-190.

⁴⁷ Smt.Mahadevi, '*Purdah*' (Veil) *Stree Darpan*, 1 June 1910, 287-299 for this reference see,297.

According to her, after Muslim rule there was extremism came to *Purdah*. She wrote that ‘where there is no influence of the Muslim rule there is no *Purdah*.’⁴⁸

By citing the example of other states she justified that the Muslim rule introduced *Purdah* in India. Despite the debated discussion on the origins of *Purdah*, it remains true that this practice has to be removed. But in this matter, religious consciousness towards their own culture or ‘other’ culture should be kept in mind. She mentions,

We are not ready to discard the *Purdah* completely, because our sons do not have the sense of behaving with their female members of the family. Our son did not know how to behave with other women. They should learn to respect other women, and the women who are locked inside the houses do not know how to behave with men. It is true that until the man and woman do not get a chance to communicate they could not learn the manners of society.⁴⁹

According to her, women are not ready to discard *Purdah*. By practising *Purdah*, they cannot behave the same way as men do. *Purdah* should be removed from society because men do not know how to treat their mothers and sisters. Even the women who are inside the houses are not aware of the behaviour towards their male partners. So it is very necessary to give freedom to women to learn social manners with men. Furthermore, she discusses the benefits of *Purdah* practice by mentioning Manu’s quote she was directing to men that ‘Do not stay in a secluded place even with mother, sisters and daughters, because powerful senses of intimate desire attract educated’.⁵⁰ She believes that our women cannot control their intimate desire even with their male family members. So, to discard *Purdah* abruptly is not a good idea. Therefore, *Purdah* should be removed carefully. Hereafter, she focuses on that, ‘to remove *Purdah* it is very necessary for women to get an education. Women are not safe in their family, to discard the *Purdah* practice, let the time come’.⁵¹ According to her, *Purdah* survived because people were unaware of subjugating women by not providing absolute freedom—and it was blindly followed by Indian society.

The discussion over the existence of *Purdah* started very early. In 1925, an article published on ‘*Purdah Pratha ki Utpatti*’ (Emergence of *Purdah* practice) discussed how

⁴⁸ Ibid., 297.

⁴⁹ Shrivastav, *Stree Daran*, 189.

⁵⁰ माता स्वसा दुहित्रा वा न विविक्ता सनो भवेत्! बलवान् इन्द्रिय ग्रामो विद्वा समपि कर्षति!!

⁵¹ Ibid., 198.

Indian Muslims initially adopted *Purdah* practice. In this article, he believes that Muslims introduced the *Purdah* practice to protect them from chaotic elements. He added that *Purdah* system was a result of the Muslim rule.

In 1917, an article by Rukmani Devi titled 'Bharatvarsh Me Pardhe Ki Pratha' (*Purdah Practice in India*) discusses the problem of *Purdah* and why women should discontinue *Purdah* practice. She believes that *Purdah* means purity of women and it is followed for self-control. It is unnecessary to believe that *Purdah* can protect women by providing self-control to maintain their dignity. Rukmani Devi also counters on Muslim rule that said to be responsible for *Purdah* Practice. She said

In ancient society, we did not have this *Purdah* like nowadays and in those days' women were more polite and religious, but unfortunately here and because of the Muslim rule, the custom of *purdah* had to be observed, because of Muslims. They (Muslims) saw our woman or beautiful girl, they impure women's dignity and honour.⁵²

Hence, the men believe that 'women cannot control their intimate desire, but women also believe that a woman cannot control her desire and there is a need to protect their dignity.

Smt. Kumari Kaushalya, B.A. Jalandhar pointed out that *Purdah* practice came after the establishment of Muslim rule and barren the educational opportunities for girls.⁵³ She was against the 'isolation' due to *Purdah*. She indicates that '*Purdah* polluted civilised society' due to which women cannot attain psychological growth.

Muslim rule is the reason for women's grief. The foundation of Muslim rule established the roots of *Purdah* practice. There was no practice like *Purdah* existing in Hindu society

⁵² Rukmani Devi 'Bharatvarsh me Pardhe ki Pratha' (*Purdah Practice in India*), *Grihalakshmi*, November/December 1916, 319-320.

⁵³ Smt. Kumari Kaushalya, 'Ghoonghat Ka Pat Khol' (Open the side of *Purdah*), *Chand*, November 1935, 100-102. This essay was written by a highly educated woman; who was bluntly opposing the *Purdah* practice. She was influenced by western culture and practices. She remarked that Muslim men are accountable for the women's terrible condition; by continuing it, Hindus are more responsible for making their women's situation worse. *Chand* this special issue of *Chand* edited by Mahavdevi Varma M.A. Its article contained a large number of women concerned with issues. This volume also added articles related to *Purdah* and education. With depicting family life and daily household activity of women contained in the issue prominent Hindi women writers and their contributions were introduced with respective images. (Announcing this number, Kamla Devi Chattopadhyay remarked her words to its intellectual women community. She focused on the re-emergence of cultural consciousness in the women's community. According to Chattopadhyay, without cultural consciousness, it is impossible to re-establish a country's growth. The women have to preserve old traditions and culture to flourish in the country. Similarly, a message delivered by Rajkumari Sahiba Amrit Kaur, Chief manager of the women's movement and a member of the 'Akhil Bharatiya Mahila Conference', stressed women's rights. She validates her concern that without getting their rights, women cannot bring change in society, *Chand*, November 1935, 11.

in the ancient period. The Foundation of the Muslim rule began to control the country and several atrocities were perpetrated on Hindus putting negative remarks on the Hindu society.⁵⁴

Through her writing, Kumari Kaushalya glorified Hindu culture and she was concerned about respecting women by potential Hindu men. In ancient society, she stated that women's protection was the prime duty of the ideal Hindu man; now it has changed. Cowered Hindus do not have enough potential to save their women. She noted that the Muslim rule's atrocity over the Hindu women resulted in imprisonment for women. Then onwards, women underwent the supervision of male inside the home's periphery. The consequences of women's control existed as *Purdah* practice firmly observed by the Hindu community. She criticises Hindu men's potential in her challenging words by questioning why they were absent when their women were in danger.

She made a decisive mark on the *Purdah* practice and its effects on women's education. She expressed her concern about the girls not attending college and discussed why men did not allow women to go outside by restricting them to practice *Purdah*. As a result, women remain uneducated. Women are more responsible for their awful situation because they carry this burden in the name of society and family honour. By maintaining *Purdah* practice, women became dependent on men. Women following the path of male reformers convinced other women to be ideal women. However, they could not sense their freedom of expression.

In her article titled 'Streeyan or Samjik Swatantrata' [Women and Social Freedom], Smt. Prafullnalini Saraswati emphasised the problem of women in Indian society. She believes the ancient Hindu women enjoyed more freedom. To justify her statement, she said,

Earlier our country did not even have the name of the veil, it turned strict when the Muslims invaded the country and abducted our girls and women, it turned out to be the custom of veils to avoid them, that too is the custom of the curtains in the same countries where the Muslim ruled for a long time.⁵⁵

According to her, if our men learn to respect women, then the nation will progress.

⁵⁴Smt. Kaushalya, Kumari, 'Ghoonghat Ka Pat Khol' (Open the side of Purdah), *Chand*, November 1935,100-102.

⁵⁵ Smt. Prafull Nalini Saraswati, 'Streeyan Aur Samajik Swatantrata' (women and social freedom), *Stree Darpan*, December 1918, 307-309. For this article, the author has been honoured with the Vshannarayana medal as an award.

An essay titled ‘Adhunik Purdah Pranali Tatha Usse Haniyan’ (‘Contemporary Veil Practice and Its disruption’) by Smt. Bhagwati Devi, Kota, stated that ‘Nowadays, those women are considered a modest category who observe an elongated *Purdah*’.⁵⁶ ‘Due to the foreign rule in India, there have been significant changes in the customs, policies etc. of this golden land. In comparison with Northern parts of India, those changes have been reduced in the South, even in the provinces like Travancore, Cochin, etc., there is only a minute difference. Therefore, the practices of ancient India can be inferred from the traditions of the provinces mentioned above. If we consider this principle, then it seems clear that this practice is not ancient at all.’⁵⁷ ‘The rise of *Purdah* does not harm the bud, but there are many benefits; this practice is a great obstacle in women’s education.’⁵⁸ Emphasising the significant value of education to women, she wrote that ‘Four to five hours of education was provided in the school, but it is difficult to find a qualified teacher even for one hour, even if a lady teacher found, then it is a question of money for salary, so everyone should talk about this [Women education]. We can assume that people cannot give education to their girls without removing the *Purdah* practice’.⁵⁹ She discusses education and highlights the plight of lower-class people who cannot afford a female teacher to educate their girls and the main reason behind this problem is *Purdah*.

In her article ‘Purdhe Ki Visham Vedna’ (Uneven Pain of *Purdah*), Smt Raj Dulari Devi discussed that

First, we have to think about our progress, how far this practice has closed its doors for women, and get the means of progress (for women)—the excellent way to get an education. However, after thinking carefully, it is known that our alphabetic knowledge is vanishing by this veil practice and it is a terrible weapon to destroy the power of thoughts. At the age of six-seven, we came as victims of *Purdah*, as then we do not get fresh air even though we are facing sickness and poor health. These are the reasons that *Purdah* incapacitates. We are excluded from self-knowledge, and self-respect, and not aware of moral education we are becoming weird living beings of society. and all socio-

⁵⁶ Smt. Bhagyavati Devi, ‘Adhunik *Purdah* Pranali Tatha Usse Haniyan’ (Contemporary Veil Practice and Its Harm), *Stree Darpan*, July 1918, 97-100.

⁵⁷ Smt. Bhagyavati Devi, ‘Adhunik *Purdah* Pranali Tatha Usse Haniyan’, 98.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

economic; only the world travels through the same four walls, only the stove of the house, the square mill, teaches art, skill, knowledge and science.⁶⁰

Because of this *Purdah*, boys get the degree of B.A. M.A, but our girls are away from the script of language.⁶¹

Furthermore, she said, 'At present, there is no practice of *Purdah* in the southern province at all, which is why many are being independent in earning education'.⁶² She further believes that 'without education women are following the *Purdah* practices, lakhs of widows are orphans, who have no generous nurturing person, even though they have hands like human beings, they are desperate for a piece of bread, [but they cannot find]. So lakhs of widows lose their supreme religion to fill their stomachs.'⁶³ By attacking Muslim rule, she stressed that the problem of *Purdah* is the only increasing only by the reason because women are illiterate.

A male intellectual named, 'Shri Murlimanohar Tiwari, who discusses the *Purdah* practice. In his essay titled 'Ab Purdah Kyu' (Why Purdah Now), Murli Manohar Tiwari deals with Muslim Rule for imposing *Purdah* on Hindu women. He stated

A wickedness practice has been broadened in our India since Muslims rule, well! This was very necessary during the Muslim rule because when those people [Muslims] attacked India and defeated the Hindus, at that time they did not bring their women with them, so they started fulfilling their lustful desires by oppressing our virtuous women, those days our women stopped sitting out. They[women] were so alert about those people [Muslims]. The women were so surprised and wild that they did not have a mere trace of gentleness in them. If we could see our women sisters and mothers somewhere, then the same anger would have entered their[Muslims] hearts; they would try to destroy their chastity forcibly, that is why our women and sisters started living in the Veil from that time.⁶⁴

He blamed Muslim rule responsible for *Purdah* practice in India. 'See who used *Purdah* in Indian society before coming of the Muslims, See, Savitri used to move here

⁶⁰ This article was read by Rajdulari Devi in 'Stree Dharma Sammelan' of Fatehgarh. It was a half-yearly session of the conference. This conference was organised to discuss the issues related to women's interests. It was organised by Smt. Mantrini Ji. Smt. Rajdulari Devi could not attend the session. Her essay was read by someone else, Smt. Rajdulari Devi, 'Purdhe Ki Visham Vedna', 301.

⁶¹ Rajdulari Devi, 'Purdhe Ki Visham Vedna', 303.

⁶² Ibid.,304.

⁶³ Ibid, 305.

⁶⁴ Murli Manohar Tiwari, 'Ab Purdah Kyu' (Why Veil Now), *Stree Darpan*, November 1917, 249.

and there, Damayanti used to wander, and Sita went to the forests alone, readers! From these examples, it is seen that earlier there was no *Purdah*'.⁶⁵

In her article 'Hamare Poorvaj' (Our Ancestors), Smt. Ramkala Devi focused on the oral history created by the forefather. She believes that it was Muslim rule which is responsible for *Purdah* practice and denial of women's education. She stated that 'when the state here went into Muslim hands, they forcibly took away beautiful women. To save their daughters-in-law and daughters from these hands, people started getting veils and got deprived of all reading and writing'.⁶⁶ By glorifying Hinduism, she said that our ancient past was on its peak of progressiveness. By giving the example of Gargi'.⁶⁷ She discusses the conversation between the Sage Yajnavalkya and Gargi in the court of Janak. To justify her words on the glorification of Hinduism, she stated

Once Gargi went to Janak's court completely naked, many sages were sitting there, seeing Gargi like this, some sages closed their eyes, others smiled and turned their faces away from her.⁶⁸

By ending the essay, another author gives her name with her husband's name to identify Ramkishori Devi, wife of B.L.Vrama 'Vyavar'. Two authors wrote the article.

3.10. Political Leaders' Views on *Purdah*

The news reported on *Purdah* in *Chand* at section name 'Hamare Sahyogi' (Our Associates). The article is titled 'Purdah' discussed Gandhi's views on *Purdah* that was conveyed through his writing in the magazine *Hindi Navjeevan*. Gandhi speaks on *Purdah*, 'It is said that the phase of *Purdah* has not left, it is possible that *Purdah* exists in Ramrajya. But undoubtedly there is no Ramrajya. If we need it, we need to start practising Ramrajya. We can prove that without *Purdah*, women can also protect their dignity. When women were considered men's property, kidnapped by the abductors, that is when the *Purdah* was required in society. It would not be appropriate to follow such kinds of practices in society if men were inaccessible to public places and abducted. Women had to observe *Purdah* to protect themselves. In an appropriate manner, he

⁶⁵ Ibid, .250.

⁶⁶ Smt. Ramkala Devi, 'Hamare Poorvaj' (Our Ancestors), *Stree Darpan*, September 1924, 492-506.

⁶⁷ Gargi is known for the discussion she had with sage Yagvalyak in the court of King Janak. She was a prominent past of women as an educated woman.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 503.

advised that it is the men who have to control their intimate desire, not women. *Purdah* cannot save women from men's evil eyes. And women only can play an important role to shape the identity of ideal men. But women themselves are suppressed under the burden of *Purdah* and how can they make it possible. *Purdah* is not a patron of virtue, but it damages the morality of society. For ethical behaviour, there is a need for a generous and liberal upbringing surrounding that can lead them towards kindness. He believes that it was tough to fight against *Purdah* in the past, but now it is not challenging. He advises the Rajput community to take the initiative of eliminating *Purdah* from their society. Such kinds of customs were stricter in the upper caste community. Gandhi's sympathy was with upper-caste Rajput women.⁶⁹ He insisted the Rajput community oppose the *Purdah* practice and said that by observing *Purdah*, society's growth is not possible.

Similarly, another story about *Purdah* was published in the editorial column of *Chand* with illustrations with the title 'Chitra Parichay'. The prime concern of the image was over the feeling of nationalism because women were not able to see the national flag due to *Purdah*. This portrayed the reality of women who faced many problems under the restrictions of *Purdah*. 'Due to this evil practice, today, crores of Indian women have no right to see this mysterious creation of God with their eyes.'⁷⁰ Marwari women of Kolkata used to watch outside their window because of their strict *Purdah*. They are not allowed to be free to see the world around them.⁷¹ Such pictures portray that the social norms restrict women.

Chand in its reader's section Samachar Sangrah (News Summary), 'Purdah Pranali Ke Bhayankar Parinam' (*Purdah* Practice and its Harm). It was a discussion in a news column on *Purdah* practice and its harms. The burden of *Purdah* not only harmed Hindu women but Muslim women were also a victim of it. Smt. R. S. Husain was opposing the *Purdah* practice. She delivered a speech on *Purdah* at the 'Bengal Regional Women Education Conference'. There she stated that the '*Purdah* system among Indian women, is an essential component like deadly 'Carbonic Acid Gas.'⁷² She compares

⁶⁹ *Chand*, July 1924, 260.

⁷⁰ *Chand*, November 1926, 19.

⁷¹ *Chand*, November 1926, 19.

⁷² Carbonic acid is a dibasic acid with the chemical formula H_2CO_3 . The pure compound decomposes temperature greater than ca.-80 C.

Purdah with a chemical acid used to pure, other compounds related to a chemical reaction.

Indian women are slowly getting destroyed due to this deathly custom, and we may not feel this misery. It was not only a movement of Hindu women but Muslim women also participated in this fight.⁷³

She believes that such practices harm the women of every community. Even women's presence in public places was an example of a kind of relaxation from *Purdah* practice. If they started participating in public gatherings and speaking in public spaces in that manner, they were registering their freedom in the open. She said that *Purdah* was asserted as a chemical that makes Indian women pure. Besides that, women are ruining their social existence by practising such a deadly practice. It was not only the problem of Hindu women, but it was also the problem of Muslim women.

Another story on the Muslim community served in the *Chand* section named Vividh Vishay.⁷⁴ The editor of the journals edited this section. In this column, the *Purdah* was projected as sinful activity. The editor tried to define the *Purdah*, by relating it to the public narrative where Muslims practise *Purdah* very strictly. He said that the Muslim women never wanted to observe the *Purdah* practice. So there were voices raised to deny *Purdah*. Women's gatherings were started in the northern regions such as Dinajpur district of Thakurgaon. A woman named Kumari Jyotirmayi Ganguli was the president of the session. Jyotirmayi Ganguli mentioned, in the meeting Muslim women participated actively. Without any hesitation, they discussed the disadvantages of the *Purdah* practice. The president requested that the participants demand women's absolute freedom, that if women discard *Purdah* then only they can participate in the freedom movement with men.⁷⁵

3.11. *Purdah* as Dignity of Women

The arguments of women intellectuals on women's dignity in the context of *Purdah* developed a compromising plan for society. Especially, it imposed on them to set up the

⁷³ See., Samachar Sangrah (News Summary), 'Purdah Pranali Ke Bhayankar Parinam' (Dire Consequences of *Purdah* System), *Chand*, June 1927, 303.

⁷⁴ Vividh Vishay, 'Purdah Paap Hai' (Purdah is a Sin)., *Chand*, June 1930, 7.

⁷⁵ See; *Chand*, June 1929, 263.

structured notion of an ideal Hindu society to believe that women are the honour of the society.

In her article titled, 'Purdah Aur Sharam', Jankibai, a teacher in Kanyapathshala Dungarpur, puts her views on *Purdah* and its value. She relates *Purdah* as the dignity of Indian women. According to her, earlier, women were much more concerned about their shy nature and quiet behaviour. In Indian society, shyness should be the foremost habitual behaviour of ideal women. The kind of behaviour people were expecting from women was uncomfortable and made them nervous and also unconfident in society. By accepting these behavioural changes, women were under the grip of patriarchy where they were frightened to meet with new people. They avoided public places, and were also hesitant to speak in front of their own family members. This behaviour of Indian women asserts their dignity as ideal Hindu women. It is considered a woman's best quality to prove her an ideal woman. It is also a kind of behaviour where women tend to avoid confrontation in public places.⁷⁶

According to her, women are not serious about their moral duty and dignity. Women who feel shy cannot be considered ideal women. To identify women's ideal behaviour, they must take concern if any family member falls sick. A woman who practices *Purdah* but does not take illness as a serious situation cannot be considered ideal. In family functions, the ideal women are more active to enjoy the moment without shyness and during their visit to public places, they did not consider *Purdah* very seriously. She blamed the women who observe *Purdah*; it is not good for women to protect themselves from their family members and not feel free in public places. Mainly, she criticises the Indian men who forced the custom of *Purdah* into their own families while men enjoy their privilege. The *Purdah* was specially created for the men to enjoy their freedom, and women had to protect themselves from men's evil thoughts. The women were not afraid of the public spaces or any other people to defend them. Public places are easily accessible for women. It was only men who were responsible for inculcating the feeling of insecurity among women. If a woman does not carry the *Purdah*, the men will not look at them. According to her, more protection brings more insecurity.

⁷⁶ See; Jankibai, Adhyapika Kanya Pathshala, Dungarpur State, 'Purdah or Sharam', *Stree Darpan*, February 1910, 118-119.

Smt. Satyavati Devi 'Streeyan Aur Purdah' explains about the right time to discard *Purdah* practice. She further said that 'it is not good to discard *Purdah*. First, people need to become aware of this practice. Because women cannot wander freely wearing good clothes and expensive ornaments in an open vehicle. It is not the right time to enjoy the outer world. They cannot go to watch a play, cannot go to the railway station and they should not eat outside or in the market. Such activities will never show the genuine love and affection of a couple'. According to her, this type of western culture will provoke criminal activity. Furthermore, the nation will never progress through such kind of activity.

Moreover, it will ridicule the actions of English men. The desire for *Purdah* eradication will not protect the Hindu culture.⁷⁷ Satyavati Devi advocated that *Purdah* should be removed, but she is not sure about the responses of Indians. She suggested that women should get an education first and also focus on their health care.

Moreover, all the fake allegations that are imposed on women need to be removed with the support of men. With her powerful words, she requested men to support women. Also, women are unable to help themselves; they are dependent on men. Lastly, she suggested that women should accept and respond if this change occurs in society; otherwise, women will suffer more. So, it is a basic need to educate men and women about such practices to bring justice.

An essay titled '*Purdah*' ('Veil'), authored by Smt. Rameshwari Nehru⁷⁸ effectively categorised the *Purdah* and related it with women's dependence on men. She stated,

⁷⁷ But opposing the *Purdah* is not convincing and without increasing their ability with fashioned women roam in open carriages to enjoy fresh surroundings. Also, they have a keen interest in watching plays and dramas in public places. These women are also roaming in the market and enjoying street food which is not good for the nation's progress. According to her, in India, all these things are not possible. The British will make jokes about the Indians to imitate them. And also the Indian culture will spoil. Similarly, her fear of being a part of their fun appeared in Satyawati Devi's essay, 'Striyan or Purdah', *Stree Darpan*, 35.

⁷⁸ Rameshwari Nehru, the editor of *Stree Darpan*, belonging to the Nehru family. She addresses an essay on 'Purdah' in a women's Public gathering called Rangoon Women Committee. The magazine '*Street Darpan*' published the essay in August 1917.

