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# WOMEN IN MODERN INDIA

Fifteen Papers by Indian Women Writers

Collected and edited

BY

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## FOREWORD

The authentic voice of modern Indian womanhood speaks through these pages that treat of topics of the most divine human value and interest.

The mission of womanhood remains indivisible all over the world, but the woman of every race must naturally seek to interpret and fulfil her share in accordance with her own vision and version of national life. The Indian woman of to-day, whatever her creed or community, is clearly imbued and inspired by a profound renascent consciousness of her special and two long forgotten place and purpose, privilege and responsibility in creating and sustaining auspicious and enduring conditions of national progress and international fellowship.

To her task she brings as an inalienable ancestral heritage a great spiritual tradition of sacrificial devotion and dedicated service. She enhances the beauty and enlarges the scope of the grave and ancient ideal by her wider outlook, her fuller knowledge, her deeper experience, her more ample and untrammelled opportunity of self expression, which enable her to transmute all her energy, courage, talent and power into a rich and abiding achievement in every sphere of human activity.

*Sarojini Kaula*

*Lucknow, September 20th, 1929*



## PREFATORY NOTES

During a tour in the British Isles in 1927, which brought me into touch with many students and other educated women, I was struck by the prevailing ignorance about women's progressive work in India. I also realized that the bulk of literature, which was being read about India, was written by western writers and not by Indians. This decided me to try and gather together a book of papers written by Indian women workers. The response from writers is seen in the essays which fill this volume.

Not long ago I was given some papers written by Pandita Ramabai who was the great pioneer of the modern women's movement in India. These papers which were written in 1883, were addressed to Sir Bartle Frere, then Governor of Bombay, and given to me to use by his daughters. It has not been found possible to print them in full, but some of their contents has been embodied in an article written by Mrs. Nikambe and this account of the earlier period of women's organised work gives a valuable background with which to contrast the progress of to-day. Dr. Rukhmabai of Rajkot, a medical woman of very ripe experience, has given her views on the effects of the purdah system. Lady Ramanbhai Nilkanth of Ahmadabad, who was the first woman graduate in Gujarat, has given an account of progress in that area. Miss Susie Sorabji of St. Helena's School Poona, has contributed an appreciation of Mrs. Ramabai Ranade, the founder of the Poona Seva Sadan. Miss Engineer, a lady who holds a high legal degree and has





spent her life in social service in Bombay, gives an account of the Seva Sadan and other social work in Bombay. Mrs Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Secretary of the All-India Women's Educational Conference, has given a general survey of the status of women in India. Mrs. Choksi who has herself been on the staff of a Bombay College has described modern student life. Dr. Jhirad, head of the Cama Hospital in Bombay, writes on Medico-Social work and Dr. Hilda Lazarus of Madras surveys the growth and work of the medical profession for women in India. Other sides of social work are described by Mrs. Hamid Ali who with her great knowledge of district life contributes a valuable paper on welfare work in villages. Miss Tilak, organiser of the Social Service Training Centre for Women in Bombay, has depicted modern educational lines of social service. Miss Tata, a woman barrister, has contributed a valuable article on women's work in law.

The spheres of literature and art have not been left out for many women in these days turn to music or writing or painting. Mrs. Hansa Mehta, herself an authoress, has written on literature. Miss Raihana Tyabji who is a beautiful singer has written on Indian music and Shreemati Leelavati of Bangalore has written on art.

This book is thus a composite volume from the pens of women of many different communities and so perhaps it may claim to represent to some small extent the co-operation which exists between women of many races in India to-day. These ladies who have given so generously of their time and skill in the writing of these articles, have agreed that any profit gained by the publication of this little book may be given to the new building of the University Settlement





in Bombay which provides an international hostel for students and other professional Indian women. Such international co-operation between women is one of the surest ways of maintaining peace in the world and if this book serves to bring about a better understanding of the problems of life in India it will not have been written in vain.

EVELYN CLARA GEDGE

## II

Written by women friends who belong mainly to the Bombay and Madras Presidencies this book does not claim to be an exhaustive account of women's activities in India. The Editors are conscious that several developments of interest have been omitted. For instance no reference has been made to women's work in such varied fields as contemporary *magali* literature on the one hand or to the labour unions of Ahmedabad on the other. The book endeavours to be a *representative* rather than an *exhaustive* account of the work women are doing and could do in the various departments of modern Indian life. Much of this has been an accepted and natural thing in the life of the country generally. It has been so much taken for granted that it has escaped the notice of foreign visitors. This is partly owing to the fact that Indian women very definitely distrust the use of such phrases as 'Women's Emancipation' or the 'Women's Movement'. They have the feeling, unconsciously or consciously that such terms imply something of feminine inferiority; whereas in India there is little of the sex antagonism that one often detects in accounts of women's activities in European



and American periodicals. It would, however, be foolish on the part of Indian men and women to claim that a vast extension of the part women are playing in the life of the country is not possible or to deny the presence of grave abuses concerning women's position in the social system.