‘It is necessary to unveil a woman, to be independent, whereas every veiled woman is bound to be dependent’.⁷⁹ She has mentioned the reason why women should not carry this practice. She criticised nationalists who demanded freedom. She claimed

The soil on which we stand is being filled with the blood of Indian youth to protect this freedom, it is our misfortune that in the twentieth century we still have such men and women who are not only against the liberation of women but also are in favour of custody of women by supporting their mythical veil practice.⁸⁰

Rameshwari believes that the Nationalists who are demanding freedom would never consider social freedom for their women. The places that were accessible for men to provide them space became restricted for public activity, and they (nationalists) decided to demand their public freedom. However, when it comes to women, they restricted their women by imposing *Purdah* to protect social customs and rituals. Men were conscious of their freedom in public places that was being taken away by the British and they fought for it, but what about the women who were demanding their personal space taken by their men. She preferred to place women's liberation first and later national independence. She further justified the reason behind the emergence of *Purdah*,

It is known that when Muhammad was born, Arab women used to wear such clothes which were only for the woman's dignity. At that time, wearing full clothes became necessary so that women could cover their whole body, as commanded by Muhammad. But the conservative groups advocate that without burqa Muslim women are not allowed to go out. This strict rule prisoned women and is strictly unbearable someplace. There are two groups in Muslim society; one says that the *Purdah* should be used in our homes by Muhammad's appeal and the other group beliefs that Muhammad had once made it compulsory for women, and he did not even allow them to be kept under such a strict *Purdah*.⁸¹

According to her, ‘the virtuous woman cannot destroy their chastity by moving freely, keeping her locked with the fear that the woman will not do any wrong deed is not only an injustice but also a shameful act.’⁸² Extremists of both Hindu and Muslim religion were enthusiastically criticised by Rameshwari Nehru. ‘Hindus and Muslims, considered

⁷⁹ Rameshwari Nehru, ‘Purdah’ (Veil), *Stree Darpan*, August 1917, 60-64. This lecture on ‘Purdah’ was given by Rameshwari Nehru in a meeting of ‘Rangoon Women Committee’.

⁸⁰ Nehru, *Purdah*, *Stree Darpan*, 61.

⁸¹ See, *Ibid.*, 110-111

⁸² Nehru, ‘Purdah’ (Veil), *Stree Darpan*, 64.

freedom suspicious for women till now.’⁸³ The women’s resistance provided the public with the platform to fight in the mainstream like men. Other national issues such as caste, class, and religious clashes were emerging, so the men were concentrating on these matters. But the absence of women’s concern paved the way for women to continue their fight in their own ways.

Suraj Devi justifies the women practising *Purdah* in unfaithful manners. In her article titled ‘Jhoothi Lajja’ (False dignity). She stated,

It is appropriate for us (women community) to leave the false shame and embrace the dignity of modesty. Women should discard the evil practice of *Purdah* (Veil) from their house and reduce the awful number of our demise every year. Moreover, it is known to every educated person today that in place how much harm is caused by being locked inside the doors and not getting clean air, but even then we are suffocating ourselves by making another bond in useless with our foolishness; that is why it is necessary to give up false shame and give up genuine modesty. Wearing it and making progress was not good for all human beings by becoming strong women, strong mothers.⁸⁴

Later, whatever she has given, she ultimately believes it is necessary to remove the practice.

By emphasising the problem of *Purdah*, Shri Shankar Dayalu Srivastava in his article ‘Bhartiya Streeyan Aur Purdhe ki Pratha’ (Indian women and *Purdah* Practice) discussed that ‘Like illiteracy, *Purdah* is a barrier in the progress of Indian women.’⁸⁵ According to him, it is necessary to remove such practices for the emancipation of women. He also agreed with the debate on the continuation of *Purdah*. He stated that ‘the custom of practising *Purdah* has been inclining in our society since Muslims ruled, before that we did not have the practice of *Purdah*.’⁸⁶

In her essay titled ‘Lajja or Ghoonghat’ (Shyness and Veil), Savitri Devi Srivastava outlined the women's nature and added shyness into their character. She interrelated *Purdah*, Shyness and women's dignity. She criticises the Indian women who were observing the *Purdah*. They are not obeying the instruction of in-laws. Even if their family members are sick, they stay away and do not help in the name of *Purdah* practice.

⁸³ Nehru, ‘Purdah’ (Veil), *Stree Darpan*, 61.

⁸⁴ Smt. Suraj Devi, ‘Jhoothi Lajja’ (False Shame), *StreeDarpan*, November 1917, 226-229.

⁸⁵ Shri Sankar Dayalu Srivastava, ‘Bhartiya Streeyan or Purdhe Ki Pratha’ (Indian women and *Purdah* Practice), *Chand*, October 1937, 586.

⁸⁶ Shrivastav, 1937, 586.

So behind the Veil, women tried to escape the responsibilities towards their families. She believes that by maintaining their dignity, women were debunking their prime duty.

Furthermore, they were shaming the word 'self-pride'. Besides that, during their visit to holy places like the Ganga, they never feel shy to take a holy dip. She justified the authentic dignity of women in the sense of brave women such as Rani Durgavati and Rani Lakshmibai. She stated that, 'Rani Durgavati, Jawaharbai, and Rani Lakshmibai fought during Muslim rule in India and many heroic women became famous in history. Durgavati showed great courage in the war. Although she did not win, she sacrificed her life by killing herself to save her dignity and religion. If Queen Durgavati had been sitting with a veil, then the atrocities of the enemies in the kingdom and the palace would have no bounds'⁸⁷ The justification she provides says that these heroic women were involved in self-protection. It is an example of her consciousness of women. She also advocated that *Purdah* should be removed, but her motive was to make women participate in the freedom movement. In this context, she stated 'The women whose eyes the country is looking at with full of hope, those women are harming the country today by putting the excuse of the *Purdah* in an era in which women of other countries are centuries ahead of us.'⁸⁸

An essay titled 'Purdah' authored by Kamla Devi. Her views reflect the idea of the traditionalist groups. She targeted men opposing the *Purdah*. Men who said women should get an education before leaving *Purdah* should be more concerned about its discard. Kamla Devi believes that 'Until we are uneducated, it is impossible to fulfil our men's wish [lifting veil]; if we are liberated unintentionally by not keeping us in the *Purdah* without prior assessment, the result will be awful.'⁸⁹ This statement she gave for the safety of women. According to her, *Purdah* is a safeguard for women from the outer world. The nation cannot progress unless there is self-motivation in the ladies.

⁸⁷ Kumari Savitri Devi Shrivastva, 'Lajja or Ghunghat' (Dignity and Veil), *Stree Darpan*, August 1924, 442-444. She was a writer from Nagpur. It can be imagined how the effect of *Purdah* practice was discussed all over India.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 444

⁸⁹ Kumari Kamla Devi, 'Purdah' (Veil), *Grihalaksmi*, June 1923, 197-198.

By replying to her, the magazine editor stated that ‘women who don’t have self-respect could not save their chastity through *Purdah*. And the women who are observing *Purdah* only to save themselves from goons can never fall under the *Arya Mahila*.’⁹⁰

3.12. Suffrage Movement and *Purdah*:

For the very first time, the collective identity of women, particularly concerned about their rights, such as voting rights, was discussed in public spaces. An article outlined by the editor of *Stree Darpan*, Rameshwari Nehru, titled ‘Iran Ki Purdanashin Streeyan’ (Veiled women of Iran), discussed voting rights of women and she criticised the people who were against women’s voting rights. She believes that women who observe the *Purdah* can vote.

An article outlined by the editor of *Stree Darpan*, Rameshwari Nehru, titled ‘Iran Ki Purdanashin Streeyan’ (Veiling women of Iran), discussed women's voting rights and criticised the arguments against voting rights. At the beginning of her essay, she stated ‘It is often argued against women's voting rights that women wearing *Purdah* will not be able to cast their vote, so giving them this right is meaningless.’⁹¹ It was the time when the discussion over voting rights for women was taking place. She tried to defend women's rights by giving the example of Iranian women and critiquing the arguments. ‘Not long ago, when our country was fighting for the indigenous boycott, only the ‘Pardanashin women’ of Nagal gave them success; they burnt the foreign goods of their homes and took a vow to use indigenous goods on it’.⁹² A similar story she had discussed on Iranian women who observed such a strict practice; Iranian women came into the street and led movements against Russia. She believes that women can raise their voices by keeping such rules as Iranian and Bengali women did. The activity against the Muslim law was taking place but by protecting *Purdah*. Women were participating in the mainstream but by carrying such practices.

⁹⁰ Gopal Devi, *Grihalaksmi*, 198.

⁹¹ Editor, Rameshwari Nehru, ‘Iran Ki Purdahnashin Streeyan’ (Veiled women of Iran), August 1919, 68-75.

⁹² Ibid. 68.

3.13. Women Conflict with the Nationalists

Stree Darpan, an essay titled 'Streeyan aur Samajik Swatantrata' (Women and Social Freedom) authored by Kumari Chandravati Gupta. She was a young writer of the time. For this essay, she was awarded 'Bishannarayn Dar Padak'. By glorifying our bright ancient culture, she discussed Gargi Matryei, Seeta, Sumitra and Savitri, the prominently known women of ancient India. These prominent women were entirely free from the restrictions to participate in public assemblies and they even participated in the war with men. She shows her grief at the condition of twentieth-century women. She believes that because of being denied of education, women become the slave of men. She stated, 'If there was no ignorance, then the male community could not take away our rights and freedom and perform arbitrary atrocities on us and keep us as their slaves.'⁹³ She believes enslaving women and keeping them inside the houses is considered the sign of ideal women.

3.14. *Purdah* and Health

Purdah practice utterly deprived women of education and bound them to stay home. This custom worsened women's health. They cannot get fresh air, resulting in anxiety and losing confidence. Rajrani Devi, exemplified her words and after spending a long time in darkness; a person visualises dazzles in the light and habituated to obscurity similar to women facing the *Purdah* practice. She stated that women have the potential to change the world. They have the rule of supremacy from their ancestors.⁹⁴

Purdah practice significantly affected the freedom of middle-class women. It drastically impacts their education, health and confident behaviour. Due to that, women remained uneducated and self-doubting. They were hesitant in public places and their health was affected negatively.

Similarly, Ramsaroop Bhalotiya mentioned in her essay that *Purdah* harms women's health. He stated that 'many Marwari women and girls suffer from tuberculosis and lose their lives because of such disease. Later he suggested that it is impossible to secure absolute privacy without shutting out light and air, as houses with congested areas like gutters are almost sure to be unnoticed. The *Zenana*, women's separate portion, is

⁹³ Kumari Chandravati Gupta, 'Streeyan or Samajik Swatantrata' (Women and Social Freedom), *Stree Darpan*, December 1918, 307-308.

⁹⁴ Rajrani Devi, 'Sabhyata ki Kasauti' (Criterion of Civilization), 247-249.

usually situated in the inner part of the house, ill-lighted and ill-ventilated but effectively screened from observation. He summarised that girls are getting sick from *Purdah*; they are denied fresh air and light and stay locked inside the houses. It is the immense responsibility of men and women to maintain their physical health.

Smt. Raj Dulari Devi discussed women's health. She believes that due to *purdah*, women at a young age suffer many health issues. 'At the age of six-seven, we came as victims of *Purdah*. We do not get fresh air even though we are facing sickness and poor health'.⁹⁵

3.15. Women's Views on Discarding *Purdah*

The group of moderators was in favour of discarding the *Purdah* and advocated its existence in ancient India. They believe holding *Purdah* is women's responsibility to protect the Ideal Hindu culture. They believe that *Purdah* should be removed inside the houses, but it is necessary to carry outside. The *Purdah* practice imposed on women was utterly based on their oppression. By linking it with patriarchy, *Purdah* is intelligently designed to control women. The movement for women's emancipation started by the educated middle class by participating in the literary movement to claim their freedom in public places.

Most importantly, the women who followed such customs were unaware of their individual and everyday problems. They enthusiastically accepted it as a tradition to preserve the ancient culture. In public places, these women reject taking off the veil and feel discomfort if they refuse *Purdah* practice. In their groups, women feel free from restrictions, but it is awkward when they are unaware of the absolute freedom they need. Moreover, upper-caste Hindu women had to observe *Purdah* due to family pressure. By supporting the discard of *Purdah* women were giving the solutions. According to Latita Devi,

To reform a society that education is the only solution to discard *Purdah*. Initially, many girls' schools and colleges opened, and women are heading abroad to study. No women will agree to observe *Purdah* after returning from a foreign country. However, usually, it is followed up by them because under family pressure they had to observe such kinds of practices.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Rajdulari Devi, 'Purdhe ki Visham Vedna', *Stree Darpan*, 301.

⁹⁶ Lalita Devi, 'Purdah Uth Kar Rahega', *Chand*, August 1931, 462-463.

She believes that education can protect women from such vicious practices. And after getting an education, women might leave the purdah, but due to family pressure and restrictions, women cannot discard such practice. Education can show the way to be aware of the surrounding world, so there are chances to remove *Purdah* practice. To remove this practice, educated women had already started a movement.

Arya Mahila, magazine was more focused on the Idea of an Ideal Hindu society. An article titled 'Purdah Pratha Todak Andolan' (Movement for Removing Purdah Practice) was authored by Narayani Devi, editor of the *Arya Mahila*. She justified the movement that was protecting women's rights and emerged in the Darbhanga district of Bihar. She narrates the story of Ramanandan Mishra, who encouraged his wife to participate in the movement. Furthermore, he took the help of Gandhi Ji to enlarge the action. She believes that if it comes to women's health, we can say that 'The root cause of the health plight of our mothers is *Purdah*.'⁹⁷ Next, she believes that without discarding the practice, women cannot progress. She also quoted the thought of the Princes of Afghanistan, 'Nowadays *Purdah* became a part of religious identity, but there is no connection between *Purdah* and religion, In Quran practice of *Purdah* seems to civilise ideal women.'⁹⁸

A discussion by a social activist of Patna (Bihar), debating on *Purdah*. In a public gathering. They were opening the women's old age home to educate women for the house business so they could become financially independent. Prominent social activists initiated the discussion on *Purdah*. The main leader was the minister of the Bihar government Ganesh Datt Singh, Brij Kishore Narayan, and Anugrah Narayan Singh. They were also demanding financial aid for the ashram.⁹⁹ The movement for discarding *Purdah* and women's participation was seen in the literary column of *Chand*. Narayani Devi discussed the emerging movement against the *Purdah*—and criticised the movement by advocating for the women under the Purdah. She remarked, '

In Indian provinces, there is a fierce movement against the Purdah. This movement's supporters draw a corrupted picture of the *Purdah* by saying this is the root cause of the stupidity of uneducated Indian women. But several educated women are under the

⁹⁷ Narayani Devi, 'Purdah Pratha Todak Andolan' (Veil Breaking Movement), *Arya Mahila*, April 1928, 84-85.

⁹⁸ Narayani Devi, 'Purdah Pratha Todak Andolan' (Veil Breaking Movement), 85.

⁹⁹ For detailed content see, 'Purdah Pratha ko Door Karo', *Chand*, January 1929, 376.

Purdah. *Purdah* never put obstacles in the growth of women; whenever they wished to get an education, they could.¹⁰⁰

She believes that Indian women observe *Purdah* because they accept it and feel satisfied after observing this practice. 'Women who observe *Purdah* experience a comfort and dignity that very few European women experience'.¹⁰¹

Smt. Kamla Devi Nevatiya, daughter of Shri Jamna Lal Bajaj and Janki Devi Bajaj who belongs to a prosperous family was married to a wealthy family in Mumbai. She participated in the Satyagraha movement with her father and had a keen interest in social activities. Therefore, later, she actively participated in the activity of discarding *Purdah* among the Marwari community. With the help of her mother (Smt. Janki Devi), Kamla Devi travelled to many parts of India to present a deputation against the *Purdah*. Both mother and daughter addressed the gatherings and conferences to make women understand the problem of *Purdah*. Later, they succeeded in their mission. Due to this movement, many women discarded the *Purdah* practice. This period impacted the national movement by the women's participation in public places, and a feeling of patriotism among women.¹⁰²

An essay by Smt. Satydevi Mishra, titled *Purdah*, compared the liberty of western women to Indian women. She focuses on Indian women and their freedom from such evil practices. She believes that *Purdah* obstructs educational opportunities for women. According to her, lack of education restricts women from discarding *Purdah*. Without getting educated, women cannot participate in national movements. She struck on nationalist leaders who were demanding national freedom. She put her taunting remarks on nationalists.

Can't we appeal to the nationalists to discard the *Purdah*, who demand freedom and independence from the British? Will they not listen to us? Will they not allow us to develop our potential to become human? No, Aryaputra never does this, so sisters! Put the *Purdah* off from this system that emphasises to the world that we are also alive.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Editorial notes, Narayani Devi, 'Purdah', *Arya Mahila*, February 1929, 627.

¹⁰¹ .Narayani Devi, 'Purdah', 627.

¹⁰² Rameshwar Dayal Mantri (Banaras), 'Marwari Mahilayen', *Arya Mahila*, June 1932, 161-168.

¹⁰³ Smt. Satyavati Devi Mishra, 'Pardah' (Veil), *Stree Darpan*, February 1910, 88-90. This essay was read on 'Fatehgarh Stree Sammelan'.

Satyavati Devi Mishra criticised the nationalists demanding freedom. According to her, men demand their independence from the British. But women could not because men were barriers to women's progress and freedom.

An erudite scholar Shanti Prasad Verma B.A. in his article *Purdah* reflected on the ways of this practice. According to him, *Purdah* enslaved women.

The rise of the *Purdah* at any time and whatever reason, but has caused of harming country as the slavery for centuries. The subordination of other social classes destroyed our political life, and the slavery that we made such as *Purdah*, made our lives depressed.¹⁰⁴

He mentions that discussion over the emergence of *Purdah* is worthless; we should focus on its discarding. Because *Purdah* is like slavery that made women's life worthless.

3.16. Caste and *Purdah*

Another essay titled 'Pardhe Ki Pratha' (Custom of *Purdah*) by Vishambharnath Jijja. In his article, he addresses the problem of women due to *Purdah* practice and the women from a lower caste. He stated that 'lower caste women live in much freedom and taking good advantage of that freedom, they increase their household happiness, women go out and do physical labour to increase the happiness of their poor husbands and children, they are not like civilised women. They are luxuriant, and neither lust, anger etc. get so much awake in their shame; there is no artificiality or artificiality.'¹⁰⁵ Next, he blamed Muslims for kidnapping Hindu women; according to him, 'nowadays Hindu women are being kidnapped in every province in India, so how can those tolerant women save themselves? If someone comes to rob them, their feet will freeze due to fear and shame.'¹⁰⁶

3.17. Conclusion

The moderate intellectuals strongly disagree with the forced imposition of *Purdah*. This debate remarks on women's awareness of *Purdah*, but discussion over the 'othering' was injecting communal feelings towards other religious groups that were held responsible

¹⁰⁴ *Purdhe Ka Utthan Kisi Bhi Samay Aur Kisi Bhi karan se Hua Ho, Usne Desh ko Utna hi Nuksan Pahunchaya Hai, Jitna Sadiyon Ki Gulaami Ne. Anya Jatiyon Ki Paradhinta ne Hamare Rajnaitik Jivan Ko Nasht Kar Dala Aur Apne Banaye Purdhe Ki Gulami ne Hamare Jivan Ko Khokhla Kar Diya*. (Arya Mahila, August 1932.).

¹⁰⁵ Pt. Vishmbharnath Jijja, 'Parde Ki Partha' (Custom of Veil), *Stree Darpan*, August 1925, 345-352.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 350

for women's downfall. The intellectual community refused to accept that *Purdah* is a part of the male patriarchy in India. Besides that, they believe that *Purdah* is a result of Muslim rule. It was introduced in India to protect Hindu women from Muslim men. It is said that patriarchy always required subjugation and control of authority. If a woman enjoys liberty, then men cannot control them quickly, so the role of male patriarchy will be more critical in crushing women's freedom.

However, at the same time, their demand for protecting Hindu culture provoked women to be conscious of Muslim rule and Hindu identity. The narrative drifted the *Purdah* resulted from the Muslim atrocity to protect Hindu women from Muslim men. However, Muslim women also faced the same kind of practice within their religious dogma. Even the begum of Bhopal carried the *Purdah* in her whole life. Blaming Hindus and Muslims, the reformers unknowingly tried to remove this practice and that idea was creating a communal misunderstanding in society.

Similarly, the women were advocating the *Purdah* by citing the example of religious texts that pursue spiritual consciousness among them. The solution was to remove *Purdah* through women's education, maintaining dignity, and following religious texts floating in society. Many reformers proposed that to protect women from men's eyes, women should not spend their time in an isolated place, away from men. This conflict was based on women's dignity and protection of cultural and religious values through *Purdah*. Controlling women's sexuality became a matter of debate. This debate vehemently questioned restriction and control over women.

A detailed overview of this discussion on *Purdah* helps us understand that attempts to discover the roots of the origin of *Purdah* were futile because instead of solving the problem, it took a communal shape and paved the way for more wrangling. However, the intent was to provide solutions to the problems that *Purdah* had caused to women; health issues, lack of social recognition, no political rights and receding individuality. One possible way to overcome all this as suggested by many scholars above is to educate women. Women need to be provided with a good education that makes them aware, conscious and critical of their practices and belief systems. Only this can lead to the progress of women and the country as a whole.

Chapter-Four

The Question of Widowhood: Critiquing Gender Discrimination

This chapter attempts to analyse the multiple perspectives of women intellectuals on the question of Hindu women's widowhood. Women intellectuals have vividly described the multiple atrocities perpetrated on widows and their routine human rights violations and appealed for the human treatment of widows. A number of them advocated remarriage as a solution to the problem of widows. But journals like *Arya Mahila* opposed Hindu widow remarriage because it was against the pure Aryan culture. To protect the same, it was better than women committing sati. Those who proposed remarriage for widows called the Vedic and Shashtric sanctions. And more importantly, there was a fear of contamination of the Hindu religion: they felt that Hindu widows 'ran away' with Muslim men for love, marriage, and security. As one reads the pages of the women's journals, one gets a strong impression that this fear was very dominant and mere fare the vehement advocacy of widow remarriage. Thus, the problem of Hindu widowhood contributed to the villainisation of Muslim men as potential seducers, abductors and thereby contaminators of Hindu wombs.

It will also discuss the problems of widowhood from the perspective of women intellectuals. In ancient society, women faced enforced widowhood through Sati practice, Jauhar and denial of re-marriage; these practices were considered societal ideals. Child marriage and early widowhood (child widows) emerged due to the denial of remarriage. But its consequences have been seen later, and conflict between widow remarriage and early marriage affects girls' educational opportunities and social life. It increases the problem of widows, which is precisely discussed in Hindi women's journals. This chapter dealt with the views of women intellectuals on widow remarriage.

Furthermore, the newly educated women were demanding the removal of practices such as child marriage due to the atrocities perpetrated on widows, but not remarriage. It will also discuss those women who advocated widow remarriage only for child widows by citing the example of religious scriptures. In this manner, the impact of social reforms forward in a legal manner, such as the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, 'Sarda Act', 1929, passed for the welfare of widows and child marriage to stop early widowhood. Social reformers advocated these acts and strongly condemned widow remarriage and child marriage. Similarly, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar initiated the widow

remarriage movement; due to his efforts, widow remarriage became legal in 1856.¹ The ‘Sarda Act’ will discuss the women’s understanding of religious concerns to stop child marriage.

4.1. Widowhood

Enforced widowhood is described as the devastating loss of a partner. If a woman loses her partner, she will be called a ‘widow’. Similarly, if a man's wife has died, he will be called a ‘widower’. The loss of a partner leads widows to undertake different situations such as they will be under the control of their in-laws and many social practices they must follow such as head tonsuring, exclusion from social life, food and clothes. They had to wear simple clothes such as a white saree, but for men, the rules are not the same as for women. To do this, they both faced the problem of losing a partner, but their struggle was not the same as women. If widows have children, the problem of household responsibilities and their financial burden make their life more suffer.

Kanti Devi Gupta from ‘Kashi’ reflected on widows’ condition and how they were treated after their husband’s death.² Earlier, they were considered the ‘Grihalakahmi’ of the house before their husband’s death, but after the death of their husband, this ‘Grihalaksmi’ suddenly becomes an unpleasant member of the house.

Who can describe the difficulty of widows? Somehow, they spend their lives counting the days of her life, and they become irritating in the eyes of their family. After the husband's death, the widow's right to family property was taken away. For the pieces of bread, they depend on family members and tolerate humiliation and oppression to protect the ‘honour’ of the family.³

The financial burden, social expenditures, handling promises (promises made during marriage) with in-laws, and experiencing social obligations are associated with

¹ To initiate widow remarriage, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar submitted a signed petition of 987 people to the court; in response to this petition, Radhakant Dev sent the letters of 36,763 people. See., Sambhunath, *Samajik Kranti Ke Dashtavej*, 21.

² After becoming a widow, the goddess of the house is not only considered a sinner but a transgressor in the community, our experience is that if a woman in the house becomes a widow at a young age, she will face numerous abusive words and taunting through the elderly women of the house, some of the women addressed to us by the mischief that, ‘The witch came and ate my son, my house has been destroyed since she entered the house.’ Kanti Devi Gupta Kashi, ‘Jatil Samasya’ (‘Complex Problem’), *Arya Mahila*, April 1928, 6-14.

³ Smt. Prabha Devi, Chhapra, ‘Hindu Striyon Par Anginat Atyachar’, *Arya Mahila*, 1925, 76-79, for this reference, 77.

victimisation and widowhood vulnerability. Furthermore, compulsory household management, raising children in financial crisis and sometimes managing their new inexperienced marriage partnership with a new companion burdened widows' life. In addition to this, due to societal pressure, widows experience a toxic relationship with their new partners.

4.2. Widows in Ancient Customs

4.2.1. Sati-

Indian widows faced countless troubles due to social pressure, such as Sati practice, remarriage, and seclusion in public places. Even laws were created for widows, that become the part of cultural practice. The cultural practices of Muslims society, such as 'Laws of Hanafi⁴(Sunni law) and Ithna Ashari⁵ (Shia Law) Muslim Laws and the Dayabhaga⁶ and Mitakshara schools of Hindu Law introduced numerous practical traditions of customary Law, applicable to caste, tribe, lineage or family group'⁷ their condition deteriorated. According to Basham, a widow rescued from customs like 'Sati',⁸ faced society as half-dead survivors. They were alive but were restricted by many

⁴ According to the law, in the absence of a surviving child of a widow, the one-fourth collective share of her husband's property will transfer to her for maintenance. For this reference, see Lucy Carroll, "The Hanafi Law of Intestate Succession: A Simplified Approach." *Modern Asian Studies* 17, 1983,643.

⁵ In the absence of a relatives, a childless 'Shia Widow' can inherit the husband property.

⁶ Dayabhaga, Hindu Law, written by Jeemutvahana, discusses the property rights of widows. The widow has been given the right to inherit her husband's property in the absence of other male family members. According to the Mitakshara school, she can only succeed in the separate property that comes under her husband.

⁷ Lucy Carroll, "Law, Custom, and Statutory Social Reform: The Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act of 1856." *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 20, no. 4 (1983): 363-388.

⁸ Sati is a Hindu cultural practice of burning widows on their husband's funeral pyre. After burning, this widow will be considered an absolute ideal woman of Hindu society. The term 'sati' refers to the woman of Hindu society. It contained the honour of Hindu society. According to Vedic society, a woman who lost her husband had to perform some symbolic rituals to self-sacrifice for her husband to consider the honour of 'Sati'. According to Rig-Veda, during the funeral hymns of the widow's husband, she has to lie down in the rites beside the husband and the woman is called on to return to the land of the living. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India: A Survey of the History and Culture of the Indian Sub-Continent Before the Coming of the Muslims*, Sedgwick and Jackson, 1967; Reprint, Delhi: Rupa, 1996,187. The earliest evidence of Sati has been found in an inscription from Eran in Madhya Pradesh of six century AD. Dinesh Chandra Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*. Motilal Banarsi Das, 2017.

customs and practices. Besides, they were not allowed to appear in public places; vulnerably, they were forced to survive under the guardianship of society.

They were bound to follow such kinds of customs. Hence, there was an unseen inner pressure that widows were going through without any existing physical restrictions. Widows were the awful victims of social practice; if they resisted, they faced criticism from society.

In her essay, 'Bhartiya Vidhwaon ka Jeevan', Sukhlata Devi criticised Sati's practice.

According to her, a woman must burn alive after her husband's death.

Orthodox Hindus used to praise this custom excessively, but today in the twentieth century, no such person praises sati practice. Does it mean that more sympathy has come towards widows? I believe that widows were definitely saved from being burnt alive, but now somewhat, slowly, they turn out into the fire of sorrow; The fire of poverty is now burning them for life earlier there used to be some torturer that used to end on the pyre in a while, but now the fire of the pyre continuously burning them throughout life, has the society freed the widows from the pyre of Sati so that they should be burnt for a lifetime on a pyre that is more tortured than that?⁹

She believes a widow's survival in society is more uncompromising than the Sati practice. Women intellectuals started criticising ancient practices that were endangering their life.

At the same time when women were questioning on widow's miserable condition due to Sati practice magazines such as *Arya Mahila* praising it. In its editorial column, *Arya Mahila* favoured Sati practice. The column titled 'Punah Sati' (Again Sati) published the story of a woman (in the Darbhanga district of Gadhatol Vishnupur, Bihar) who self-sacrificed when her husband was in a dying condition. 'Our heart is full of pleasure and feels proud when we receive the news of women who perform Sati.'¹⁰ In this section, the editor believes that after performing Sati practice country will save its

⁹Sukhlata, Kumari Devi, 'Bharatiya Vidhwaon Ka Jeevan' ('Life of Indian Widows'), *Chand*, April 1923, 436-437 for this reference see.436.

¹⁰ Hamara Hirday Harsh se Phool Uthta Hai, Garv se Mastak Unnat ho Jata Hai, Jab Sunte Hain ki, Amuk Sthan Par Amuk Stree Sati ho Gayi, Hamari Dhrad Dharna Hai ki Jabtak Striyon ke Satitva ka Lop Na Hoga Bharat Kabhi Bhartiya na Tyagega', 'Sampadkiya Tippniya' (Editorial Notes), 'Punah Sati' (Again Sati), *Arya Mahila*, March 1930,917.

real identity. In favouring sati, Arya Mahila writes that sati practice can only save cultural purity of India.¹¹

Social activists such as Vidyasagar and Rammohan Roy attempted to reform society. But the reaction against Sati attempted to justify by traditionalist groups that such practices as Sati and widowhood symbolise ideal Hindu society. In this context, moderates deny the existence of such practice by arguing that women were in better condition in the past. According to Patel, ‘Nearly 50,000 signatures were collected and thousands assembled in the Dharma Sabha to oppose Bentick's ordinance of 1829 in which widow burning was finally declared illegal.’¹² Since the Indian renaissance, the concerned Hindus have been protesting against this ordinance to protect the purity of their religion. The British government possessed legislative powers sufficient to bring change in personal religious laws.

4.3. Widows’ Social Condition

4.3.1. Honour Killing

In her essay ‘*Stree Darpan*,’¹³ Ganga Devi (Allahabad) reflected her views on the widow's experiences. In her article, she examines the condition of many young widows who become the victims of honour killing due to their relationships with other men. She stated that when a girl becomes a widow, she will not be allowed to go out in public places even though they were denied to talk with their family members, especially males. Only the female members were allowed to visit in their isolated place only to provide food. These widows were abandoned, separated in an isolated place and instructed to read religious texts to make them busy.¹⁴ If they [Widows] engage with other men and become pregnant,

¹¹ ‘Sati Ka Nash Jagat ka Nash Ka Karan Hoga, Sati Ka Abhyuday Jagat ke Uday Ka Hetu Banega.’ Sampadkiya Tippiyaan (Editorial Colmun), ‘Phir Sati’ (Again Sati), *Arya Mahila*, April 1930, 9-11.

¹² Hitendra K Patel. “Aspects of The History of Bharat Dharma Mahamandal Andhindu Mobilisation.” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 70 (2009): 604–13.

¹³ *Stree Darpan*, the first monthly Hindi women journal for Hindi women and girls. Most of the articles and essays published by women are related to women's issues. A Woman of the Nehru family, Rameshwari Nehru was the journal's chief editor and managed by Kamla Nehru. It costs one rupee for a copy, and for a one-year subscription, it costs two rupees. The magazine focused on religion, literature, and politics incidents of the time.

¹⁴ Smt Ganga Devi, ‘Vidhwa Vivah’ (Widow Marriage), *Stree Darpan*, January 1910, 45-48. ‘In 1906, when a girl of a high caste family became a widow in Mathura city, her family members barred her from going outside. She stopped meeting people; even with her brother, she could not talk. Alternatively, she was allotted a separate room in the house. All the management was done for her in that secluded place. Her sister-in-law and mother were only allowed to visit her. She was separated because everyone used to come

they become the victim of honour killing.¹⁵ She believes that ‘the women [widows] families are hesitant to accept such changes like widow remarriage.

According to them, widows will remain unhappy due to social misconduct; when their husband dies, they are hated by their family members. The responses of their mother-in-law taunts ‘from where this demon came and kills my child! I do not want to see her face’; everyone in the family hated her. They go through many hardships that were deliberately inflicted on them. They faced disrespect during their basic needs, such as food and clothes. Due to this suffering, some widows commit suicide,¹⁶ and some leave their houses, which is also a reason for the increasing number of prostitutes today. After being upset with social oppression, when they are out of the house, they either become victims of our enemy or sell their priceless chastity by being involved in prostitution.’¹⁷

Due to their suffering, widows have left only ways to commit suicide or the path of adopting prostitution occupation.

4.3.2. Prostitution

As a widow women’s lost their property rights for their survival they adopt prostitution. Several women intellectuals described the condition of Hindu widows and their suffering and loss of their property rights due to their husbands' deaths. An essay titled ‘Hindu Striyon Par Anginat Atyachar’ (Countless Atrocities on Hindu Women), written by Smt Prabha Devi, Chhapra (Place in Bihar), discusses the social distress faced by women where it is familial, social and religious pressure and atrocities in every manner widows faced, and she provided the solution for this. By explaining the family’s atrocities on women, she discussed that ‘the family’s financial difficulties mainly affect women. Apart from this, when mother-in-law, sister-in-law and husband are angry, what is the meaning

into the house. She was instructed to read Ramayana and Mahabharata. She was locked inside the houses like a prisoner. After some time, she came into contact with her servant and became pregnant. When her family got to know, they gave her poison and killed her’. Ganga Devi, (Allahabad), ‘Vidhwa Vivah’, *Stree Darpan*, 45.

¹⁵ However, after a short time, it came to be known that she was pregnant, so the family members killed her by giving her poison in the food. Ibid. 45.

¹⁶ A widow died by drowning; the widow committed suicide in a village called district Bhagalpur, Banwarsa (Bihar). The reason for the suicide was her family troubles.

¹⁷ *Arya Mahila*, ‘Sampadkiya Vaktavya’, April/May 1925, 28-29.

of their other troubles? A gentleman from a high family known to me forcibly cut his wife's hair because of one strand of hair that was found in the kitchen. One such gentleman had punished his wife because she had some simple conversation with one of her neighbour's brother-in-law. The result was that the woman drowned in the river. This was a matter of Sadhwa (Married women). Who can describe the plight of widows? After the death of her husband, she lost her property rights from her family. The needy for the bread pieces please everyone and protect the family by enduring humiliation and atrocities. No one cares about them as much as the birds that have been reared. Sometimes wicked people are capable of misleading them because of these reasons. In this way, I am well aware of many incidents where widows' good wishes have been crushed and the pillars of ailing stigma have been imposed. Furthermore, as a result, they have run away from home feeling sad and unsuccessful. Who can say that there is no continuous increase in the number of these exceptional or common prostitutes who prick like a thorn in the heart of Hindu society from such independent women?'¹⁸

Calcutta has an eleven lakhs population, and the number of prostitutes is more than one lakh. Approximately ninety-five per cent of these prostitutes are the daughters of reputed Hindu families. Small towns like Vrindavan have hundreds of Bengali Hindu widows who are surviving by prostitution.¹⁹

So it is recognised that poverty drove widows towards prostitution which was followed in the Bengal region. Sukhalata Kumari said, 'the unusual burial customs of Hindu society ruined the widow's life before it bloomed. Hinduism still does not feel the torture of widows'.²⁰ She challenges the customary laws and principles of cultural values against widows. Also questioned on the laws and customs that continued in the Hindu religion, why did widow remarriage not be allowed in Hinduism? She said, 'according to Hindu religion, during the marriage ceremony, a woman offered to the man with whom she married. Due to this kind of provision, a woman cannot leave her family after becoming a widow and is

¹⁸ Smt. Prabha Devi, Chhapra, 'Hindu Striyon Par Anginat Atyachar', *Arya Mahila*, 1925, 76-79. for this reference, 77.

¹⁹ Ramhit Singh, 'Hindu Manovorittiki Ka Vyapak Swaroop' *Chand*, September 1929, 1-7. For this reference, see page no 3.

²⁰ Sukhalata, Kumari Devi, 'Bhartiya Vidhwaon Ka Jeevan' (Life of Indian Widows), *Chand*, 436.

also not allowed to remarry'.²¹ Hence it is believed that enforced widowhood acquired the profession of prostitution.

4.4. Control on Widow's Intimate Desires

Widows were punished for their transgressive desires'²² and this punishment manifested to control their life. In the nineteenth century, ancient rituals were re-shaped to enslave widows and control their sexuality, which created social pressure on reformists. The immediate focus was on widow remarriage, and the removal of practices such as 'Sati' and the removal of all belongings that widows were under the reformists' agenda. The strict widowhood following created social pressure that excluded widows from other married women. Even child widows were forced to live their life in sorrow and isolation. Child widows faced a worse situation than other middle-aged widows who could live by involving themselves in the ascetic life.

It recorded that for every 1000 girls between 10 and 15, 382 were married, and 17 were already widowed. By religion, out of every 1000 Hindu girls between the ages of five and 10, 111 were married, and between the ages of 10 and 15, 437 were married. Fifty Muslim girls were married for every 1000 between the ages of five and 10, and 344 between the ages of 10 and 15. Christians in India also practiced child marriage, as three in every 1000 Christian girls under the age of five were married, although the Census report tried to argue that these marriages probably took place before conversion.²³

However, child widows were restricted to enjoy their happiness at a young age. These limitations of life made it compulsory for widows to control their physical needs to restrict their involvement in remarriage. Similarly, cultural liberators advocated social reform for widows but were not ready to compromise to harm their religious sentiments and cultural values.

4.5. Social Reform and Widow Remarriage

The colonial era was the period of social transformation where social reformers and fundamentalist organisations concentrated on women's issues. This colonial era led

²¹ Ibid.,436.

²² Krupa Shandilya, "The Widow, the Wife, and the Courtesan: A Comparative Study of Social Reform in Premchand's *Sevasadan* and the Late Nineteenth-Century Bengali and Urdu Novel." *Comparative Literature Studies* 53, no. 2 (2016): 272-288.

²³ Sumita, Mukherjee, "Using the Legislative Assembly for Social Reform: The Sarda Act of 1929." *South Asia Research* 26, no. 3, November 2006, 219-33.

to many social and political movements that stepped toward widows' emancipation for their happiness, but later these movements unsightly abandoned their legacy. Therefore, the movement for widow emancipation was deep-rooted and supported by the social reformers. But this movement has some loopholes in reformers' writings. However, 'there was a frequent divergence between profession and practice within advocates of social reform.'²⁴ Middle-class, educated women started to express their approach to widows but were afraid to reveal their identities. At the end of the nineteenth century, an unknown Hindu woman was writing about the intimate desires of widows. 'The literature written by men distorted the image of women'.²⁵ In 1882, by writing these lines, a question was raised by a woman in the Bharatendu era and brought writings before and after him to the forefront. The fear of prohibition and revealing of identity might be the reason for not allowing them to write openly. Dr Dharamveer Bharti has acknowledged her by finding her writings. He has discovered, decorated, and placed an essential document of the ignored literature of women's writing; as the feminist historian Uma Chakraborty discovered Pandita Ramabai, a woman revolutionist of the nineteenth century, Sudhir Chandra brings out the story of women like Rukhmabai, who struggled at an early age for the marriage rights of Hindu women. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the questions of women's rights were raised enthusiastically, but a general literature reader is ignorant of this information. In such a situation, any question favouring women is rejected by saying that the consciousness of any rights was not in the women themselves; these are the questions of anti-feminist psychology of the male Hindi writers.

Every demand for women's rights raised by women was neglected and uncovered. Currently, when the era has been traced, it cannot be ruled out that there must have been more women who raised their voices for their rights. When women were set aside under strict restrictions, they raised questions about the old customs of the society which can be considered an act of incredible bravery. In this scenario, Hindi women intellectuals were advocating the idea of widow remarriage.

4.6. Women Supporting Widow Remarriage

²⁴ Sudhir Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*. Routledge 2014, 80.

²⁵ Dharamveer Bharti, *Seemantini Updesh*, 'Agyat Mahila', 2004.

At the end of the nineteenth century, it presented liberal ideas in society. Therefore, by not revealing her name, a woman was writing under the title of 'unknown woman' (Agyat Mahila). In her essay, while addressing the Hindu women, (Agyat Mahila) remarked that

whenever the senses (body desires) are uncontrolled, get married immediately. Society has given this permission to men; they can marry many women even if they have a wife; why not a woman after her husband's death. There is no wrong in this because all this is happening by God's will.²⁶

These unknown women believe that widows should marry if they are willing. In the very early period of 1882, when women were not ready to speak in their favour, these women were attacking the practice and customs that diminished women's freedom.

Furthermore, discussion on widow remarriage, sati, child widow and their struggle in colonial north India provided a literary platform for newly educated widows to communicate their emotional state in the Hindi public sphere.

Smt. Krishna Kumari Ji Baghel writes a poem on widow remarriage. She was more concerned about the male atrocities and patriarchal structure that made women suffer. She requested men to remarry due to the sorrowful life of widows who spend their entire life alone.

Oh, Brother! you want to marry as many as you want, even after suffering the sorrow of life; Do we have no wish to remarry! Oh, Brother! You refuse to protect the widowed sister; can you take the responsibilities of my protection by becoming a husband!.²⁷

In the first section of the poem, Mrs Krishna Kumari sarcastically exalts the ideals of the religious people of the society. She says nothing is more important than this ideal concept of breaking only for the widows. She believes that there is no meaning in human life. Society is not flourishing due to the sorrowful cries of widows like Sadhvi; it is not easy to adopt this challenging life. After seeing such a kind of opposition, some intellectuals were looking for a way to escape from widow remarriage.

The movement for widow remarriage²⁸ raised anxiety and uneasiness among the religious-cultural associates such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. It hammered on the

²⁶ Dharamveer Bharti, *Seemantini Updesh*, 'Agyat Mahila.

²⁷ Smt Krishna Kumari Ji Baghel, 'Samaj Par Hindu Vidhwa', (Hindu Widow in Society), *Chand*, April 1923, 545.

²⁸ If a husband died, left his wife alone, and abandoned the world, in this manner Parasara (before AD 1300), Hindu lawgivers confirmed the possibility of a widow remarriage which Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar (1820-91) held as his imitative point for the campaign of widow remarriage movement in the mid-nineteenth century. Rajul Sogani, *The Hindi Widow in Indian Literature*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, 6.

cultural practices and secluded pain that endangered women's identity. Women intellectuals and their understanding of widow issues, including remarriage and everyday life, and the information of women organisations were discussed in these women's journals to uphold the question of widows' existence. The voices of women intellectuals appeared in the journals but a different perspective on taking sides of widows.²⁹ Some intellectuals advocated that widow remarriage should be allowed in society because an act had been passed. All adult widows who wanted to remarry had the right to marry and produce children.

Organisations that were favouring/opposing widow remarriage employed their place in journals and advocated widow remarriage. Activities of the widow remarriage organisations were dynamically debated in Hindi women's journals of the colonial period.

These reformist organisations that support widow remarriage in society for widow remarriage consider it a threat to the life of Hindu widows that control the lives of widows. As reformist organisations were advocating widow remarriage and declaring sati as illegal practice and favouring women's education was not endured by the Hindu Sanatanist Organisations.

²⁹ The first women-initiated Hindi journal, *Stree Darpan*, reached its height to address the question of widows. As *Stree Darpan*, the first monthly Hindi women's journal of the early twentieth century that addressed the issue of Hindi women and girls. Most of the articles and essays were published on women-related issues. A Woman of the Nehru family, Rameshwari Nehru was the journal's chief editor, and as a manager, Kamla Nehru took the journal's responsibility. *Grihalakshmi* was first published in 1909. Like *Stree Darpan*, it was the most primitive journal of Hindi media with an easily accessible source edited by women. Pandit Sudarshan Acharya and his wife, Smt. Gopal Devi was committed to the publication of *Grihalakshmi*. In the early publication phase of *Grihalakshmi*, Sudarshan Press (Press name belonging to Pandit Sudarshan Acharya) took the liability to publish this Journal. Arya Mahila started its publication from 1917 onwards. The place where it began to be published was known as Shri Mahamandal Bhavan. Surathkumari Devi was the editor of the Journal. In 1885 she was succeeded by the title of Rani of Khairagarh. Later, this periodical was operated and managed by Pandit Ramgovind Trivedi 'Vedantashastri'. Chand was a high-flying Hindi women's journal of the early nineteenth century. It was published from 1922 to 1949. In its initial decade, the journal was edited by Ramrakh Singh Sahgal and his wife, Vidyavati Sahgal. *Chand* was known for focusing on social issues and national events. As a woman-centred journal, it focused on countless women's issues related to everyday struggles. *Chand* published a particular Issue on widows titled, 'Vidhwa Ank, [Widow Issue] (April 1923), which dealt with the problem of Hindu widow remarriage. Later it was challenged by fundamentalist groups, and this debate diverted into criticism. This issue was introduced in the early phase. This issue was mainly focused on widows' life and their everyday struggle and advocated widow remarriage. It draws a closer line on the widow's distress and of social norms that they underwent. The religious cluster framed the widow's life as deadly mistreatment by cultural patrons who advocated widows as objects of extreme dislike and dependent community.

Similarly, many other religious fundamentalist organisations that opposed widow remarriage formed to consolidate the real 'Hindu Dharma'.

4.7. Organisations Opposing Widow Remarriage

Various Hindu organisations emerged to defend Sanatan dharma. These organisations were campaigned against missionary activities and opposing the priesthood, rituals and sacrifices. Movements led by the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj as well as a Theosophical society were in order to revive the Hindus. According to Patel 'various attempts to reform the Hindu religion by reformists -mainly Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj were seen as threats to the Hindu religion. The intensification of the Christian missionary activities and various efforts of the British Indian government to modernise Indian society led to a perceived threat to Hinduism.'³⁰

"Dharma Sabhas³¹ (Divine Society) in the cause of Sanatan dharma began to spring up in India in 1831 when a Dharma Sabha was founded in Calcutta. Nearly 50,000 signatures were collected and thousands assembled in the Dharma Sabha to oppose Bentick's Ordinance of 1829, in which widow burning was finally declared illegal. Later, various dharma sabhas were founded in different parts of India -Bengal, North-Western Provinces and Oudh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Bihar and elsewhere to defend Sanatari Dharma.³² Besides that, in 1856, widow marriage was declared legal by the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, passed by the efforts of Shri Ishwar Chandra Vidyanagar.