The articles represent the views of the individual writers, the fruit of the personal experience of each. They are therefore varied, sometimes even conflicting. Such divergencies have been left, as they appear to the editors to be valuable parts of their attempt to secure a first hand but therefore naturally a many sided view of the facts.

MITHAN CHOKSI

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO PUBLISHERS

The Editors desire to thank the Association Press, Calcutta for permission to use extensive quotations from "Poems by Indian Women" edited by Margaret Macnicol—The Heritage of India Series—in Mrs. Mehta's article entitled "Literary Achievements of Indian Women." They also desire to thank Messrs. Macmillan for permission to use passages from Dr. Tagore's writings in Miss Tilak's article "Possibilities of Social Work in India."



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## THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

It is a common belief in the west that women in India occupied a very inferior position until the advent of the British and the introduction of English education in India. There are several critics in the West who are still misleading a good portion of the world and impressing upon it the degradation of women that prevailed in India for centuries. The converts to this belief curiously enough seem to fail in discerning the anachronism in this fallacious statement. It is indeed pretty obvious that no country could have attained the height of civilisation which India attained, nor have given to the world the wealth of knowledge that she gave, if her women-folk had been kept down and denied equal opportunities and rights with her men-folk. Even a cursory glance over the history of India from the Vedic times right down to the modern day reveals a very different state of affairs from what these original historians try to make out to the world.

The history of the women's movement in India has to be traced from its very source in order to get the right psychological background, for modern India is but the shadow of her past and in order to gauge the significance of this shadow one must know the light which cast it.

In those beautiful days of the Vedic period of India the glory of which still surrounds the country like a faint halo, women took part freely in the social and political life of the country, and, in the celebration of religious functions and rituals, they had a special place of importance assigned to



them. They composed and chanted hymns at the Vedic sacrifices. In the fifth chapter of the *Rig Veda*, one of the hymns is stated to have been composed by a woman called Viswavara, belonging to the race of Athri. Another famous composer was Lopamudra, the wife of Agastya. The hymn which is said to contain the nucleus of the later Vedanta Philosophy claims as its author Vak, Ambhri's daughter. They were also earnest students of philosophy and took active part in subtle philosophical debates. Even coming down to the Puranic period one reads of their dialectical dexterity. Maitreyi, Gargi, Tara, are a few of many examples. Such social disabilities as purdah and child-marriage were entirely unknown. Women travelled about freely and had a voice in the selection of their partners in life. All those who are held so reverentially as great ideals, Sita, Savitri, Draupadi, were those who enjoyed a high degree of freedom and asserted their individuality. They were by no means content to be mere shadows of their husbands, as the general belief seems to be now. Sita and Savitri, although belonging to the mighty royal houses of their time, were given much freedom, and thus, while the former chose a partner for his valour, the latter allied herself to a lowly prince living in a forest. Draupadi took an active part in the administration of the Empire and she took particular care to instruct her subjects on the rights and duties of women. She had under her charge even the treasury and the finances of the Empire. Women like Kaikayi and Satyabhama distinguished themselves on the battlefield. They had free access to every field of activity.)

Coming to their economic position, one finds that it was perfectly secure. Their rights of inheritance and succession



were fully recognized, whether they were widows or daughters.

The advent of Buddhism gave a fresh impetus to women's education and general progress. A cousin of the great King Asoka went to Ceylon and founded a school of philosophy there, and trained women in several arts. There were many others of note. (Bharathi, who acted as the arbitrator in the famous debate between her husband Mandanamisra and Sankaracharya; Lilavathi, the daughter of Bhaskerachari, who although a widow was not consigned to the gloomy corner of the house, but became a great authority on mathematics and philosophy. Women even penetrated into the field of astronomy—Khana is a striking example of this.)

Even as late as medieval times, one hears of scholars, such as Laxmi Devi, who in the fourteenth century wrote a law book named *Vividchandra*. Colonel Tod has said "The annals of no nation on earth record a more ennobling or more magnanimous instance of female loyalty than exemplified by the Rajput women". Even within the last hundred years which have marked the rapid decline of India and consequently a deterioration in the position of women, there have still struggled to flicker a few flames here and there, like Laxmi Bai of Jhansi, Ahalya Bai Holkar, who have made for themselves an imperishable name in history. The Moghul court, in spite of the great drawback of purdah, could boast of women who had perfected themselves in art, literature, science and philosophy. (The daughter of Aurangzeb was herself a poet and a scholar.) When we look across the southern countries of India we find that the Dravidian women too enjoyed perfect equality and freedom.





It is with such a heritage as the foundation and such a past as the background that the present women's movement in India has evolved itself. It is not so much the establishment of a new order or a new convention but rather a revival and a regaining of a lost glory—though with a distinct desire and attempt to adjust it in concord with modern conditions. At the same time, one central fact has to be borne in mind and it is that intellectually and psychologically woman in India has never lost her honoured place of old. The attacks of external influences affected but her external position.

History always seems to go in a cycle guided by the laws of evolution and involution. The rise of a civilization is followed by its fall. Thus in India, disruption and disintegration came in the wake of its height of power. The constant shocks which she received by foreign invasions, the consequent decline in the physical and material energy of the nation, led to the disturbed and unnatural state of things which we find in the country to-day. What India is passing through now is a sort of nightmare. It is not the genuine expression of her real self, for India has never lost the sense of the essential truth which is deeply embedded in her bosom.