4.8. Organisations for Widow Remarriage

³⁰ Hitendra K. Patel, "Aspects of The History of Bharat Dharma Maha Mandal and Hindu Mobilization." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 70 (2009):604.

³¹ In Punjab, in the late 1870s, the Arya Samaj emerged as a powerful challenge to the values of traditional (Sanatan) Hinduism, and soon this movement started reaching out to various parts of northern India. In the 1880s, various Dharma Pracharini Sabha and Kirtan sabha were formed in centres like Vrindavan, Bañaras and other places. Among them, one noticeable sabha was Vaishnava Dharma Pracharini Sabha which Madhusudan Goswami founded at Vrindavan. A gigantic network of these Hindu satanist organisations and even in Bihar, a list of dharma sabha is provided by Dharma Diwakar that mentions Sheikhpura Dharma Sabha (Monghyr), Bhagalpur Dharma Sabha, Darbhanga Dharma Sabha, Madhubani Dharma Sabha, Tajpur Dharma Sabha, Muzaffarpur Dharma Sangrakshini Sabha, Muzaffarpur Dharmopadeshini Sabha, Hajipur Dharma Sabha, Bakhara Dharma Sabha (Muzaffarpur), Motihari Dharma Sabha, and Motihari Suniti Sancharini Sabha was most active dharma sabhas of the state.

³² Patel, "Aspects of The History of Bharat Dharma Maha Mandal and Hindu Mobilization." 604.

The first widow remarriage of the Marwari community that took place was published as a story in the Marwari issue. In its 'Marwari Issue'³³, *Chand* published a story of widow remarriage in North India. The first widow was married in the Marwari Agrawal caste on Sunday, 13th January 1926. The widow was Janki Bai, daughter of Gauridutt Shah, a resident of Howrah, and the groom was Nagarmal Ji, a resident of Jharia. Many social reformers of Calcutta attended the marriage. Janaki Devi was a child widow, and she had a will to get married due to non-adherence to the widow duty; her honesty is an example to other women.³⁴ Such an example set the trend of widow remarriage for the suffering widows.

'All women should pledge to favour widow remarriage by supporting widow remarriage; then only women will attain freedom. Such enforced strict practices that widows face should be removed, and women can equally marry as men do. If there will be provision for the son to remarry, why not the daughter?'³⁵ Women such as Ganga Devi favour widow remarriage, and their appreciation gave hope to other widows who wanted to remarry. Such an appreciation of widows was increasing the number of widows who wanted to be involved in familial life. After seeing this, many organisations supporting widow remarriage came up to provide a platform for remarriage.

4.8.1. Bharat Dharma Mahamandal (1887)

Bharat Dharma Mahamandal was noticeable after Darbhanga Maharaj became its secretary in 1900. He was the chief patron of the organisation. The patron of Sri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal was Rameshwar Singh, the brother of Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh of Darbhanga. Even before the formation of the Mahamandal, organisations that were trying to organise Hindus had been all patronised by the British Government as the saviour of the Hindus from the oppressive rule of the Muslims. In 1881 an appeal to Lord

³³ *Chand* focused on the Marwari community in its special issue 'Marwari Ank'. It was published in November 1929 and contained 400-page. The colourful illustration and ethnographic study against the Marwari community twisted aggression among the Marwari youth of Bengal. Its editor Ramrakh Singh Sahgal was physically assaulted by a Marwari youth from Calcutta after the issue's publication. Rahul Bjorn Parson, *The Bazaar and the Bari: Calcutta, Marwaris, and the World of Hindi Letters*. Berkeley: University of California, 2012, 7, 61.

³⁴ *Chand*, 'Marwari Ank', November 1929, 407.

³⁵ Men can marry four times, even the hair becomes white, and the teeth are broken despite that they go for another, and soon they die but our 15 years old widow cries throughout their life. Ganga Devi, Allahabad, 'Vidhwa Vivah', *Stree Darpan*, January 1910, 46.

Dufferin clearly stated how the 'empire declined, which emanated even more light than the sun in the universe, had freed them from the 'Yavanrajs Karal Gaav (darkness of the Muslim rule).'³⁶ They thanked the British rule because it had removed all darkness except a few areas where improvements were yet to be made. In 1910, Bharat Dharma Mahamandal organisational report mentioned that due to organisational power, Hindus had survived the onslaught of Muslim rule and had been able to save their religion. The first Hindu organisation that initiated widow remarriage in north India was Bharat Dharma Mahamandala 1887 in Benaras.

4.8.2. Vidhwa Sahayak Sabha (Widow Facilitation Organisation)- 'Vidhwa Vivah Sahayak Sabha' was formed in Lahore by the initiative of Sir Ganga Ram. It functioned from 1915 to 1925. This Sabha conducted 6334 widow remarriage with approx spending 95639 on widow remarriage during its active years; the Sabha published its report on widow remarriage based on caste to advertise widow remarriage in local journals of Punjab Such as 'Stree Sudhar' (Women Reform) 1926, 'Punjabi Bahain' (Punjabi Sisters) 1907. *Chand* wrote advertising to its readers about the 'Vidhwa Sahayak Sabha' of Lahore that 'this Sabha does not take any kind of donation to conduct remarriage, but also provides primary financial assistance. The address of correspondence was 'Lala Lajpat Ji Sahani, B.A. treasurer of 'Widow Remarriage Assistant Sabha' Lahore (Punjab) In March 1923, a small section of a women's intellectual group received letters from widows published in the essential Urdu paper of Lahore named 'Vidhwa Sahayak'. Later these writings were published in the *Chand* special issue on widows.'³⁷

A father of a widowed daughter had written a letter to 'Vidhwa Sahayak Sabha'³⁸. The title of this letter was (Ek Vidhwa Kanya ke Pita Ka Patra) 'Letter from the father of a widowed girl'. This letter was written to the religious patron of Lahore, 'Janlala Ji Sahib' to find a groom for an eighteen-year-old widow from a reputed family; when the girl became a widow, her father was searching for the groom with conditions such as

³⁶ Patel, "Aspects of The History of Bharat Dharma Maha Mandal and Hindu Mobilization."604.

³⁷ In 1929, *Chand* came up with a special issue. This issue was printed at the Fine Art printing Cottage in Allahabad. This issue was highlighted with some excellent words, 'Chand is in favour of social reform, without reforming the society, without revamping our house, we cannot make any progress, this is a definite truth, so every progressive person has to contribute in the promotion of the *Chand*. The first text of the number started with a poem written by Mahadevi Ji Varma titled 'Sandesh'.

³⁸ *Chand*, April, 1923. 498

(Groom's) the first wife should not have any children. Furthermore, his age should be between twenty-one to twenty-two years. At the end of the letter, the girl's father requested the editor not reveal his identity.³⁹ So, the fear of not accepting widow remarriage boldly among Hindu society can be seen in the writings of widow's fathers. This organisation conducted marriages and has given the information to the *Chand* for publishing so that other widows can be inspired by such news.

'345 widows were remarried in July by the Widow Marriage Sahayak Sabha of Lahore. From January 1926 to July 1926, 1901 widows were married, in which Brahmins 324, Khatri 226, Arora 246, Agarwal 296, Kayastha 49, Rajput 156, Sikh 181, other 203 In this way total 1901 widow marriages conducted.'⁴⁰ 'Lahore Widow Vivah Sabha' and its other branches performed the remarriages of 220 widows in August 1926. From January to August, this institution performed about 1923 marriages. Brahmins 374, Khatri 348, Aroras 288, Agarwals 282, Kayasthas 57, Rajputs 177, Sikhs 191, others 312.'⁴¹

Above data numbers of widows were counted caste-wise. These organisations became important because widows were marrying in other communities and other religions. So these organisations were helping widows to find their community partners within their caste and religion. Widow remarriage was taking place under some restrictions that widows should be part of their own culture; they should consider marriage with only their community and caste.

4.9. Opposing Widow Remarriage:

As Hindi women's journals were the communicative platform for women, the idea of advocating any belief was discussed in the magazine to reach out to the women. The opponents of widow remarriage believed that widow marriage is entirely unjustified, and there is no doubt that the condition of Hindu widows was becoming the most terrible and unimaginable at present. Despite supporting widow remarriage, some intellectuals advocated a different way to find the path to escape from widow remarriage.

There are many opinions regarding the conscience of widow remarriage. Editor of the *Arya Mahila*, Narayani Devi opinionated,

³⁹ 'Vidhwaon Ki Durdasha', 'Ek Vidhwa Kanya ke Pita Ka Patra' (Letter from the Father of a Widowed Girl), *Chand*, April 1923, 497-498.

⁴⁰ Samachar Sangrah 'Vidhwa Vivah' *Chand*, September 1926, 543.

⁴¹ Samachar Sangrah, *Chand*, October 1926, 644.

The maintenance of widows must be arranged in provinces. At this time, Hindu widows are in great danger; many Hindu widows are converting to other religions. And they are the legitimate victims, misled and converted into other religions.⁴²

According to her, to prevent widow remarriage, there should be some financial arrangements for widows so they will not go for remarriage. She believes that financial assistance can save widows from conversion.

Aryan women were known for their ideal character and purity, and this purity will continue when the widow hates the word 'widow remarriage' ('Vidhwa Vivah'). Widows will lose their chastity if widow remarriage starts among the Aryans, she believes. In its editorial notes, *Arya Mahila* criticises the people who advocate widow remarriage. By stressing on the intention of newly educated people, the journal addresses some questions, (i) if men do remarry, then why can women not? (ii) every day, Hindus are decreasing their numbers; why not! their number should increase through the encouragement of widow remarriage. (iii) If there is some disagreement with widow remarriage, then widows who were intimate with their husbands should encourage remarriage (iv) At their very young age, the concept of child marriage exists; why not remarriage of child widow can be considered. (v) Widows who are unable to practise widowhood should encourage remarriage. (vi) What right do we have to force someone to be patient and controlled? (vii) If widow remarriage is not according to scripture, why do its favourable words originate in the Hindu scripture? (viii) Why should child widows be given the right to property?

To answer these questions, the editor reasoned why widow remarriage should not be done, the true Aryan should be more concerned about saving Hindu culture, according to Vedas, the widows who adopt asceticism. (i) The marriage of a Hindu girl is known for faithfulness, so a widowed marriage should be an injustice for the Hindus. (ii) Remarriage is not convenient with only an increasing number of Hindu widows. (iii) Child marriage is unacceptable in Hindu scripture, but the loss of a widow's chastity will not be tolerated in the name of widow remarriage. (iv) Widows who cannot handle their chastity should be married off to close relatives. It will keep their purity, and she will be saved in our community. (v) Government's punishment of its public will only force religious conversion.⁴³ *Arya Mahila* believes that a widow's remarriage should not be a

⁴² Mahila Sansar, *Arya Mahila*, April/May 1925, 20-21.

⁴³ Sampadikya Vaktavya, *Arya Mahila*, June/July 1925, 67-69.

compulsory matter of debate only for the valid reason it should be advocated considering the religious value of Hinduism.

Another woman Smt Pragya Sundari⁴⁴ questioned widow remarriage. She discussed that widows follow their duty with loyalty to their husbands. According to her, Indian woman are very faithful to their culture and will never be compromised by men's campaigns against their cultural values. By mentioning the ancient text that advocates the laws for widows, she mentioned that widows could never agree to compromise with remarriage because it is not part of the ancient text. She said,

Till now, the stigma of the delightful society is bringing happiness to the men due to the lust of women's senses. Due to the physical addiction of women, they are providing sexual pleasure to men and do not have to look the way the scriptures do. You, people, cannot force us to sleep in the lap of men, and by being fascinated by your classical praises and wonderful tips, we will be rebellious, and leave our veins filled with rituals, start taking shelter of other men, never think such a thing.⁴⁵

With such kinds of disagreements, she believes that widow remarriage will not be acceptable in Indian society because our women are more loyal and faithful to their religious and cultural values. Even she demanded reformists stop the widow remarriage movement.

‘May I request to both opponents and proponents of widow marriage that you please do not diminish the unbroken purity and peace of the society by supporting one side of widow marriage and the other side of opposing it. By doing this, the wishes of both sides will not be fulfilled. All your efforts will be ineffective due to heated arguments. If you only want that these sinful activities in the society should be removed, and peace and purity should come, then forget the movement of widow marriage for some time and concentrate on self-realisation’.⁴⁶

Similarly, in a correspondence letter, anonymous women have written additional remarks. She concentrates on the widows' issues related to ‘Vidhwa Vivah’ (widow

⁴⁴ Pragya Sundari Devi, a Bengali woman, presented her views on the widow remarriage movement. The article was originally written in Bengali, but its translated version was published in *Stree Darpan* to its readers. Pragya Sundari addressed this essay to male reformers leading the widow remarriage movement. In her article, she understands that people who favour the widow remarriage movement forcefully impose widow remarriage on women. This means they want all widows to marry. Still, no one is saying this movement is only for those widows who want to marry, so they cannot move the wrong path. Smt. Pragya Sundari, ‘Vidhwa Vivah’, *Stree Darpan*, 1914, in *Stree Alakshit: Beeswin Sadi Ke Purvardh Ka Stree Vimarsh*, edited by Shrikant Yadav, 2018, Allahabad: Lokbharti Prakshan, 53-59.

⁴⁵ *Stree Darpan*, 1914.

⁴⁶ *Stree Darpan*, 1914.

remarriage). She appreciated Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar for initiating the movement of widow remarriage. But she said, 'The birth, death and marriage all are controlled by heaven; these are realities of human life. This signifies that birth happens once, and death has to be suffered only once; similarly, marriage also happens only once.'⁴⁷ According to her, 'Whether it is male or female, if anyone is losing their partner, they cannot get married if they are truly faithful to Indian cultural values.'⁴⁸ She completely denied remarriage for both men and women to protect Hindu customs.

A section called *Chitthi Patri* (Letter Remark) discussed women's correspondence on widow remarriage. She appreciated *Stree Darpan* and said, 'Glad to read the article of Smt Ganga Devi on widow's plight in the November issue that now focuses on relieving the distress of widows.'⁴⁹ She appreciated the magazine for considering widow remarriage as a severe issue. In her letter to the magazine's editor, she said,

Our sisters have an unfair understanding of widow remarriage, which they took mistaken. Earlier, girls used to choose their husbands according to their choices in the marriage ceremonies. Even they get married after committing adultery. Nowadays, a 12-year-old girl is married to a 50-year-old man, or a 10-year-old girl is married to an 8-year-old boy.⁵⁰

She believes that child marriage is the reason for unsuitable partners and early widowhood. However, she glorified the ancient customs that were the best in terms of women's law.

In her letter, addressed to the editor of *Stree Darpan*, she believes that the provision of remarriage should only be for those widows who married but never visited their husband's place. She believes that virgin (pure) widows can only be offered a man for a remarriage; if one loses her purity (virginity), she cannot make further confederation with another man; even their parents did not allow her to marry another man because they

⁴⁷ An anonymous woman was writing an article in *Stree Darpan*. In the essay, she addresses the editor in its Section of 'Chitthi Patri', the essay titled 'Vidhwa Vivah'. She discusses ancient customs which did not allow women to marry once. To reveal her identity, she mentioned 'Stree Darpan ki Darshika Dehli' (A woman reader of *Stree Darpan* from Delhi). Reader, 'Vidhwa Vivah', *Stree Darpan*, September 1910, 166.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 166.

⁴⁹ 'Chitthi Patri', (Letter remarks), 'Vidhwa Dukh' (widow sorrow), *Stree Darpan*, February 1910, 100.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 100.

consider their daughter impure after visiting their husband's house. According to her, this custom will cause the decline of Hindu religious beliefs.

By replying in a letter to the editor, on Ganga Devi's essay, an anonymous woman who was a regular reader of *Stree Darpan*. In the November Issue of *Stree Darpan*, after reading her essay, she said, 'Widows, especially child widows, suffer a lot in their life.'⁵¹ By sending her remarks by post, she disagreed with widow remarriage; she believes there is no such practice followed (widow remarriage) in India. So, it is not possible to accept widow remarriage. She believes that in India, marriage is considered a sacred tradition of the Hindu religion, and widow remarriage is not a part of Indian culture. Furthermore, the father gives her daughter to a man, whom she married, so it is impossible to allow the same thing again (According to her, women are the male property and have the right to transfer that property to anyone once it has been given to someone; it cannot offer again) with another male. She believes that Indian widows will never accept such liberties and practices because they are more faithful towards Indian cultural tradition.

Women intellectuals believed that preserving the legacy of their ancient culture was women's primary duty. In addition, she remarked, 'their (widows) families never agreed with such practices, and also, they (widows) did not get self-respect from the family members whom they remarry. Therefore, she suggested persisting in this practice; first, widow remarriage should be separate from cultural values.'⁵² Thus, the women wanted to remove such customs, but within Hinduism, it is impossible without harming cultural values. Hence, the women themselves opposed the idea of widow remarriage advocated by women's magazines.

Women such as Sukhlata Devi condemned the religious institutions that did not allow the solution of widow remarriage. Citing the example of the English government, how they introduced widow pension for old aged, she said,

If the government of India does not allow widow marriage and does not want to break the ancient Hindu custom, then it can make such a law that widows can get a pension. Many institutions are found in many provinces of India for the help of widows. If they are adequately managed, and a central institution is established for them, help and

⁵¹ 'Chitthi Patri', *Stree Darpan*, January 1910, 54.

⁵² Smt Ganga Devi, 'Vidhwa Vivah' (Widow Marriage), *Stree Darpan*, January 1910, 45-48.

instructions are sent to all the meetings from this centre; even then, the widow will be greatly appreciated and benefited.⁵³

By addressing the organisation, escaping from widow remarriage, and preserving the 'Honour' of Hindu society, she favoured economic certainty for widows where they could get financial help from the organisation that works for them. She denies the idea of widow remarriage by providing alternate solutions for widows.

4.10. Nationalist Views on Widow Remarriage

4.10.1. Purushottam Das Tandon's views on Widow Remarriage and Child marriage:

The second decade of the twentieth century can be considered an era of the women's reform movement in north India; individual women's participation and their involvement in public places propose widow remarriage. Similarly, a conservative section of male and female intellectuals opposed the idea of widow remarriage. The reactionist group of the national movement headed a debate on widow remarriage among women intellectuals of the Hindi belt. On criticism of widow remarriage, Ramrakh Singh Sahagal (editor of the *Chand*), explains, 'Some gentlemen complained that we are not publishing any remarks against the widow remarriage. He further justified, '*Chand* that opposing widow remarriage is visible in intellectuals' writings of *Chand* such as Shri Ram Krishna Mukund, Pursottam Das Ji Tandon, Smt. Padmavati Saji Rao and Krishna Kumari Baghel Ji. These prominent figures have given their views against widow marriage'.⁵⁴ Thus, the prominent figures of Hindi literature opposed widow remarriage.

4.10.2. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's thoughts on Widows, 'Countrymen, how long will you lie in dishonesty and sleep? Please! Open your eyes and see! that the pure land of our sages and ancestors was once the highest status in the world. Nowadays, it is flowing in a tough situation for widow's unfaithfulness. By allowing them to remarry, you will be saved from unrighteousness; you believe that after the death of her husband, women become altogether free from the effects of humanity and nature, and their sexual desire also does not persecute them. Still, with the new instance of adultery, your belief

⁵³ Sukhalata, Kumari Devi, 'Bhartiya Vidhwaon Ka Jeevan' (Life of Indian Widows), *Chand*, April 1923, 436-437.

⁵⁴ Ram Rakh Singh Sahgal, 'Chand ki Neeti Apeksha', *Chand*, November 1927. 12.

will prove wrong.⁵⁵ Iswarchandra was more concerned about protecting ancient beliefs than the women's true emancipation. He believed that women could not control their intimate desire, leading them towards wrong deeds. He favoured widow remarriage only with the concern of saving the Hindu religion.

4.10.3. Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru⁵⁶ views on Widows: This interview was taken by a *Chand* representative, where Dr Sapru remarked, 'I strongly favour widow conscience, and widow remarriage must be done; I think it is against humanity to stop widow remarriage'.⁵⁷

'Child widows must be remarried, but the question of remarriage should be left to the will of other widows. If the woman wishes to remarry, there should be no restriction, and hatred towards them should not arise in society.'⁵⁸ Dr, Sapru was in favour of widow remarriage; according to him advocating, widow remarriage can emancipate the widows.

4.11. Widows' Abduction Stories

There were many abduction stories narrated by Hindi journals. The editorial section of *Arya Mahila*, July 1931, narrated the abduction stories of widows. 'we be familiar with Muslim rule as a period of beheaded Hindus; at that time, our education declined, learning Persian was becoming a reason for the livelihood of men, and our women did not benefit from learning, our Aryan women used to sit at home and read religious texts, who could not get an education so Hindu men had made arrangements to recite the Puranas. That time was for self-defence; women were taught using weapons rather than the scriptures.'⁵⁹

A letter originally published in the *Hindu Punch* was reproduced in *Arya Mahila* in which the story of a widow has been published. 'we read in the letters that a woman ran away from her father's house after getting into difficulty with the constant beatings of her

⁵⁵ A Special Representative of *Chand*, 'Dr Sapru Ke Vichar'. *Chand*, April 1923, 489.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 489.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 489.

⁵⁸ A special representative of *Chand*, interviewed, 'Dr. Sapru Ke Vichar', 489.

⁵⁹ Sampadkiya Tippaniyan, *Arya Mahila*, July 1931.

husband and mother-in-law. At the same time, the Muslim goon abducts them and brutally tortures them.⁶⁰

These kinds of stories try to project that Hindu women are already in trouble at the same time as Muslims were abducting them.

A poem titled 'Jay Bharat Virangna' written by Narmadabai Chaturvedi addresses the Arya for being awakened to the harm of Hindus. She reasoned that it was Muslim rule that made Indian society turn down. She was arousing the Hindu women by protecting their religion;

sisters carry the weapon, our life as a Hindu becomes a burden, but this Muslim atrocity reminds us of our historical past; the burning house reminds us of the Gori invasion. The enchantment of Suhrawardi repeats Genghis. The world's humanity has been destroyed. sisters carry the weapon; our Hindu life has become a burden.⁶¹

In her writings, Narmadabai Chaturvedi appealed to Hindu women to be brave and take their weapons against their enemy.

'Most people do not care about their pets such as birds, then how they will care for their women. Due to this, wicked men (Muslims) are capable of seducing widows. I am aware of such incidents where the ever-present desires of widows have been trampled upon with a bad stigma. That's why these widows choose to run away from home after being disappointed and sad.'⁶²

Prabha Devi reasoned that as Hindus are careless, they cannot keep their pet pleasingly then how they will care for their widowed daughter. That is the reason widows themselves choose to be run by Muslims.

Further, Prabha Devi explained women's presence in public places. She commented that

Travelling on the road, in a hired car, in trains or the inn and even inside the house (Antahpur), the goons do not stop chasing. As Hindu women are public property, anyone can use them voluntarily. However, they (Muslims) go beyond the limits they rob, beat, murder and rape women.⁶³

Here, she mentioned that even if Hindu women are under control, wicked men will purposefully chase them to fulfil their lustful hunger.

She warned Hindu men that

⁶⁰ 'Hindu Pancha,' *Arya Mahila*, June/July 1926, 90-93.

⁶¹ Narmadabai Chaturvedi, 'Jai Bharat Virangna', *Arya Mahila*, April/ May/June 1947,2.

⁶² Smt. Prabha Devi, Chhapra, 'Hindu Striyon Par Anginat Atyachar', *Arya Mahila*, 1925,76-79, for this reference,77.

⁶³ Prabha Devi, Chhapra, 'Hindu Striyon Par Anginat Atyachar',79.

There is still time; take care and learn to respect your women. Be ashamed of your mother's milk; your motherhood is in danger. Get ready to protect it. Wherever you see atrocities on Arya women, take a breath! only after the end of the oppressors. 'If you are afraid, if you are greedy for life, then believe that you should die.'⁶⁴

Prabha Devi appealed to Hindu men to be brave and protect their women from abductors. In its section of *Mahila Sansar*, *Arya Mahila* discussed the teasing stories of Hindu women and English women.

'It is often heard that a Muslim or a European goon raped the woman in such a place. Such news is heard not only about Muslims but sometimes about British women. In just a few days, an English woman was abducted by a Pathan in the Frontier Province. See! how the British were angry, and what a terrible storm had arisen? The protection of women is a symbol of freedom. No one has the power to put an eye on an English woman without her concern. If a sinner (Muslims) acts like this, he will be killed on the spot, and the court will stay away; this is the freedom of the British government, also called freedom of bravery. This bravery does not exist among Hindus today.'⁶⁵

By comparing such incidents, *Arya Mahila* tried to make Hindu men more conscious about women's protection than the British.

In its 'Mahila Sansar' section, it is discussed, 'Hindus have the highest position in the world, their women are considered as ideal in the world for their loyalty towards husbands. Do people become so degenerate? That is why goons abduct Hindu women whom they consider a minor thing. It is suitable for the Hindus to be finished off from the world, and it is not good to live in this condition.'⁶⁶

This narrative is taken from *Bangwasi* (A Bengali Magazine) published in *Arya Mahila*.

A Miyaji (Muslim man) tried to marry a Hindu widow from Naromara village in Dhaka district, but their hopes remained unfilled because the judicial court stayed its decision. Neither Kafirani (A non-Muslim woman) got the privilege to become a Muslim nor did her love.'⁶⁷

Another story is of a vegetable seller. In Lahore, he lured a ten-year-old Hindu girl to his shop, where he closed the shop and raped the girl. A neighbouring shopkeeper informed a sergeant about this; the police officers also came into a closed shop; after opening the

⁶⁴ Ibid.79.

⁶⁵ 'Mahila Sansar' *Arya Mahila*, May/June 1924 ,80.

⁶⁶ Ibid.,81.

⁶⁷ Mahila Samachar, *Arya Mahila*, July/August 1926, 130-131.

door, the girl was afraid. This Muslim man was immediately arrested, went to police custody, and was taken to court.⁶⁸

‘A few days later, two Muslims of Rawalpindi seduced an innocent girl and locked her in a house for several days; at the same time, they raped her. When the cops knew about their evil misdeeds, they went to that house and rescued the girl. After that, they arrested both men and accused them of several charges for seducing the girl, such as abduction, caging and confining her to rape. The magistrate proved his judgement against the accused and sent them to jail. The judgement came that the judge is to prison both criminals for fourteen years.’⁶⁹

The stories have come from Bengal, where the journal *Arya Mahila* appealed to Bengali Hindus to protect their women from Muslim men.

These days, the trend of destroying the Honour of Hindu women is trending in Bengal. What about the Hindus of Bengal and the Hindu leaders of the country? What are Hindu leaders of the country thinking? Do not Hindus, proud of Bengal, get down in shame after reading such news in newspapers? Is there bravery in this? A woman has been kidnapped and has been thrown out of society. Can't this Muslim goons' activity stop in society? Due to this, the number of Muslims has increased in Bengal.⁷⁰

Arya Mahila shows its concern about the increasing number of Muslims in the Bengal region. And further, it warned all Hindus to be united in favour of Bengali women.

Those who do not know how to protect the honour of their women by the cost of their lives, their days are completed now we should understand this, Hindu society should soon be ready to eradicate this stigma of Bengal. The police and the judiciary cannot help us straight away. We consider them for later; first, we need to take charge. Therefore, there is a need for Hindus of the village area to be organised, or else it would be better to leave that settlement forever where the number of Hindus is so lesser that the Muslims do whatever they want, and there is no one to help.⁷¹

Furthermore, the journal mocks Bengali men by comparing them with women. ‘When we have enough courage and Organisation to face the extreme oppression of oppressors

⁶⁸ Ibid.,130.

⁶⁹ Mahila Samachar, *Arya Mahila*, July/August 1926,130-131.

⁷⁰ According to the editor of Hindu Panch, [Chapter2: Modern Period \(maharashtra.gov.in\)](http://maharashtra.gov.in), Hindupanch was first Marathi magazine edited by Dabake. Hindu Panch, *Arya Mahila*, June/July 1926, 90-93.

⁷¹ *Arya Mahila*, June/July 1926,91.

and that day itself, no one will keep an eye on our women. The Bengali men have become female; that is why today their women face this pitiful condition'.⁷²

4.12. Conversion and Abduction of Widows

Women are considered *Grihalakshmi* (Goddess of the House); they turn into unpleasant and sinner women by attending widowhood. Similarly, widows' lives were affected due to communal politics, and the victimisation of widowhood appeared in the Hindi periodical.

In its news section 'Vidhwaon ka Kaccha Chittah' (Widows Deeds), *Chand* discusses the stories of widows. The title of a widow's story was 'Musalman Ke Sath Nikah' (Marriage with a Muslim), a widow. She came to the Arya Samaj temple in Lahore with her girl, and prayed to be purified or reconverted. She narrated her own story. 'I am the wife of a Hindu Thanedar who has two wives. The SHO (Thanedar) was old, and I married in his old age. On the death of Thanedar, his second wife's son filed a case against me because the SHO had given all his property to me. I had no side. When I was young, I advocated for the case for two years. I was in misfortune, and I lost the case. Then I married a Muslim; before that, I was a girl's mother; now, she is not comfortable with Muslims. I regret my old condition and want to get better by conversion.'⁷³

Such conversion stories were discussed in *Chand* by the editor. However, this story well mentions the condition of widows and how they struggle with the financial burden. Chand's other widow's story was published in this section in the periodical Pratap. A mother and her son narrated their story.

Chand published another story about Sardar Khan from Gujarat's 'Bhallu' District. This story is of a Hindu widow Mayadevi, who belonged to the Brahmin society. This widow was a resident of Ashrafpur district, Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh. She narrated 'she married in childhood, and after her marriage of two years, her husband died. After becoming a widow, she faced humiliation from both in-laws and in the maternal home. She was not allowed good food and could not wear good clothes. Going to the wedding was considered a sin. After her family's atrocities, she ran away with Sardar Singh Sikh and stayed with him for ten years. She gave birth to a girl child; due to her miserable

⁷² Ibid.,91.

⁷³ Samachar Sangrah 'Vidhwaon Ka Kaccha Chittha' (Widows Deeds), *Chand*, April 1923, 504-505.

health, the man kicked her out and took all the ornaments. Later she gets shelter in a shelter home with her daughter. After her story, Mayadevi narrated another abduction story of Sardar Singh, that he abducted a Brahmin woman named Mohani from Barambaki and sold her in Sialkot for 200 rupees. According to Mayadevi, many Hindu women were sold to Muslims. Many women became Christians; it was only because of child marriage. To the story's authenticity, Mayadevi's thumb has been marked in her registered complaint. As a Brahmin widow, no one was ready to accept her because she was considered impure after staying with a man from another community. Hence, in every situation, widows were suffering. Chand narrated such stories of conversion and published them.

‘Hindu Vidhwa Musalman Ho Gayi’ (A Hindu Widow Became Muslim), *Chand* (September 1926) wrote a column about a Hindu widow’s conversion in its ‘Samachar Sangrah’ column (News Records). The title of this news was ‘Hindu Widow become Muslim’. *Chand* writes that a Hindu widow in Delhi, along with her three children, converted to Islam; Hindus tried hard to reconvert her, but she refused; her statement was a blot on the head of the Hindus. She suffered because of a man and became pregnant, but her people threw her out of the home. Will the Hindu society pay attention to this disaster?.’⁷⁴ The story of Hindu women's conversion is always a fearful position for Hindu protagonists. This is why the Chand uncovered the conversion story, especially women who converted to Islam.

4.13. Muslim Men as Rapist in News Columns

Samachar Sangrah section of Chand mentions the atrocities perpetrated on a widow titled ‘Vidarak Kahani’ (A Heartbreaking Story of a Woman). The statement of Smt. Kaansa Devi was recorded in the Additional District Magistrate Rai Saheb Lala Amarnath court. According to Kaansa Devi, when she separated from her husband and went to Sivalaya (A religious place), some Muslim goons attacked and threw her son in the channel. Kaansa Devi was beaten up, her ornaments were taken off, and all clothes from her body were removed. When a report was written about this matter in the Lahore police station, the court sentenced 14 years imprisonment to two accused named Gulab and Alladin.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Samachar Sangrah (News Collection), *Chand*, September 1926, 543.

⁷⁵ Samachar Sangrah (News Collection), *Chand*, October 1926, 642-643.

Widow's stories were trying to present that Muslim men are wicked and widows are in miserable conditions due to Muslim atrocities.⁷⁶ On one side, these stories provided information about incidents that happened to Hindu women, and on the other side, warned women to be aware of Muslim men.

4.19. Potential Hindu Men

In its news section, *Chand* 1925 mentioned the condition of Hindu men is useless; they cannot save their women from Muslims. This news column contained the article 'Hindion Ki Namardi' (Hindus Impotent) considers fearful and frightened Hindus. *Chand* has taken this news from the magazine 'Vartman'. A gentleman named Shri Bhagwan Das Aggarwal has narrated a story of an Agrawal girl who has come to Indore cantonment; Muslim goons forcefully tried to convert that girl. However, she was not ready to become a Muslim when those Muslim goons brought four gold earrings, kept them with the girl, and accused her of theft, so she was arrested. The people of the cantonment later rescued her.⁷⁷

4.20. Women Should Be Masculine:

Women magazines were requesting Hindu widows to learn self-defence, so they could protect themselves from wicked men. 'Ladies, I have to tell you one thing, try to be the form of the identical Durga, whose image is notorious for Indian women being explicit about her muscular character. Until yesterday, Hindu society worshipped you like a goddess, but today it closed its eyes of awareness, which were covered with foolishness. So, this society does not recognise your potential and tortures you. Moreover, seeing others committing atrocities, he is unaware of protecting the women and cutting off tyrannical hands. Therefore! You get up! and try to accumulate enough morale and physical strength to avenge all the atrocities, insults and injustices that have been perpetrated, which no one can ever see you.'⁷⁸

4.21. Widow as Ascetic

⁷⁶ Ibid., 643.

⁷⁷ *Chand*, October 1925.

⁷⁸ 'Hindu Panch', *Arya Mahila*, June/July 1926, 90-93.

The magazine *Arya Mahila* advocates that widows should adopt the way of ascetic life only to contribute to society and protect our culture. 'The pride of a sanyasi (an ascetic man) in Hindu society is the same as a widow, as sanyasi denies everything and stays away from materialistic life. Therefore, widows should keep worldliness away. They should be given simple food. No provocative act should be done in front of them. Moreover, we should take care that they should not suffer any trouble. Those families who cannot adequately protect the widows of their home should be sent to the Ashram of *Arya Mahila Hitkarini Mahaparishad*; the Widow ashram provides maintenance for them, even if they get the education to serve the country.'⁷⁹

By inspiring such stories, a woman explained her loyalty to her husband. Smt Vimla Devi wrote a poem titled 'Swargiya Preetam Ke Prati' (For Late Husband) favouring widows; she tried to mark the widow's approach towards their dead husbands. To be a loyal wife, she was questioned by her husband. In the poem, Is he busy with women of heaven or turned to be like other men who run behind the women?.⁸⁰ In this manner, women were questioned by the society that advocated adopting asceticism.

Another essay titled 'Stree Jati me Dhan Ka Durupyog' (waste of money among women community)' Smt. Shrimati Surya Kumari Devi emphasises women's expenditure. Focusing on women's financial waste, she emphasised not spending money on worldly life and fake superstition. According to her, this will cause an unnecessary burden on family and society. She stated, '

O! Arya girls, when you go to graves and mosques and bow your head, you are not ashamed at all, you have 33 crore gods beside you that worship them (Muslims), you go to Muslims tombs, devote chadors and Sholes. Shame on you for your wisdom; how do you deserve this mahatma who does cow slaughter? You make them rich by not thinking of right and wrong.⁸¹

She warned women to be aware of the Mahatma (religious guru) who slaughtered cows, showing her understanding of cultural awareness. The conversion of widows is most debated. She says,

⁷⁹ Mahila Samachar, *Arya Mahila*, July/August 1926, 130-131.

⁸⁰ Smt Vimla Devi, 'Priyatam ke Prati' (To Late Husband), *Chand*, April 1923, 477.

⁸¹ Surya Kumari Devi, 'Stree Jati me Dhan Ka Durupyog' (Waste of Money among women community), *Stree Darpan*, December 1918, 318-321.

Millions of widows are absolved and suffering under great torture'.⁸² She is concerned about her fear of the existence of the Hindu community and suggests to women that 'Come sisters, let us understand our original religion, do not let the name of our country and society be tarnished in the world; otherwise, this period will destroy the Hindu name in such a way that then people will forget (Hindu Identity).⁸³

Shrimati Surya Kumari Devi justified that if women take the path of criticism, they should be aware of the 'other' religions. Because worshipping other gods can harm Hindu identity.

4.23. Discrimination of Men for Marrying Widows

In its editorial section of 1925, *Arya Mahila* discussed the widow's problems. The journal was perceptive in addressing the widow issue in its editorial column. However, *Arya Mahila* criticises incidents of widow remarriage.

A daily newspaper editor of Kashi married a widow. He was a high caste Brahmin. However, he married a widow without being concerned about his ideal status in society. Then he lost his position—many newspapers and magazines celebrated such a step. Surprisingly, as Hinduism declined, the people openly commemorated this religious loss.⁸⁴

Another story is of a man who was discriminated against in society for marrying a widow. The people taking the initiative of widow remarriage were discriminated against in society. A story of such kind of discrimination was published in *Chand*. 'Ganga Pathak, resident of Madhurapur district Munger, married a widow from Mahuri village near Bihar and lived with her for two years, and she gave birth to a child from Ganga Pathak; the people of that village threw her out of the house and asked him to leave the woman somewhere else. Then Ganga Pathak took that widow to Calcutta, left her there after a few days, and returned. The widow returned to Madhurapur for Ganga Pathak. Then the religious protagonist beat him and drove him out of the settlement. The couple started living in the old market of Teghra (Bihar). Ganga Pathak filed a case against his relative Ramsunder Pathak with the Magistrate of Begusarai. Sundar Pathak did not even allow witnesses to appear in the court to protect Sanatan Dharma. The helpless Ganga Pathak

⁸² Ibid., 325.

⁸³ Ibid, 325.

⁸⁴ Sampadikya Vaktavya, *Arya Mahila*, June/July 1925, 67-69.

withdrew the case and left the widow; she started living alone in Teghra Bazaar, where many Muslims resided. The widow and her child were in danger. Will any Hindu Lal (potential Hindu men) resolve the trouble of that widow by saving a sinking boat? ⁸⁵ The men marrying widows; were suffering harsh discrimination by society to protect their religion. However, no one considered the problem of widows; they were left all alone in their plight.

4.24. Child marriage and Unsuitable Partner

Ganga Devi, in her essay 'Vidhwa Vivah', discusses child marriage as the main reason for early widowhood. She believes that child marriage and polygamy increase the number of widows in the country.⁸⁶ Prabha Devi describes the social tyranny and consequences of child marriage and unsuitable partners in this way; she says that 'the marriage between a five-year-old girl and a seventy-year-old man is the same. Nothing has changed about the rights of women in the present Hindu society.'⁸⁷

4.24.1. Numbers of Child Widows

According to the 1921 census, the Numbers of Hindu Child Widows:

Table.No.1

No.	Age	Number of Widows
1	1 Year	612
2	5 Year	2024
3	10 Year	97857
4	15 Year	332517
5	15-20 Year	500000
Total-		933010

⁸⁵ Ramhit Singh, 'Hindu Manovoritiki Ka Vyapak Swaroop.' *Chand*, September 1929, 1-7. For this reference, see page no 7.

⁸⁶ Smt Ganga Devi, 'Vidhwa Vivah' (Widow Marriage), *Stree Darpan*, January, 1910, 47.

⁸⁷ Smt. Prabha Devi, Chhapra, 'Hindu Striyon Par Anginat Atyachar', *Arya Mahila*, 1925,76-79, for this reference,77.

Source: *Chand* 'Widow Issue' April 1923.

The data explains that crores of widows existed in society. The more the number of 20-year-old girls, the more widows increased to ten lacs. Hindu widows were two crores, two lacs, eighteen thousand.⁸⁸ Arya Mahila explained the miserable condition of widows and how they face everyday humiliation.

The condition of Hindu widows worsens. In their house, other male family members and their wives avoid them; at this point, no one wants to wake up in the morning and see the face of that poor widow. Even they cannot get good food and drink. No one cares whether she dies or lives. Because of Hindu widows, many markets have remained buzzing, and many have gone to Muslim homes.⁸⁹

After such kind of behaviour, these widows were heading towards prostitution. 'The father of a widow is trafficking her for money. In some places, the husband is also doing the same with their wife. This is a common practice in many places around Shimla. Wherever orphans, women's houses, and widow homes are being constructed, some people are biased to marry orphan widows. However, a black snake remains hidden under these promising industries. Often these orphans traffic women like animals.'⁹⁰

4.24.2. Sarda Act.

From 1928 to 1929, Sarda Bill was Introduced by the Rao Sahib Haribilas Sarda⁹¹ in Indian Legislative Assembly against child marriage. The aim of this Bill was to stop unlawful sexual intercourse with underage girls. Later this Sarda Bill was enacted by Lord Irwin in the Imperial Legislative Council of India on September 28, 1929, as the Sarda Act. It is also known as the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929. It applied to the whole country except Jammu and Kashmir.

Many women intellectuals opposed this act because, according to them, this act distressed Hindu culture. After the commencement of this Bill, Arya Mahila appealed for

⁸⁸ Sampadkiya Vaktavya, 'Balvivah Ke Dushparinam', *Arya Mahila*, October/November 1925, 204.

⁸⁹ 'Hindu Vidhavaon ki Badaulat na Jaane Kitane hi Bajar Gulajar Bane Hue Hain Aur Kitani Vidhavayen Musalamaano ke Ghar Jaakar Baithi Hain Jisase Ant Mein Hamaare Sar Phodane Aur Hamen Chhura Maarakar Musalamaano Sa Raasta Saaf Karne Wale Paida Hote Chale Jaate Hain.' *Mahila Sansar* (A special section for women), 'Nari Nirayatan', *Arya Mahila*, June/July 1927, 91-92.

⁹⁰ Smt. Prabha Devi, Chhapra, 'Hindu Striyon Par Anginat Atyachar', *Arya Mahila*, 1925, 76-79, for reference, 78.

⁹¹ Mukharjee, "Using the Legislative Assembly for Social Reform: The Sarda Act of 1929.", 219-220.

a nationwide movement against this bill.⁹² To process this movement, Arya Mahila demanded a peaceful movement against the higher authority who introduced this Bill. It was appropriate for the followers of Varnashrama Dharma to initiate such a peaceful movement in the country. The Honourable Viceroy should suspend this bill, and the reformers should not do such misconduct again.⁹³ It became compulsory to oppose this Bill before enacting because it was unacceptable for conservatives to interfere in religious matters.⁹⁴ These conservatives believed that this Bill would harm their religious values. Bhaushashtri Bhaje of Nagpur initiated this movement, Lakshmanshastri Dravid of Kashi, Panchanan Tarkraksh of Bhatpada and Pdamnath Vidyavinod M.A. from Silhat. This group of male intellectuals lead the movement against the Sarda Act.⁹⁵ Women such as Indumati Devi, Vimla Devi, and Sarojini Devi opposed this act. The ‘Saradha Bill has been passed as if there is severe damage to the people of India. This is unfair that modernist council members make such rules against their brothers to suppress their feelings.’⁹⁶

Conservative section of women not in favour of the Sarda Act. They believe that this act will not bring any changes to society. According to Sarojini Devi, the Sarda Act will not reduce the female infanticide rate. She believes that this Bill harmed Hindu culture. In its editorial section, the movement mentioned the Sarda Bill. A column entitled ‘Hamara Andolan’ (Our Movement) mentions that Sarda Act should remove otherwise, it will harm in future.⁹⁷ In 1931, Arya Mahila, in its section ‘Hamari Daak’ (Our Post), mentioned the disagreement of Arya Mahila Mahaparishad Sarda Bill. It was a condemned letter that sends to Viocory and Act council president to scrap Sarda Bill.⁹⁸

⁹² ‘At such times, there is a need for complete awakening and a nationwide movement against it’. Editorial Notes, ‘Dharmik Andolan’ (Religious Movement), *Arya Mahila*, October 1929, 504.

⁹³ Editorial Notes, *Arya Mahila*, 1929, 505.

⁹⁴ Editorial Notes, ‘Ashankniya Avastha’ (Doubtful Status), *Arya Mahila*, December 1929, 673.

⁹⁵ Editorial Notes, ‘Varnashram Sangathan’, (Varnashrama Organisation), *Arya Mahila*, November 1929, 582.

⁹⁶ Sarojini Devi, ‘Aisa Dabav Kyun’, *Arya Mahila*, March 1930, 310-312.

⁹⁷ ‘Sarda Bill Vah Act Hai Jiska Mulochhdan Ho Jana hi Shreyakar Hai, Yadi Ham Agyantavash Isko Radd Nahi Kara Dete to Bahvisya me Apne Liye Apda Mol Lete Hain, Jiska Tanta Kabhi Na Tutega’. Sampadkiya Tippiya, (Editorail Notes), ‘Hamara Andolan’ (Our Movement), *Arya Mahila*, May 1930, 88-91.

⁹⁸ ‘Aryamahila Mahaparsihad All India representative Hindu Ladies Association again strongly condemned Sarda act which violates Empress Pledge and interferes with sacred Laws of religion and sacrament of both sexes. Maha Parishad welcomes Bills repealing the same and earnestly prays to protect Hindu ladies’ religion and social order and request foresight action at this grave moment’, Hamari Daak (Our Post), *Arya Mahila* November 1931, 476.

The voices against this bill were also coming from Muslims. A column discusses Muslim views on the Sarda Act. Arya Mahila presented a cautionary appreciation of a Muslim group who visited the viceroy to take back this law to protect their laws.⁹⁹ They were ready to fight against the law harming their religious identity. This section demanded that Muslims be exempted from this law, and the government should again introduce this with the necessary amendments.

4.24.3 Numbers of Young Widows

In 1923, *Chand* published a section called ‘Vidwano ki Smasyaen’ (Widows Problem). This section included the thoughts of various prominent personalities, including social reformers, political leaders and literary intellectuals. ‘Indian women aged between fifteen and forty are eleven percent widows. More widows are found among Hindus than Muslims; in this condition, twelve per cent among Hindus and nine per cent of widows were found in Muslims. Six per cent in the North-West Frontier Province, seven in Kashmir, eight in the Central Provinces of Punjab and Berar, Mumbai, Madras, the United Provinces of Awadh, Cochin the princely states of Central India eleven, Thirteen percent of widows were in Mysore and Assam and sixteen per cent in Bengal’.¹⁰⁰ Most Hindu widows live in Bengal and the northern region.

‘Except in Bengal, there are more widows in the lower caste than the upper caste in other provinces. Among the Brahmins, Kayasthas and Rajputs in Bihar and Odisha, twenty per cent are widows between twenty and forty years. Only thirteen per cent of the Chamar, Dhanuk, Dhobi, Gwala, Kumhar, Kori, Lohar, Musahar and Telis are widows. Twenty-five per cent of widows were among Brahmins in Bombay. The same is true of the Central Provinces, Berar, United Provinces, Punjab and Madras.’¹⁰¹

Table.No.2
Numbers of Widows 1881-1911

Women	1881	1891	1901	1911

⁹⁹ Muslims are not ready to tolerate this kind of interference in their personal law; all Muslims are ready to stand against law which is related to religion. Editorial Notes, ‘Musalman Aur Sarda Kanoon’ (Muslims and Sarda Act) *Arya Mahila*, December 1929, 671.

¹⁰⁰ Shriyut Sheetla Sahay Ji, ‘Bhartiya Vihwaon ka Sudhar’ (Indian Widow’s Reform), *Chand*, April 1923, 462-468.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 463.

0-5 Yr	3	1	1	1
5-10Yr	...	4	6	5
10-15Yr	21	16	21	17
15-20 Yr	50	38	49	42
20-30 Yr	104	86	101	90
30-40 Yr	239	216	229	214
40-60 Yr	531	532	522	523
60 and above	855	861	842	850

Source: Sheetla Sahay Ji, B.A. (Editor, Swaraj), 'Indian Widows Reform', *Chand*, April 1923,,463.

Mr Khandewal wrote an article about widows in Navajivan, in which he gave the following figures from the census of India, which includes the number of Hindu and Muslim widows.

Table.No.3
Widows number According to Religious Data

Age	Married Girls	Widows
1 to 12 Months	13212	17014
1 yr. to 2 yr.	16753	856
2 yr. to 3 yr..	49787	1807
3 yr. to 4 yr.	134105	9273
4 yr. to 5 yr.	302425	17703

5 yr. to 10 yr.	2219778	94240
10 yr. to 15 yr.	10087024	223032

Table.No.4
Numbers of Hindus and Muslims Widows

Age	Hindu Widows	Muslims Widows
1 to 12 months	866	109
1 yr. to 2 yr.	755	64
2 yr. to 3 yr.	1564	166
3 yr. to 4 yr.	3987	5806
4 yr. to 5 yr.	7603	1281
Only 5 yr.	14775	2133
5 yr. to 10 yr.	77585	24276
10 yr. to 15 yr.	181507	36264

Table No. 5
Numbers of Widows According to Region

Bengal	17583
Bihar	36275

Bombay	6726
Madras	5038
U. P.	17209
Baroda	783
Hyderabad	6782

According to this data, most of the widows were in Bengal, Bihar and U.P. In the Gujarat region numbers of widows were very less.

Khandewal discussed the views of Mahatma Gandhi, the note entitled ‘Mahatma Gandhi Ke Vichar’ (Gandhi’s Thought). He (Mr Khandewal) mentioned that Mahatma Gandhi opposed widow remarriage,

Mahatma Gandhi had made his comment on these numbers of widows, whoever reads these numbers will surely cry, but unsighted reformers will say that widow marriage is the best remedy for this condition, but I cannot say that. I am a man with children, there are widows in my family too, but I cannot dare to tell them that you should remarry; even the thought of remarriage will not come into their mind; it means that men should take a vow that we will not remarry.¹⁰²

To prevent widows from remarriage, he gave a solution to men not to agree to widow remarriage.

4.25. Widows’ Letters to Magazines

Number of letters sent by widows to magazines for publishing. In those letters, widows expressed their sorrow and the miserable condition they suffered due to strict social customs.

Chand printed some letters of widows’ and their plights on the widow issue.

A widow writes to the editor the letter entitled ‘Ek Pratisthit Mahila Ka Patra’ (A letter of a Dignified Woman).

¹⁰² Vidwano ki Sammatian (Scholars Note), *Chand* 1923,486-488.

‘Respected editor of Chand,

Namaskar, for the unspeakable favour you are doing to women through *Chand*, our sisters and their children will have to remain indebted to you for their life. Significantly, the light you have been throwing on the poor condition of widows from time to time is not hidden from the world today, even though *Chand* has represented the condition of widows in front of its readers. I am a helpless widow; I express my heartfelt thanks to you on behalf of my widowed sisters. I have read your influential articles very carefully in other monthly magazines and always promote them when your influential articles are published in the widow's issues. In ‘Bharat Mitra’ (magazine) of Calcutta, I have read that the following number widow number widows were mentioned in *Chand*. These widows are coming forward for remarriage. May the Almighty God give you (*Chand*) success in this and give so much wisdom to the people that they can pay quick attention to the unfortunate widows. I belong to a humble family and am the daughter-in-law of the prestigious Khatri family.

My father is devoted to *Sanatan Dharma* and a member of ‘Bharat Dharma Mahamandal’ however, since I became a widow after only 21 days of marriage and have been at his neck since then, he felt pity for my condition and decided to marry me again. My husband had already suffered from disease when I got married. Which probably increased into marriage, and after twenty-one days, he went to the next world; I was eight years old then. I had heard that my husband was already ill. He was thirty-five years old at the time of marriage, and his two wives had previously died of childbirth. At present, I am seventeen years old. I have an English education, and my mother, a stepmother, can't naturally love me as my mother could today. Despite his opposition, my father asked me many questions one day in solitude. I cried and said yes to remarriage, longing to be freed from the tyranny of my stepmother. From the day when people outside the house knew that my second marriage would happen, my father was condemned in every house, and people cursed him; our relatives also threatened to leave us. You have given a lot, and you have introduced lowliness. I only want to know in which Veda, or Quran, such a command has been given that whenever men want to renounce their footwear, they can get married many times, but poor women, despite living in such a situation as I am today, can't get married? If this is not the terrible downfall of society, then what is. I am definitely in favour of widow remarriage. However, if my mother and family had treated me well, I would not have allowed the idea of remarriage to enter my heart since my marriage now puts a heavy burden on my dear father.

There is a possibility of objection, so at first, I thought of suicide, but no, I will not do this, but I will leave my house, and today I will do this. I assure you I will devote my life to the service of my widowed sisters, and whatever I can do in this regard, I will do. There is no such organisation in India with which I can work. Feel free to publish it in the coming widow issue but do not write my name so that our other widowed sisters whose life is going on like mine today can help themselves and soon present a significant movement in front of Gandhi and his followers while doing political agitation, they should pay little attention to the condition of their widowed sisters'.¹⁰³ The letter was written in March 1923, and Lady mentioned her last name, Kapoor.

A Bengali monarch lady wrote a letter to a Bengali friend. This letter was published in *Chand*. In her letter, Rani Sahiba discussed her condition after becoming a widow. Rani Sahiba writes 'I became a widow at twelve and was my husband's third wife. At only twenty, I got into relationships with about thirty people. I used to live contrary to the way widows should live according to the scriptures; my food was like that of a queen. No woman or man could take care of his legitimacy by eating such food; now, I have become infamous enough. If I had been married again, I would never have become an adulteress, so let our fraternity see and take a lesson from us; the young girls who need a husband must do their marriage; I hope people will learn from this story of mine. Date 5th April 1927, Your Queen.'¹⁰⁴

Similarly, the narrative of widows' in Hindi literature formed community awareness throughout the colonial era. By narrating the story of their sufferings, widows formed a new perspective among the colonial inhabitants. It resulted in women's resistance in literary form, and widow's narration drew a consciousness among middle-class intellectuals' towards widows' reality.

4.26. Education Prevents Widows from Domestic Suffering:

Smt. Bhagbhari Handu from Madras explains the grief of a south Indian widow. In her article entitled 'Saccha Paropkar' (True Generosity), her concern was the widow's education but not the stress of widow remarriage. Handu criticised the social reformers who were not concerned with widows' issues. She argued, 'In Deccan, there are renowned people who deliver their lecture in a public place about women's issues,

¹⁰³ 'Vidhwaon Ki Durdasha', *Chand*, April 1923. 496-497.

¹⁰⁴ *Chand*, April 1927.

although their widowed mother has to shave her head every week. If they do not shave, they have to face harsh humiliation.’¹⁰⁵ She countered these reformers who were not providing freedom for women in their own houses. She said, ‘If they cannot earn their bread, they have to stay in their in-laws’ house or their brother’s house in domestic servitude.’¹⁰⁶ Widows have to depend on others to survive. According to her, ‘Indian men treated their women as servants of the house, similarly if the time came to educate girls; the memsahib (English educated women) would be there.’¹⁰⁷ She further said that women were treated as secondary subjects of society. By mentioning widows’ conditions, she gives the example of D.K. Karve’s initiative on widows’ education to establish a widow home. She said, ‘When both girls and boys will get the education, for the future, they will spend their money to start a welfare society for widows and will not waste their money on Durga Puja or Ramayan Pandal.’¹⁰⁸ The educated crowd and widows themselves will find the solution of widows’ help. After such a solution, educated people will not spend their money unnecessarily. She believes that education is the cure for all problems. It can prevent early child marriage of educated women, and will initiate remarriage, which in turn, can resolve the issue of child widows.

The concept of female education proclaims that educated girls will educate society. This scenario was materialised to educate women only to make an ideal wife for a well-educated male partner. However, it was followed by the female authors. In her essay (Special for *Chand*), ‘*Vidhwaon Ke Karya*,’ (Widow’s work), Padmabai Sanjeevra (M.A.) focused on the widow’s contribution to female education, which was the demand of the time. She explains,

We need some educated female teachers to educate our girls; we need women doctors and lawyers who can help with the needs of women. We need women municipal commissioners who keep the city clean by keeping their homes clean and tidy.¹⁰⁹

She believes widows only can manage society, and their courtesy in public life can contribute to society. With the help of widows, society can be more beautiful and proud. She further said, ‘We believe that the unique benevolent nature of widows should be used

¹⁰⁵ Smt Bhagbahri Handu, ‘Saccha Paropkar’ (True Generosity), *Stree Darpan*, January 1910, 39-41.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰⁹ Padmabai, ‘*Vidhwaon Ke Karya*’, 1923, 439.

for the public benefits, as they are never engaged as the advantage of healthy personal interests'.¹¹⁰ She believes that a widow can engage in recreation in building our society magnificently. They are not trouble for the community; therefore, people should take the responsibility to improve their lives by treating them as part of society. The Editor of *Chand* justified her and the situation of female education.

We entirely agree with Mrs Padmabai Sanjeevarai; there is a terrible need for teachers now. Fifty-five letters have come to us on this subject, whose teachers have been demanded, many girls' schools are not opening only because there can be no arrangement of qualified teachers for them.¹¹¹

He believed that the girls could not access education due to fewer girls' schools and teachers, so it was essential to appoint a female teacher that only widows could do.

Furthermore, girls' parents did not allow their girls to get co-education; however, widows can contribute to girls' education by taking up teaching profession. The editor of *Chand* wholly agrees with Padmabai's idea of widows' involvement in the education and teaching occupation. Widows should not be treated as a secluded part of society; they can contribute to society by connecting to female social welfare activities. However, she favoured widow involvement in different social activities but did not concern with widows' remarriage.

4.27. Conclusion-

In the nineteenth century, continuous efforts were made to improve the status of women, but at the same time, these reforms were limited to a few areas. As far as these laws are concerned about women, but could not prove too effective in preventing the prevalence of social evils because the primary functions of the official system that implemented laws were to promote the factors to strengthen British rule and not interfere in works like social reform.

Despite legislation-making, the actual implementation of these laws remained limited. For example, only 38 widows were married in the nineteenth century.

Thus, despite formulating a rule to abolish the practice of Sati, there was respect for the women who practiced Sati. It has been idealised in one form or the other through literature's myths or misconceptions. The responses of upper-caste Hindu women intellectuals were against the Sarda Act.

¹¹⁰ Padmabai, 'Vidhwaon Ke Karya', 439.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 439.

Besides that, widows experience painful social burdens and societal humiliation, whereas cultural reformists made widows responsible for saving cultural purity. They were denied remarriage, remained isolated in their own houses, were not permitted to have good food, and were treated as house prisoners. By experiencing social and financial burdens, some widows find other ways for their social freedom by converting to other religions. The struggle for survival in Indian society made them dependent on others, whether other religious groups or their family members.

The question of widow remarriage becomes prevalent because the stories of abductions and presenting widows as lusty women could be reasons for denial of widow remarriage. Due to this narrative, widows were put under the second-class category. And also the women who lost their purity. But after seeing the stories of widows' conversion to other religions, social reformers strengthened the movement for widow remarriage. They were allowed to get married in their religion. Still, Hindu men were not ready to marry a widow because of the societal pressure and the discrimination they faced after marriage; hence, they (widows) were persuaded by other ways by other religions to survive, and even they faced the same condition in other religions.

In support of the widow remarriage movement, prominent social reformers were not faithful to reformist commitments. Their idea of widow remarriage was defective in personal life due to familiar compulsion and social belief. Hence they denied getting married to widows. It resulted in the widow's conversion into other religious communities.

Chapter-Five

Debunking Superstitions and Orthodoxy

This chapter highlights the various perspectives of women intellectuals on women's education. The debate on favouring formal and domestic education was primarily occurring in journals. Favouring women's formal education and advocating religious education, women intellectuals were more concerned about the fear of losing ancient culture. So, few women's education proponents differed on the 'Kind' of education offered to women. The dominant voices and concerns were that women should be educated without jeopardising Indian/Hindu culture. Educational instruction should transform women into good homemakers, better mothers, compassionate wives, etc.; they should be trained to become successful managers of home and upholders of Hindu culture. The objective of this chapter is to bring out the women's writings in Hindi journals regarding educated women's participation in the social debate to make women aware of religious and formal education that can benefit their personal and public growth.

Educated women intellectuals who were joining the national movement questioned nationalists' leaders for they ignored the former from mainstream and neglected them from equal opportunities as men enjoyed. So, with this disagreement they demanded that women should get home rule first, nation's freedom later.¹ They believe that India's freedom did not claim women's freedom because after attending freedom, women will be under the burden of patriarchy. Due to society's patriarchal structure, women are denied from equal educational opportunities, social privileges, and equal rights as men receive, and they face harsh discrimination. According to Forbes, 'women's movement started before the nationalist movement.'² So, the middle-class, educated women were feminising their space in public platforms. The importance of women's

¹ In February 1917, Miss R.P. Paal delivered a lecture in a meeting of 'Women's Brahmasamaj', in which she disregarded those Indians who had told women should not get higher education because they would break the ancient traditions. With her inspiration, Satyavati Devi and Lakshmi Devi Bajpayi, in the article titled, 'Streeyon ko 'Home Rule' Pahle Dijiye', mentioned, today the political leaders of India are holding many meetings and agitations for attaining Home Rule/Swaraj. Our clear motive is that if you want to make genuine progress in the country, give home rule to the women first. There should be a complete rule for women at home.' Here she believes that women of our country are under confident and dependent on men, so it is necessary to provide education for women to attain progress. Satyavati Devi and Lakshmi Devi Bajpayi, 'Streeyon ko 'Home Rule' Pahle Dijiye', (Women's Rule First for Women), *Stree Darpan*, February 1917, 72-76.

² Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*. Vol. 1. Cambridge University Press, 1999, 7.

education and the responsibility of women intellectuals were concerned in this period of transformation—the women such as Smt. Kamla Devi Chaudhri, Subhadra Kumari, Shri Yashoda Devi, Shri Shivrani Devi, Shri Tejrani Pathak were the prominent story writers of the mid-twentieth century. They were primarily focused on the social condition of women and their problems. Kamla Devi Chaudhri focused on the psychological situation of women. Other women writers such as Dineshnandini Choangya and Rameshwari Gupta concentrate on the poetic way of writing.

Education is a milestone in empowering women because it facilitates self-awareness and identity consciousness to challenge traditional beliefs that endanger women's life. The conventional view was that women must imbibe the role of the ideal mother and wife. But the intellectuals class was justified that the 'lack of educational opportunities for women was the reason for Muslim rule.'³ Due to that women were under the burden of social beliefs such as Sati and *Purdah* practice and child marriage, where they missed the opportunity of formal education.

Education encouraged women to show their anger and dissatisfaction in literature such as Hindi journals. But this anger and dissatisfied voices came from the upper-class, educated women. They started questioning ruinous old beliefs and customs. However, the middle-class women of the United Provinces were denied education; so these women were under the burden of protecting cultural practices and carrying the responsibility of an ideal Hindu woman. The customs and traditions such as *Purdah* and child marriage harmed their social liberty and educational freedom.

5.1. Role of Printing Presses

During the early nineteenth century, the aim of education served for women's perfection in the household, reinforcing the role of the ideal wife and nurturing mother and creating an environment for finding a capable husband for their substantial growth. But Geeta Press⁴ of Gorakhpur and Arya Samaj directed middle-class readers towards

³ Due to repeated atrocities of Muslims, evil practices such as child marriage and *Purdah* gradually started in society. Therefore, women were deprived of education and went into the darkness of ignorance. Satyavati Devi, 'Striyan Aur Purdah,' *Stree Darpan*, July 1917, 61.

⁴ Gita Press was started by Hanuman Prasad Poddar and Jaydayal Goyandka in the 1920s. It was established as a non-profit publishing house to publish high-quality translated Hindu religious texts that focused on the devotion of God to control and manipulate the emotion of Hindu public. Gita Press was located in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, this publishing venture became crucial in shaping a larger understanding of what constituted Hinduism through the publication of Hindi translations of the Bhagavad Gita and advice books

the spiritual domain. Apart from educational books, cheap books that contained religious content, booklets and pamphlets were printed in large numbers for spiritual consciousness. The prime agenda of Gita Press was to provide spiritual education to women, and it was subjecting them to a highly restrictive regime of vibrant culture.

By creating texts related to women's matters, Geeta Press adopted the agenda of social and spiritual reform among female readers. The Gita Press also published literature that communicated the quality of ideal women, focusing on becoming an Ideal Hindu mother and her ideal child that women had to visualize in certain mythological characters such as Bal Rama and Krishna.⁵ This spiritual literature was trying to console women's emotional situation during their breaking movement. 'During unpleasant moments and even in childless life, it was the wife's responsibility to avoid complaining and control her 'greed for children.'⁶

Literature by Geeta Press, compelling two narratives about women's education (i) if a woman will get an education, she will lose her faith in ideal women like Sita, Sati, and Shakuntla (ii) women who favour formal education will criticise the ancient education, and they would disrespect the cultural values of ancient past. The print literature produced by Geeta Press inculcated religious sentiments and gripped society under spiritual matters.

5.2. Women Favoring Formal Education

Women who were favoring formal education were setting the criteria for what kind of education women should get. In her essay 'Unnati Kya Hai' (What is Progress), Shakuntala Devi Gupta 'Patiyala' mentions, 'only passing B.A. or M.A. will not protect girls, they should learn the work by which they can earn money and set business. Girls should be taught the rules of self-protection in schools'.⁷ In favoring formal education,

for the Hindu community. Monika, Freire, "Cultivating emotions: The Gita Press and its Agenda of Social and Spiritual Reform." *South Asian History and Culture* 3, no. 3 (2012): 397-413.

⁵ Ritu, Sinha, "Educating the Hindu Child Citizen: Pedagogy of the Gita Press." *Contemporary Education Dialogue* 14, no. 2 (2017): 141-165.

⁶ Monika, Freire. "Cultivating Emotions: The Gita Press and its Agenda of Social and Spiritual Reform." *South Asian History and Culture* 3, no. 3 (2012): 397-413.

⁷ 'Keval B.A. ya M.A. Paas Karane se Ladkiyon ka Uddhar na Hoga, Balki Unko Vah Kaam Sikhaane Chahiye Jisse ve Bade-Bade Karkhane Kholkar Bahut sa Dhan Upaarjan Kar Sake, Ladkiyon ko Schoolon Mein Gudiyon Dwara Baal Raksha ke Niyam Sikhane Chahiye. Shakuntala Devi Gupta, 'Unnati Kya Hai' (What is Development), *Stree Darpan*, April 1925, 163-164.

Shakuntala Devi believes that providing a higher education to women is not a matter of debate, first women should learn surviving techniques in society where they can earn their bread for self-dependence. But she focused on the techniques of self-defense for girls, so they can protect themselves from goons and wicked men.

The more critical interrogation is that the colonial structure of women's education only ruled their lives which determines the criteria of ideal women of the dominant discourse in the context of becoming an ideal educated wife that can support her educated husband. 'The educated young man wanted that the girl should also be educated, so far the desire of a promising young man was high status for women, but now it is changed to her being educated. The effect of this demand of the youth (men) has impacted the parents of the girls and they also started to educate them.'⁸ According to Chandravati, the reason for educating women was high on demands for their marriage partners. Because an educated girl can get an educated partner for their happiest life, it becomes necessary to educate women.

In her article, 'Vartman Stri Shiksha Paddhati ka Kuparinam' (Outcomes of Present Education System) Smt. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit narrates the situation of girls who are getting college education and dumping the meaning of life. She believes that women who are getting modern education should be socially aware and contribute to society in both public and private domains. Because women who were getting education, she believes, will not concentrate on their familial life and will also lose their interest in household and social activities. To inspire modern women for social activities, she favoured modern education. In that manner she narrates, 'even by getting proper education, modern women should not fear coming forward.'⁹ She believes that women should use that education carefully and they should not forget their prime duty towards their true religious identity.

5.3. Against Formal Education

It was a challenging task for liberal social reformers who were advocating women's formal education because anti-educationists disliked the trend of educating women,

⁸Shrimati Chandravati Lakhanpal, 'Stree Siksha Uddeshya Par Ek Drishti.' *Chand*, November 1933, 123-128.

⁹ Smt Vijaylaxmi Pandit, 'Vartman Stri Siksha Padhhati ka Kuparinam' (Outcomes of Present Education System), *Chand*, November 1935,71.

‘nowadays, many anti-educationalists consider educating girls is a sin.’¹⁰ As lower class people were busy managing their financial aid and social burden, their inferior complexities stopped them from providing education for their children. In order to provide education for women in society, the fundamentalists were opposing the idea of liberal social reformers of women education. They were advocating religious education as the main tool to protect the ancient values.

Kaushalya Devi Mehta in her essay, ‘Bhartiya Striyan aur Adhunik Siksha Pranali’ explains the deeds of Hindu women who were meant as an ideal wife such as Atri-Ansuiya, Vishisth-Arundhati and Savitri-Satyavan. She believes that purdah was the reason that took the educational opportunities of women. Kaushalya Devi made important remarks on women who were carrying Purdah. According to her,

‘Social restrictions and men’s control over women affected their education, health and insignificant role in society considered a powerless being in public life. She further added, ‘modern education made women dismissive towards their family life. Women are now more focused on beauty and materialistic life which Indian men are incapable to fulfill. If women will not save Indian culture, the country will lose our true civilization. The adolescent girls should take the responsibility of preserving Hindu culture.’¹¹

She was against formal education because modern education was ruining the ancient culture that ideal Hindu women followed during the time. ‘Culture is the root of our nation. By ignoring it and getting modern education, Hindu civilisation will decline, then why not remove western education and teach cultural values to our Hindu boys and girls.’¹²

Sarojini Naidu a prominent congress leader participated in the fourth council meeting of ‘Akhil Bhartiya Mahila Conference’ (most important women organization to unite Indian women to participate in national movement) she favored co-education of girls and boys. At the same time, she believes that the kind of education women should receive should present women as an ideal of society. She gives her own example, of her Europe trip where she carried the identity of ideal Hindu women such as Savitri and Sita, that challenges those who question their (Indian women’s) chastity and purity.¹³

¹⁰ Shrimati Shakuntala Devi, ‘Bharat me Striyan ki Heen Dasha’, *Stree Darpan*, 1912.

¹¹ Kaushalya Devi Mehta, ‘Hindi Bhushan’, ‘Bhartiya Striyan Aur Adhunik Siksha Pranali’, *Chand*, November 1935, 88-90.

¹² Mehta, ‘Bhartiya Striyan Aur Adhunik Siksha Pranali’, 89.

¹³ ‘Bhartiya Nari-Andolan ki Kuch Pramukh Netriyon ki Vischardhara’, *Chand*, November 1935, 73.

Women such as Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade,¹⁴ Dr. Muthhulaksmi Reddy,¹⁵ and P.K. Rai¹⁶ were writing about women's education. Women such as Manmohini Juthsi participated in the conferences and presented their views on the women's reform movement. Muthhulaksmi Reddy said 'if educated women take the responsibility of uneducated then the problem of women education can be resolved' she believes that upper caste Hindus and Christians were getting education and with the help of government this idea of providing education only can be effective when women will come forward to educate their sisters.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century very few women were getting education. The percentage of women population and the percentage of educated girls was very low and the united provinces were highly backwards in educating girls. 'In 1885, 92 percent of the population of the (then) North Western Provinces and Oudh was quite illiterate, and one of 350 females received an education. In Banaras the number of girl students crossed the 1000 mark in 1924, and 2000 in 1932.'¹⁷ In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the movement of women's education was moving slowly.

5.4. Women criticizing the Reformers against Formal Education.

In her article, Rampriya Devi (Raygadh) attacked social reformers who were against women education she said, 'they believed that getting education for women can distract them from their domestic life.'¹⁸ According to her, people who deny women education believe that women will be distracted from their household responsibilities. The type of education that was introduced for women was domestic perfection and craft skills to

¹⁴ Rani Lakshmi Bai Rajwade was an educated woman who belongs to a reputed family of Gwalior. She was appointed as organising secretary of the all India women conference. She delivered her speech in the fifth conference of 'Awadh Women's Conference'. *Chand*, November 1935, 75.

¹⁵ Mutthulaksmi Reddy was one of the chief cadets of the women's conference. She was the president of the Travancore branch of the conference. During her fourth conference in Mumbai she focused on women's issues in her speech. *Chand*, November 1935, 76.

¹⁶ Smt. P K Rai was the prominent leader of the women's movement who was taking the responsibility of Bengal, also she was the senate member of Calcutta University. She became the president of Madras Women's Conference and delivered her speech in the event. *Chand*, November 1935, 77.

¹⁷ Nita, Kumar. "Widows, Education and Social Change in Twentieth Century Banaras." *Economic and Political Weekly* (1991): WS19-WS25.

¹⁸ Rampriya Devi, 'Rashtra ki Unnati me Streeka Sthan', *Stree Darpan*, April 1910, 185.

manage their family life, not for developing their intellectuals and social abilities. Dozens of modern educated women from the northern region started questioning on such education that was only centered on marriage to specially intend for them. These middle class educated women played an important role in challenging the educational movement in new dimensions. ‘These women stand out as pioneers of education where they started schools and dynamically they administered and expanded these schools and were radical in the vision they had for their students.’¹⁹ They were debating and debunking the religious orthodoxy by denying the old customs and obtaining the path of modernity. The role of educated middle class women was important in providing education; they were involved in establishing girls’ schools and educational institutions.

In her essay, Gupta mentioned the writings of a prominent Arya Samjist Shiv Sharma *Updeshak*, who was writing a didactic manual for women in 1927.²⁰ In his sixteen pages pamphlet, ‘*Stree Siksha*’ (Education for Women), he discussed the social ethics for Hindu women, particularly becoming an ideal Hindu woman by following such proper instructions, especially maintaining distance from Muslim men. Even today, the deeds of women and their contact with Muslim men can threaten to Hindu patriarchal structure of the community.²¹ The text that was based on atheistic beliefs was prepared for Hindu women was specially to maintain social distance with Muslim men. This text reflected the fear and anxieties of religious conversion and women’s intimacy with Muslim men. Simultaneously, these kinds of texts and pamphlets also create social pressure on Muslims. It represented Muslims as wicked and threatening to the Hindu community and their women.

5.5. Organisations for Religious Education-

Religious education and its perspective on pursuing it was precisely to increase the awareness of religious beliefs and moral values. This spiritual belief made women aware of religious and cultural identity, which leads to the cultural development of a

¹⁹ Nita, Kumar. ‘Widows, Education and Social Change in Twentieth Century Banaras.’

²⁰ ‘Do not get your clothes stitched from Muslim tailors ... Do not buy toys and fruits from Muslim hands for your children. Do not buy or wear bangles from the hands of Muslim bangle-sellers ... Never approach a Muslim servant without *purdah* (veil) and never cross him’. Ramdas Gaur, *Kanyaon ki Pothi ya Kanya Subodhini*. Prayag: Gandhi Hindi Pustak Bhandar, 1927, 220–28.

²¹ Gupta, Charu. “Domestic Anxieties, Recalcitrant Intimacies: Representation of Servants in Hindi Print Culture of Colonial India.” *Studies in History* 34, no. 2 (2018): 141-163.

community. But this belief alienated women from other communities and distinguished their religious identity from one community to another. Religious education was a kind of language to generate a sense of differentiation from one community to another.

As a result, many local women's organisations, such as 'Kanpur Sanatan Dharma Mahila Parishad'²², were rising with a focus on women's emancipation through religious education. Parallelerly, the movement for political rights and civil liberty was occurring. But the prime objectives of these organisations were to provide religious education to women and protect ancient cultural values that were influenced by historical events. Not only the printing press but the women's organisations and committees were coming up with spiritual consciousness to make women more conscious of their ancient culture.

5.5.1. Kanpur Sanatan Dharma Mahila Parishad-

Kanpur Sanatan Dharma Mahila Parishad was a part of *Shri Sanatan Dharma Mahila Parishad*. A report of *Sanatan Dharma Mahila Parishad* published and presented a description of women's condition, which was appreciated by *Arya Mahila* magazine in its editorial column. A women's college was also running under the Parishad. Shri deputy Shyamlal Ji has donated a house and Rs 10,000 as a promissory note. This Parishad organised an annual conference on 26-27 March 1924. This conference proposed eight regulations: women can get membership of *Parishad*, protecting *Varnashrama Dharma*, the importance of women education and do not wear bangles from Muslim men were the main proposal which was passed in this conference.²³

Regulations were passed in women's conferences to decide the criteria of educating women set by the male reformers. The separate curriculum was decided by the male reformes to educate women that was completely based on religious values. The kind of education women should get, to help them in managing the household activities. Being ideal Hindu women their ability had been defined by their attitude as nurturing mother

²² *Arya Mahila* published a 'Kanpur Sanatan Dharma Mahila Parishad' was upper caste women organisations to protect women from Muslim men. This parishad presnted its report in 1923 to *Arya Mahila*. The magazine appreciated the initiative of Mahila Parishad to embrace women's education. Parishad was running a Girls' college that the deputy Shyamlal Ji funded with his promissory notes of 10000 rupees and a house to provide a teaching space for the college. This Parishad conducts its annual conference on 26-27 March 1924. This confrence passed eight resolutions such as, increasing the numbers of Parishad, Protecting of Varnashrama Dharma, Women education and request them not to wear bangle of Muslim men. Editorial Notes, *Arya Mahila*, February/March/ April, 1923, 384.

²³ *Arya Mahila* , 1924, 384.

and dutiful wife. The basic rules of the ideal behavior towards her husband was, women should love and respect their husband unconditionally even if her husband does not respond for her efforts. The responsibility of an Ideal wife towards her husband is to keep him always satisfied and happy, she should be polite with her husband even if he behaves badly, during his sickness. A wife should always speak in an agreeable manner to manage their emotions.

5.5.2. Shri Arya Mahila Hitkarni Parishad

It was a basic agenda of religious revivalist to uphold their upper position. Women organizations, such as *Shri Arya Mahila Hitkarni Parishad*,²⁴ concentrated on religious education for women. The educational objective of this association was ‘to establish college and maintain widows’ home for their safety. This college *Sri Arya Mahila Mahavidyalaya* was for high caste Hindu ladies to provide them religious education. Their education should be according to *Varnashram Dharama* as well as to train them to be worthwhile for the Hindu society as religious preachers, teachers, governesses, etc.’²⁵

The upper-caste Hindu male reformers were directing the kind of education that women should get. But the missionary education that first introduced English education influenced educated people. English education was recognized in Indian society due to the literature that influences educated intelligentsia toward the similar trends as the west. Many women's voices and Organisations were addressing the process of civilising the cultural traditions by civilising the women. But the access to English education for women created a constant fear among the Hindu male community. That after getting

²⁴ The objectives of the association were: 1. the protection of the interest of Hindu women following Varnashram Dharma by (a) helping certain cases of friendless and helpless Zenana Ladies, who otherwise would continue to suffer a great wrong or injustice or disability to the detriment of the Hindu Society. (b) Endeavoring to reform un-Shastrik local practices of customs harmful to women. (c) Providing for the religious education of girls and arranging for the dissemination of religious knowledge among Zenana ladies and taking measures for keeping off non-Varnashramik influence from Hindu homes. 2. To promote purely philanthropic work especially for the benefit of the Hindu Ladies and Hindu Society in general. 3. To do useful work of a philanthropic, educational, social, religious and patriotic nature, for the good of the Hindu society in general and womanhood in particular. *Stree Shiksha (Education for Women)*, *Arya Mahila* 1918, 235. A thin tract of sixteen pages, was written by Shiv Sharma Updeshak, a prominent priest and member of the Arya Samaj in the United Provinces, which retailed ‘proper’ behavior for Hindu women, particularly ordering them to keep away from Muslim men. Not only any intimate liaison but even day-to-day contact between Hindu women and Muslim men was perceived as a serious threat to Hindu patriarchal order and community identity. Muslim workers were specifically referred to in this context.

²⁵ *Arya Mahila*, 1918, 236.

English education their women will be like English memsahib which will be a threat to the existence of Hindu culture; therefore, Hindu male reformers are more stressed on providing religious knowledge to their women. And they defined the criteria for women's education to be a better companion of husband and nurturing mother, religious preacher, teachers, and governesses.

5.6. Women on Nurturing Mothers-

Journals such as *Arya Mahila* were fulfilling these criteria of religious knowledge for women. The immense religious literature published in general and especially for the ideal womanhood enriched Hindu literature. By providing the statement of M. Paul Bert (a French Zoologist, psychologist and politician) on the importance of educating a girl Rampriya Devi mentioned, 'Educating a boy can educate only one person, but educating a girl makes an educated family.'²⁶ Similarly, In her essay, 'Stree Siksha', Mahamaya Devi explains, 'If a mother is educated, she educates her 5 to 8 years children within three to four years; an ideal mother can teach three to four books, instill good rite in child's heart and fill his heart with high virtue.'²⁷ In her article 'Rashtra ki Unnati me Stree ka Sathan' by Rampriya Devi mentions, 'The ideal and imperfect behavior of child depends on their mothers, if their mothers are not educated and religious, then it is rare to find religious qualities in the youth of our country.'²⁸ These kinds of perceptions were made for women's education. An educated mother can educate the next generation of society. But this only depends on what kind of education she provides to her children. An educated mother can comfortably raise their children.²⁹ There is a saying that an educated woman can educate a whole society; similarly the kind of education that women get is a matter of debate. If she gets religious education, then only she can teach religious values to the children.

5.7. Women's Education for Nation Building

The working and generously active women came forward against religious orthodoxy and started to question the predefined notion of a majoritarian fundamentalist group. The

²⁶ Rampriya devi Raygarh, 'Rashtra ki Unnati me Stree ka Sathan.' *Stree Darpan*, January 1910, 144, Garima Shrivastav, *Stree Darpan*, Annanya Prakashan, 2018.

²⁷ Mahamaya Devi, 'Stree Siksha', *Arya Mahila*, 1918, 336.

²⁸ Rampriya Devi Raygarh, 'Rashtra ki Unnati me Stree ka Sathan.' 147.

²⁹ 'Stree Siksha', (Women Education), *Stree Darpan*, April 1925, 84.

creation of inherent female literature and its debunking became possible by women intellectuals.³⁰ In this manner, women's voices were continuing to challenge the conservative forms of writing, constantly enriching Hindi literature and beyond that elevating the composite culture of India as a whole with new forms of communication and expression.

Women's journals advocated female education to organise country.

'In order to organize the country, modifications and changes are needed for ancient systems. Intellectual women were under the burden of this responsibility to carry out the modification in such situations and they (educated women) can be the eyes of the blinds and voice of those voiceless women who are locked inside their houses.'³¹

Journals were creating literature for the middle-class reader community. This literature compared the condition of men, and women, to make their freedom and liberty important to communicate with the middle-class through a literary platform. And also, women intellectuals were conscious about the male agenda of providing literature that was only in favor of men. Therefore, these women were discussing how education would help them in their community.

In her essay, 'Rashtra ki Unnati me Stree ka Sthan' (women's role in nation progress), Smt Rampyari Devi explains the benefits of women's education and their role in nation-building. She believes,

'males should focus on women's conditions. They should try to provide liberal spaces for women where they can enter in public places. Then only the nation will attain freedom.

If you (men) want your son to love your country then educate your women.'³²

According to her, educated women only can play the role to inculcate the idea of true nationalists among their children.

Mrs. Satyabala Devi has written an article on women's education, which was originally written in English. She has emphasised the behavior of educated women and the kind of education women needed. She believes, 'education is not only about finishing the education, the beginning of education is only when a B.A. passed woman is self-confident and follows her own opinion, not when instead of being beneficial to her family and society, she is harmful. We need a household and religious education, which can

³⁰ Chand, November 1935, 9.

³¹ Chand, 'Sampadkiya Vaktavya', November 1935,9.

³² Smt. Rampriya Devi, 'Rashtr Ki Unnati me Stree ka Sthan' (Women's Role in Nation Building), *Stree Darpan*, April 1910,182.

make ideal women, and they become strong, generous, noble, and educated, which is a wealth of the country.³³ However, women's discourse focused on their domestic problems in the public domain. They believed that without providing formal education to women, it was impossible to bring reform to Indian society.

5.8. Promote Ancient Education by Leaving Modernity

Few women intellectuals narrated their views on ancient education. In its editorial notes, *Chand* mentioned women's views on ancient education.

They can promote education, but before that, they will need to leave the blindness of the West and mould themselves according to their culture. If half-educated and illiterate women are under the burden of stereotypes, then even women intellectuals accept the slavery of foreign artificiality.³⁴

But she believed that earlier, women were compelled to get religious and moral education in society. It was a narrative that if women adopt modernity they will be like western women. In her essay titled *Stree Siksha* (women education), Mahamaya Devi explains the importance of religious education for Hindu women. According to her,

It is not right to provide male education to women; that is mentioned in the Hindu religious text. Both male and female behaviour is different from each other like men are predominant whereas female personality is kind of devout. For this difference, special education, which is favourable to Aryan women, who are promoting *Sati Dharma*, will be beneficial for this kind of education.³⁵

She believes that if women will receive male education they will behave like men. Women's education should be different from men's. According to their social responsibility, such as *Purush Dharma* and *Streedharma*, women should learn *Sati Dharma* (ideal womanhood) to the betterment society.

According to the spiritual text, a woman should be taught worldly knowledge, only limited education should be given to her which is suitable for her religion, along with this, she should also be educated to acquire the useful qualities of becoming a qualified mother and a qualified house bird.³⁶

³³ Smt Satyabala, 'Stree Siksha', *Stree Darpan*, June 1917, 284.

³⁴ 'Vidushiyon ka Uttar Dayitva', (Responsibility of Intellectual Women), *Chand*, November 1935, 9-10.

³⁵ Mahamaya Devi, 'Stree Siksha', *Arya Mahila*, 1918, 336.

³⁶ Mahamaya Devi, 'Stree Siksa', *Arya Mahila*, 1918, 339.

She believes that the education for Ideal Hindu women only should be limited that can control sexual desire and the religious conversion of Hindu women.

Education for the Aryan woman will be that which teaches her to control her fierce lust and gives pure love. The welfare and rise of the Hindus can take place from such kind of education. The *Arya Bhava* (feeling of superiority) can only be protected by religious education.³⁷

Similarly, Mrs Surath Kumari Devi (Queen of Khairigadh, Lakhimpur Khiri, Oudh) raised the issue of women's education and the importance of female teachers. She believes that Hindu women should get religious education; she stressed that women teachers who can teach religious education should be hired for educating Hindu women.

The educated governess in European society gets religious education by worshipping God from the very early age of boys and girls and also spreading true education according to their religious manners. In this way, if Hindu boys and girls will get educated according to Arya Sanskar and Arya Dharmanukul method in their childhood, there will be a possibility of Indian society benefiting if these kinds of education are provided after foreign higher education.³⁸

She suggested hiring an English governess to take care of the children of reputed families, these zenana ladies provide English education to the children and the trend of getting western civilisation is losing the Indian culture. She provided a solution to get rid of western education by suggesting the pattern of Zenana Education by Hindu women who can acquire the same pattern of Hindu religious education to reputed women of Hindu families.

Hence, she was conscious towards religious education and also denied accepting the European culture that was harmful for ideal women. In view of all these problems, Surath Kumari Devi mentions about 'Arya Mahila Mahavidyalaya' that started in Kashi. Its main purpose was to provide religious education to women so there can be more qualified female teachers in the society. To convert it into a college, Queen Surathkumari had demanded a donation amount of five lakh rupees and she herself gave fifty thousand to convert it into university from the Khairigarh treasury.

³⁷ Mahamaya Devi, *Arya Mahila*, 1918, 339.

³⁸ 'यूरोपीय समाज में जो शिक्षित गोवेर्नेस होती है वे अति शैशावस्था से ही ईश्वरोपासना और उनके धर्म तथा अचार के अनुसार सत्शिक्षा का संचार कर उन्हें धार्मिक बनती हैं। इस तरह बाल्यावस्था में ही हिन्दू बालक-बालिकों को आर्य संस्कार और आर्य धर्मानुसृत पद्धति से सुशिक्षित कर लेने पर विदेशीय उच्च शिक्षा देने पर उनके विशेष कल्याण की सम्भावना है।' Surath Kumari Devi, 'Sampadkiya Tippiani' (Editorial Notes), *Stree Darpan*, 333-336.

In her article titled, 'Arya Mahila Sangthan', Smt. Damodari Devi Kapoor categorised education in four sections that men advocated for women. In this manner she criticised the men who were advocating the kind of women's education. She narrated male views on female education, '(i) People who believe that after getting education women are deteriorating, women are not in control of men. So educating women is like digging their own grave. So letting women get involved in household activity and leaving them uneducated should be the ultimate goal of society's welfare. (ii) The people who come under the second category believe that women should know only the reading and writings of religious texts such as Bhagvat Geeta and Ramayna. So they can write content related to the religious text that facilitates publishing religious text. (iii) The Third section believes 'It is our pride if our women are becoming 'Memsahib', and this will lead to the progress of the country, so they should be given the same kind of modern education and should advance, otherwise the progress of the country is impossible. (iv) Similarly the fourth section advocating women's education believes that women should be educated according to ancient beliefs.'³⁹ She believes that these sages have done a great injustice by keeping women under subjugation, by following these evil practices the number of educated women is less than men and country is underdeveloped.

Smt Damodari Devi believes that the kind of education that people are demanding will never help in the country's upliftment. According to her, it is appropriate to educate and organise Aryan women in such a way that the supremacy of Aryans should remain, and there should be no change in the spiritual goal of Aryan women and the *Varnashrama Dharma*. On the other hand, women should follow religion by being well-mannered, righteous and co-religious.⁴⁰ Savitri Devi believes that giving education is equal to giving maximum happiness to women. In this context, she says that men think that women will insult their elders after getting education and also they will desire for freedom. She said that, if education is bad for women, then why do men take it?⁴¹

According to Bhuvaneshwari Devi,

Due to lack of education, there are many such customs in the society such as new bride beating their husbands. These kinds of customs women follow without understanding, that affect the girl child and when she grows up, she also beats her husband by following

³⁹ Damodari Devi Kapoor, 'Arya Mahila Sangthan', *Arya Mahila*, 59.

⁴⁰ Kapoor, 'Arya Mahila Sangthan', *Arya Mahila*, 59.

⁴¹ Smt Savitri Devi, 'Stree Jati Par Purushon ka Bura Vyavhar', *Stree Darpan*, June 1910, 283.

a similar custom. That is a sign that women have forgotten their culture and they need education to give them right values.⁴²

She believes that education can prevent such kind of slander customs for men. Women should get education in household work and their duty towards their family and husband. Smt Misha Mahila writes,

women should be given such education which is given to a particular person of the house, brother should educate his sister, and father, daughter and husband should educate his wife. That can prevent 'other losses' by doing so. If those people cannot teach their female, then at least in the week they must check their readings and explain values of education, what kind of duty women should perform towards her family and what should be done by reading and writing?⁴³

According to Mahila Mishra it is the responsibility of male members to educate their women, if they will not educate their daughter, wife and sister, they can face other religious losses such as conversion.

In her articles, 'Striyon ki Durdasha' (the plight of women), Mrs. Vishnu Kumari Srivastava, Kanpur, explains the lack of education as the reason for the poor condition of women, and blames the male society for leaving them uneducated. She appealed to the movement of women for education.⁴⁴

Rameshwari Nehru read an essay in Rangoon on women's education. She emphasises the lectures, delivered in meetings and committees and letters as well as journals that promote women's education which has widely spread and increased in Indian society. Its wide impact in society stopped opponents who protested against women's education. She believes that 'women who are in favor of education are more relaxed and lazy, due to which, movements for women education stopped.' Rameshwari Nehru appeals to the readers of *Stree Darpan* that education for women is not only for household management but it is also a responsibility of taking care of the country. Rameshwari was in favour of giving equal education for both men and women. She also explains how many social reformers such as DK Karve established a Vidyapeeth in Deccan and Annie Besant established a new education board with the name 'Citizenship for Indian Women' in Banaras that has taken the initiative of women's education in Benaras. 'Citizens for Indian Women' was run by Miss Arnedale and Jinrajdas.

⁴² Bhuneswari Devi, 'Stree Sudhar', *Stree Darpan*, June 1910, 286.

⁴³ Smt, Mahila Mishra, 'Vartman Kaal ki Siksha', *Stree Darpan*, February 1917, 129.

⁴⁴ Smt. Vishnu Kumari Shrivastav, 'Striyon ki Durdasha', *Stree Darpan*, November 1917, 276.

According to her, India can be saved only if Indian men understand the importance of women's education.⁴⁵ So, these kinds of conferences and organizations were emerging to educate women but the importance of education and the kind of education was the center point of the debate.

5.9. Debunking Religious Orthodoxy-

In her article, Mrs. Priyamvada Devi describes women's conditions in ancient literature. She mentioned a book, 'Niti Sangrah Shiromani' (Akalmandi ka Khazana), and describe this book. This book contains the views of ancient law makers such as Manu, Shukracharya and Chanakya. Its editor was Pandit Haridas Ji Vaidh, from Kolkata. It was published in February 1917. On this book, Priyamvada commented,

In what manner ethics are in other civilized world? I do not know this, but ideologically I can say that it will not be like our India. Why? Because the (foreign) sages who formulated these valuable Laws (policy) for women, while expressing their words would have kept in mind that ethics should be useful for both men and women because they are actually the same, that advocate equality. But this is not the case with Indian principles. While making it (Indian laws), the wise men (ancient sages) did not forget that the women are (in India) the toe shoes of the men, our religious policy openly abusing our women.⁴⁶

She believes that these laws were only made for subjugating women but the laws for women in other civilisation advocate women's freedom.

Mr. Shyam Mohani in her article 'Stree ka Sthan' (Woman's Place) criticised the superiority of Indian women that propagated in the ancient past. She also gives her opinion on women status. She believes that 'these women incidents were narrated by men, where men were deceiving women by telling stories of such female domination in the ancient past. The story of putting women's names first such as Sita -Ram and Parvati-Mahadev narrates that women were in first place during the ancient time. She further said

⁴⁵ Rameshwari Nehru, Stree Siksha ki Avasyakta, *Stree Darpan*, December 1917, 309-314.

⁴⁶ Kisi Sabhya Sansaar me Neeti Shashtra Kaise Hain? Ise Mai Nahi Janti Kintu Vichar Dvara Kah Sakti hu ki Prayah Aise Na Honge Jaise Hamare Bharatvarsh Mein Hain. Kyon? Isliye ki Vahan Ke Vidwano ne Apne Mulyavan Vichar (neeti) Prakat Karate Samay is Bat ka Dhyani Rakha Hoga ki Niti-Shashtra Stri-Purush Donon ke Liye Upyogi Hona Chahiye Kyonki Vah Donon Vastav Mein Ek hi Hain, Arthat Barabar Hain. Kintu Bhartiya Niti-Shashtra Mein Yah Bat Nahin Hai, Usko Banate Samay Nitigya Mahapurush Yah Nahin Bhule ki Yahan ki Striyan Neech Hain Aur Purushon ke Pair ki Juti Hain Hamara Niti-Sashtra Samaj Khule Sabdo Mein Striyan ko Gali Deta Hai. Smt. Priyambada Devi Bharti, 'Niti Shashtra me Striyan ki Durdasha.' *Stree Darpan*, April 1917, 184.

that putting the woman's name first is not proof that they had a high status in the society; she considers it a hoax with women. Shayam Mohini writes on English women that this deception has happened not only with Indian women but with women of western civilization. Their men also wooed them by providing various temptations, such as caring for women, organizing the feast in the name of women, and if the woman is carrying the heavy luggage, then helping them, and if she is approaching, then leaving the chair for her. In this way, our condition showed remarkable manners and men are trying to continue that same condition. We are not ready to accept that after this our rights will not be equal as men. It will only happen when most people will improve this condition that men will do it for us. It is not enough, we want our rights and not concessions for the sake.⁴⁷ She also mentions about the Sita, Ahilya and Draupadi how these women were glorified in ancient times but the struggle which they went through was not enough to justify their condition.

5.10. Progressive Women Organization and Committees

Women's committee such as Prayag Mahila Samiti⁴⁸ and Mahila Parishad Kashi⁴⁹, Lady Art and Literary Club⁵⁰ were organizing committee meetings to promote female education in the early twentieth century. In its first conference, Prayag Mahila Samiti advocated the importance of Hindi language and the discourse took over the existence of

⁴⁷ Shayam Mohini, 'Stree ka Sthan.' *Stree Darpan*, July 1919, 43.

⁴⁸ Prayag Mahila Samiti was established on 22 January 1910. Dhanraj Rani Sapru took the responsibility of setting up this committee. About 50 women were present on its foundation day. Nandrani Nehru became the chairman on the request and consensus of Kailash Rani Batal. Such women's Samiti's were running in many cities of India like Lahore, Delhi, Dehradun, Poona, and Calcutta. But there was no such Samiti in Prayag. 'Prayag Mahila Samiti' filled this gap, the editor of *Stree Darpan* stated. *Stree Darpan*, 'Prayag Mahila Samiti', February 1910, 57.

⁴⁹ The main objective of establishing 'Mahila Parishad Kashi' was to improve the condition of women. In its session, held on 28 March 1910, several resolutions were passed. The main objectives of this session were, the promotion of women's education, child marriage is a hindrance in women's education, it should be removed, the Purdah system was considered harmful for knowledge, education and health; women should discard it. It also proposed to open a widow ashram where they could get education to lessen their life struggle. In any auspicious moment Parishad proposed not to play any obsessive songs that can influence Hindu women towards vulgarity. *Stree Darpan*, 'Mahila Parishad Kashi.' April 1910, 181.

⁵⁰ The Ladies Art Literary Club was formed in Allahabad by Bengali and missionary women. This year's meetings were conducted four times a year, apart from this there were other activities in which women gathered every week to do crafts and painting. *Stree Darpan*, 'The Ladies Art Literary Club', March 1910, 108.

Sanskrit.⁵¹ Miss Vishart and Lady Stanley, who gave lectures on women's education in the Lady Art and Literary Club meeting held on February 15, 1910, discuss the benefits of educating a woman and that change brings in the lives of women. She also believed that women's education is one of the main factors to raising the country. In her speech, in Prantik Mahila Parishad, Smt Mahadevi discusses the idea of women education, she defines the kind of education women should get as learning of domestic work, nurturing motherhood, and to become an ideal devoted wife for her husband.⁵²

5.10.1. Bharat Mahila Parishad, the objective of setting up this committee was to promote women's education in small cities and towns in Uttar Pradesh. This committee was established in Mirzapur; its head office was in Allahabad. Parishad suggested to introduce a newspaper called 'Stree Samachar' from Allahabad. It also suggested opening of local councils in many other nearby places, in which women teachers can teach. As male teachers used to teach in colleges, due to which women from reputed families could not attend the colleges.⁵³ So according to the editor of *Stree Darpan*, it was very necessary to provide formal education for women. Only then women get to contribute their role in nation building.

5.11. Educational Institution for Women

Smt Pandita Manorma Bai⁵⁴ was encouraging, women education. She visited various places in India and delivered many lectures and speeches on the Indian education system

⁵¹ The first session of 'Prayag Mahila Samiti' was held on 1 February 1910 at Shanti Bhawan, in the house of Mrs. Prayag Das. The main theme of this convention was providing the status of a mother tongue to Hindi language. The first lecture on Matra Bhasha (Mother tongue) was given by Kailash Rani Batal. Later, Mrs. Kishori Lal justified the importance of Sanskrit and Hindi. She asked to stay away from the influence of any other language. *Stree Darpan*, 'Prayag Mahila Samiti.' March 1910, 108-110.

⁵² Smt Mahadevi, 'Prantik Mahila Parishad', *Stree Darpan*, June 1910, 287.

⁵³, 'Bharat Mahila Parishad ki Prarthna', *Stree Darpan*, November 1918, 269.

⁵⁴ Manorama Bai was born on 31 May 1895 in Ratlam in a Vaishnava Marwari Brahmin family. Her father Pandit Motidas was a prominent scholar of Hindi and Sanskrit. She was the only child of her parents. In her early childhood, she had knowledge of many Indian languages such as Hindi, Marwari and Gujarati. She was married at the age of ten to Raghunath ji, a resident of Baroda. He was a widower. But after four years of marriage she went to her maternal home due to illness. After recovering from illness, she never visited her husband's home. She got involved in the women's reform movement, she gave many speeches for the importance of women's education. The influence of her lectures was that many girl's schools started to be established. She herself established a girl's school in 1908 in Chittoor. The association such as Sri Vaishnava Mahila Sammelan established in Bombay. On 3 March 1919, she was appointed as the preacher

and its importance for women. Due to her continued efforts many women and girls were interested in getting education, and a number of schools and colleges opened in different parts of the country.

5.11.1. Dehradun Kanya Pathshala was run by women only, Shrimati Mahadevi Ji, was a writer in *Stree Darpan*, staying near Kanya Pathshala, she used to spend most of her time in the school. 13 teachers were teaching in this school, and around 114 girls students were attending the Pathshala. Girls from other cities used to study in this college, till late in the evening⁵⁵.

5.11.2. Central Hindu College⁵⁶ The main objective of this college was to provide religious education to Hindu children, as earlier there were many Christian and Islamic institutions established to educate their community children in Aligarh. Another branch of this college opened in Aligarh. Similarly, this college opened a branch to educate Hindu girls, and they were given education on religious subjects, and domestic education such as sewing, knitting, and many other useful things was taught. There were two English women teaching girl students. Mrs. Annie Besant contributed to the fundraising of this college.⁵⁷

5.11.3. Crosthwaite Girls High School was established on 1st July 1917 in Allahabad. In the beginning, scholarships were provided to the girls who passed in the English medium. Later, this school allowed girls from both Hindu and Muslim families to study

of the Hindi Sahitya Samiti on behalf of Indore. He was also awarded a gold medal by the Deputy Collector of Kheda district by giving the title of '*Vachaspati*'. She delivered speeches at the 15th Bihari Students' Conference. By impressing with her speeches, the people of Bulandshahr Kanya Pathshala donated Rs 4000. Sagar's Saraswati Women School was also the result of her influential speeches. She left her mark in almost all the cities of India such as Bombay, Poona, Sitara, Kashi and Agra. Shri Bharat Dharam Mahamandal Kashi first gave him the title of 'Mahapodeshika'. She also became the cooperative member of Shri Arya Mahila Hitkarini Mahaparishad. She got the title of 'Bhakyan Bhaskar' in the scholarly conference Amroha. Smt. Manorama Bai, *Arya Mahila*, 1923, 261-264.

⁵⁵ 'Dehradoon Kanya Pathshala', *Stree Darpan*, April 1910, 163.

⁵⁶ 'Central Hindu College', established in the town hall of Kashi in 1898, with the main objective of teaching Hindu children on religious subjects, its principal was Maharishi Richards. Later in 1898 itself, this college was affiliated to Allahabad University. Keshav Dayal Singh 'Benaras', 'Central Hindu College', *Stree Darpan*, 1910, 199-204.

⁵⁷ Keshav Dayal Singh 'Benaras', 'Central Hindu College', 201.

together, in which 30 Hindu girls were from different places like Calcutta and Pargana etc. Similarly, 12 girls were studying in the Muslim Housing Board, they were from Lahore, Jalandhar, Lucknow, and Saharanpur. In this college, education was given till matriculation. Muslim Iranian teachers used to teach Persian, similarly some teachers from Lahore also taught Urdu. After the inclusion of English and other languages such as Hindi and Sanskrit, the number of girls' students increased. The college also had several branches like one in Ranimandi, in which about 30 Muslim girls were getting an education. This school used to provide free education, but the arrangement of *Purdah* and girls' privacy in this school is also mentioned for muslims girls.⁵⁸

5.12. English Women's Views on Women Education:

Arya Mahila, in its section *Sampadkiya Tippani* mentioned lord Chelmsford's wife's views on women's education. In her speech, H.E. Lady Chelmsford discusses women's education. She said

while on the subject of women's work, I am glad to avail myself of this opportunity of saying a few words on the Child Welfare Association and about the Health Association which I am about to inaugurate. It is my desire to form an association of all person in India interested in matters which concern the health of the people, especially of women and children, and it is my hope that all societies working for this and kindred objects will affiliate with the Association and form one great whole to fight the many enemies to health which are prevalent in this land. The main activities of the proposed Association will be educational. Its work will, in the first instance, be directed towards a threefold object (1), Domestic Education (2) Education of mothers in all that concerns their health and that of their children (3) training of *dais*, supervisors, health visitors, and nurses. To attain this purpose, the Association will hold exhibitions in Delhi in February. It published relevant literature, trained health visitors, arranged lectures and assisted by every means in its power those agencies which are already working in the same direction. You are aware that there is already a training school for Health supervisors with an attached infant welfare centre in Delhi.⁵⁹

As all were advocating religious education and focusing on the ideal mother and dutiful wife, at the same time, English women were identifying the genuine problems of women that Hindu women face every day.

⁵⁸ 'Crossweath girls High School' (Allahabad), *Stree Darpan*, 1917,246.

⁵⁹ 'Sampadkiya Tippaniyan', *Arya Mahila*, 1918, 284-85.

5.13. Conclusion

The creation of a text for educated women was the prime focus of Hindu intellectuals. It focused on community understanding of women through the culture and ethical values. That was targeted against other religious communities, such as Muslims were the enemy of Hindus who polluted Hindu culture. In the context of saving Hindu culture, the creation of women's literature and focus on religious text to endure the ethics of Hindu religion to protect their culture.

Most women intellectuals wrote that women's education was not new to Hindu civilisation. It was there in the ancient past but declined during medieval Muslim rule. The notion was created in the society to observe *Purdah*, especially in safeguarding their chastity from 'Muslim' and this terror was engendered by the Hindu fundamentalists. The intellectuals believed that the *Purdah*, brought by the Muslims, deprived women of their educational opportunities. So indirectly, it is believed that the practices that Muslims follow contaminated the purity of Indian culture and that they also took educational opportunities from our women. However, upper-class women hoped others would participate in the literary movement to claim their social freedom.

Women constitute almost half of the world's population, but the hegemonic masculine ideology treated them as secondary subjects of society. In this manner, determining Indians as inferior and barbaric, British orientalists considered them uncivilised. In this debate, most male intellectuals were trying to justify the condition of Indian women by citing the example of ancient culture. According to them, Indian women are superior to any other women. In this manner, some feminists have disagreed with the ancient customs because these narratives and laws had taken women's freedom. They were unable to participate in the national movements as men did.

Male social reformers focused women's questions on political discourse to involve women in the national movement, while religious revivalists focused on women's involvement in cultural pursuit by involving them in reading a religious text. Revivalists believed that educated women could help the nation's progress by preserving their cultural rights that would significantly contribute to the nation.

The commencement of the British government directed women not to follow the path of modernity and back towards ancient education. They realised a need to revive the ancient practice of educating women. With this initiative of religious, social reformers and educational organisations, women's questions address religious education to preserve the ideal Hindu culture. In this scenario of debating women as the ideal modern Hindu

women were constructing a space for patriarchy. So, in a way, women themselves were responsible for their own patriarchal subjugation in society.

Similarly, many women and girls were getting co-education and accessing formal education. The Feminising of the public spheres was taking place, though women's participation in different layers of justice created a liberal space for women of colonial North India. The number of upper-class, educated women was increasing in the northern region, such as Patna, Allahabad, and Banaras, which were the hubs of women's education. Hindu and Muslim women both were accessing women's education. Furthermore, women's universities played an essential role in providing higher education. However, in these liberal spaces, the scenario of providing religious education was focused on the fear of losing cultural values that created a religious consciousness towards other communities, which resulted in the concept of 'othering.'

Chapter-Six

Conclusion

Women's print culture (in the context of the women's journals) significantly contributed to women's development in colonial North India. Through these journals, women articulated a strong gender consciousness and launched a women's movement (also by forming organisations). Several exhibited a clear feminist understanding of women's issues and fought for gender justice and democratic society. Similarly, the focus on modernising Hindi began with religious sentiments towards language formation among the unlike communities. The commencement of the Hindi women's journal mirrored the opinions of the intellectual community on Muslim rule as invaders that threatened Hindus. By projecting them as a destructive force of Hindu civilisation, Hindu writers proposed Muslims as the antagonist of Hindus.

However, as noticed, a Hindu communal bias is present in their understanding of the condition of Hindu women. They blamed the medieval Muslim rule for causing their degradation in the present- lack of education, Purdah system, child marriage, etc., on Muslim rule. Muslim men are routinely treated as potential seducers, abductors and contaminators of Hindu wombs, culture, and civilisation. While contributing to gender development in colonial North India, the women's journals also contributed to the spread of Hindu communal bias and anti-muslim attitude in the Hindi public sphere.

An extensive literature has been produced to support the idea of making a Hindu identity and advocating Muslims as foreign invaders who contaminated India's pure culture. The Emergence of Hindi literature was forming the community identity among the readers, uniting one community against 'other' in the context of economic, social and religious freedom in colonial North India. As prominent scholars of modern India mentioned, communalism emerged due to certain historical writings focused on Muslim rule. It began with the work of conservative colonialist writers who were deeply concerned that Muslims were responsible for the decline of Indian culture that had flourished since the beginning. Similarly, at the beginning of the twentieth century, women Intellectuals and the emergence of Hindi print media, especially women-centric Hindi journals, portrayed a picture of Muslim rule as the enemy of Hindus. The women living within the walls and the atrocities perpetrated on them connected it with Muslim

rule. And a significant role of Hindi print media was communicating about Muslim rule by women intellectuals, which harmed society.

Hindi print literature played a significant role in forming communal identity, especially women's journals that coloured the collective identity through print literature. But this ideological form of communal identity indirectly ripened the women toward Muslim rule; this idea was visible in their writings. Their clothing was becoming a severe matter of debate, and they started opposing practices like *Purdah*. In this manner, women created a widespread culture of feminising public space through Hindi print media that advocated their freedom.

The narrative of intellectuals creates the story of *Purdah* by blaming Muslim rule. Still, at the same time, they were trying to discard the content, especially considering women's problems due to observing the practice. Women, such as Rameshwari Nehru, supported the statement of women's voting rights. Such women were creating their social and political space in public spheres. Women's subjugation in society decided the criteria of their social and political freedom. Without this freedom, bringing issues like *Purdah* into the limelight was impossible. Women's achievement in political space made their status high outside the house. Middle-class, educated women also developed a severe matter of discussion after attaining a reputable position in the political space. The political authority of women proves the authenticity of their statements. But in the present scenario, the controversial comment about women always grabs the attention of the Public.

The women from the upper-middle class were very active compared to the middle class. Writings and women's religious perspectives had the same communal influence on women on men. The newly formed women's conferences also played a significant role in creating collective consciousness among women. Women began to organise themselves right from the dawn of the twentieth century; many women's organisations were established throughout the length and breadth of colonial North India. These organisations conducted regular meetings of women where they spoke, among other things, on the glorious past of Hindu women and their 'degeneration' during the medieval 'Muslim' period. It was a routinely accepted 'truth' in the women's organisation's and women's conferences' annual conferences. These are only some observations on the

various possible influences on Hindi women intellectuals and their communal consciousness regarding their degeneration during the medieval period.

Even in the contemporary era, such kinds of statements disturb society. For example, Mrs Pratibha Devi Singh Patil, former president of (2007-2012) India, interpreted the history of introducing *Purdah*. She proclaimed that *Purdah* was raised in society to protect Hindu women from Mughal invaders; such narratives twisted history and put negative remarks on educated and politically active women. A local newspaper published this statement of Patil on *Purdah*. On the occasion of the 467 birth anniversary of Maharana Pratap, she narrated this story in her speech. It created a massive controversy on Muslim outfits at Udaipur. These narratives are present among educated and high-class/caste women. Similarly, such narratives have appeared in women's colonial literature, where the debate over *Purdah* became the most crucial part of the Hindi literary sphere.

In her article entitled 'Tambaku' (tobacco), Smt Kamala Devi Vitthal discusses tobacco's problem. She means the consumption of tobacco is harmful to the Hindu religion. According to her, Hindus did not even drink water from the hands of Muslims, but Muslims give water mixed with tobacco, and with the same hand they serve tobacco, they also give soap, at the same time some part of soap gets mixed in tobacco. Hindus are happy consuming it; this is their self-denial of Muslims. These stories were coming up that showed the women's consciousness towards the Muslim community where the women were denying purchasing stuff from Muslim pedlars and practising untouchability with muslim community.

Intellectual women such as Munni Devi from Assam requested household women to visit the pilgrimage or some religious place to be involved in spiritual activity. However, the women intellectuals were more concerned about spiritual activity than visiting attractive tourist places. Even they demand women's liberty but not beyond the religious way. It is not only the male intellectuals who were defining the criteria of women's education, but the female intellectuals such as Mahamaya Devi in Arya Mahila discussed religious education that controls women's sexual desire, by the virtue of which they cannot marry into other religious communities. And they would definitely not go with wicked Muslim men.

The journal sought the attention of its readers on atrocities on women; it created a picture of the Muslim men as distressing conquerors of the Hindu nation and abductors

of Hindu women. The periodicals generally tried to project Hindu women's bravery. However, it created Muslim men's image as wicked enemies behind the impressive story of women. The effect that impacted society more was the identity of the cruel enemy.

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Women Intellectuals and Communal Consciousness in Colonial North India: A Study of Hindi Women's Journals

by Suman Kumari



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CASTE CONFLUENCES AND RELIGIOUS CONTRADICTIONS: A PERSPECTIVES OF MIDDLE-CLASS INTELLIGENTSIA THROUGH HINDI PERIODICALS

SUMAN KUMARI

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Abstract

The roots of the caste system are deeply intertwined in inequality and power-based economic and socio-cultural discrimination. In this manner, this paper will explore the problem of the deprived section and the social disparities of cultural biases. The discourse to understand the community consciousness of the oppressed class through vernacular literature that discriminates against the privileged discussed the consequences of Dalit resistance against authoritarian rules.

With the beginning of Hindi literature, Bhartendu Harishchandra initiated the vernacular writings in the Hindi region. His era of developing vernacular at the end of the nineteenth century is known as the Bhartendu era, identified as the *renainansanse* period of the Hindi belt. He was the pioneer of Hindi literature. The print culture was previously gripped by the moneylenders and merchants and known as feudalist society. Bhartendu introduced the literature of the periphery section of society earlier; this literature was only popular among the mainstream and occupied as property of the moderate elite. With his continued efforts, this literature diverted toward the general public. The accessibility of vernacular literature in the public sphere created social pressure by publishing outrageous stories on Dalits' atrocities. These routine religious fundamentalists who reasoned for religious revivalism were only dissenting in searching for

self-identity and social existence for the oppressed and oppressor class. This essay detailed the women intellectuals' responses to Dalit conversion and the privileged section's atrocities perpetrated as cultural values. This discussion acquires the place of literature in Hindi women's magazines such as *Chand*. In this essay, the lower periphery's unity is considered caste confluences, resulting in a religious contradiction faced by the downtrodden.

Similarly, vernacular literature and the commencement of Hindi magazines played a significant role in communicating with the oppressed. In the Hindi literature, Dalits' writings were extensively discussed in the social status of lower castes'. The literature in multiple languages, such as Marathi, Tamil and Telugu, appeared with different perspectives on the Dalit struggle. It familiarises the lower caste community with the upper caste privilege. Dalit literature created a social and individual awareness among the oppressed of the Hindi region regarding their social identity and cultural hierarchy. The emergence of Dalit literature in multiple languages resulted in community consciousness. However, Hindi women's magazine *Chand* (untouchable Issue 1927) illustrates the religious consciousness towards caste perspective. It focuses on the women intellectual's views on the Dalit conversion that remains untouched. This study discusses the perspective of women intellectuals on religious conversion and Dalit identity.

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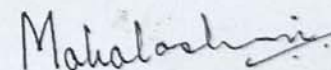
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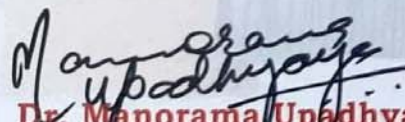
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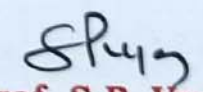


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