The women's movement in India has thus differed very much from its sister-movement in Europe. Man has not questioned the woman's right to enter any field of activity or any profession although he has held complete sway everywhere for many years now, keeping the women out and restricting their influence and scope of work by rigid rules and customs. But when the day came for her to emerge from seclusion imposed on her, and take her rightful place along



with him, it did not strike him as being anything new or strange. Thus this movement cannot in any sense be said to be a rebellion or a revolt against man; it is rather an attempt to regain lost ground. It is not actuated by any spirit of competition nor marked with violence; it is a movement of calm assertion.

The new awakening among women dates several years back. All-India Women's Conferences have been in vogue practically ever since the birth of the National Congress but not on a large organized scale. Many of the cities of India have witnessed the gatherings of women and heard their weighty deliberations. The various Socio-religious reform movements such as the Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, gave a great impetus to the awakening. The great peculiarity that one has to bear in mind about this movement is that it was not the outcome of the spread of literary education among the women. It was the general spirit of the times, the mighty wave of awakening which was passing over the world; it was nature adjusting her scales of justice by bringing to the women a realization of their larger life and responsibility. Of course the rising tide of education in which more women were being daily drawn in larger and larger numbers, the influx of ideas from outside countries and nations, more contact with foreigners and also the gradual recollection that was stealing over them of the resplendent days their women ancestors and their beloved Motherland had known, all these served to draw women out into organizing themselves. This was the period which saw the rise of those pioneers who cut a pathway for the coming women to tread upon, cut it through dark and solitary forests of gloom with bleeding feet and bleeding hands,



women who wrote the first gold letters on the new page of history that India had entered upon. The most prominent among them being Rama Bai Ranade, Pandita Ramabai, Sarojini Naidu and Saraladevi Chaudhrani. They mainly concerned themselves with the social problems that faced women and also made attempts to spread the light of education among their sisters. They found warm sympathizers and active supporters among the men. Institutions like the Sharada Sadan and the Seva Sadan were opened to educate adult women and to alleviate the lot of the poor widows whose position had got reduced to utter misery by the impositions of various kinds of hardships on them by a degraded and misguided society. They had neither social nor economic rights, and received but a paltry maintenance which very often was not paid to them. They were denied the right of remarriage even though they might be young flowering girls. They were impressed with the idea that their claim to happiness in a worldly life was at an end and, in that suppressed state of existence they allowed themselves to be even disfigured. The lot of the married woman was a better one but it needed considerable reform too. Although she enjoyed some amount of freedom within the house, her interests had no chance of widening or her mind developing any larger issues in life. Her education was poor and among the poorer people it was nil. Child-marriage prevailed in a large measure among all classes of Brahmins and some Non-Brahmins too. All these things were working much havoc in the country. Added to these evils was the curse of purdah.

The reformers both men and women therefore set themselves to remedy some of these glaring defects, and



met with considerable success. Suttee was abolished; widows were given the legal right to remarry, and the general condition of the widow was much improved. Education became more popular among all classes of people and a strong feeling against the old order crept in. The age of marriage naturally began to rise. But as yet there was no organized All-India movement evident anywhere. 1910 saw the inauguration of the Bharat-Stri-Mahamandal which was an attempt to weld the women of the different provinces of India into one association. But the conditions not being ripe enough for this seed, it did not take deep root.

After this several women's associations sprang up in the different provinces of India. An attempt on a wide scale was made by Mrs. Dorothy Jinarajadasa in 1917 in Madras by starting the ~~Women's Indian Association~~. It is the largest women's association in India that has a unitary and all-round programme of work, social, educational and political. It has 72 branches, 23 centres and nearly 4000 members.)

The year 1917 opened a new chapter in the Indian women's movement. Mr. Montague, then Secretary of State for India, was touring in the country at the time, and Mrs. Margaret Cousins, the Secretary of the Women's Indian Association, organized an All-India Deputation of Women to wait on him. Mr. Montague received the Deputation in Madras. It was led by Srimati Sarojini Naidu. For the first time the women of India asked officially for the grant of women suffrage. But a great disappointment was in store for them when the Reforms Report was published, because the ruling had been made by the British Parliament that the question of women-franchise should be treated as a purely domestic matter and should be settled by the vote of the





different provincial legislative councils of India. If the provincial councils voted in favour of it, the Government of India would endorse their decision. Probably the conservative Britisher thought that the Indian, who is rigidly conservative on all social questions, was not prepared for this revolution. But a mighty surprise was in store for the British Parliament.

The propaganda for women's franchise, continued with great alacrity. In 1918 the Indian National Congress, as well as the Muslim League, placed the national seal of approval on the principle of granting suffrage to women without any restrictions or age-limit.

In 1920 two of the Indian States, Cochin and Travancore, not only granted franchise to women, but soon after that nominated two women to their respective Legislative Councils, in Travancore the lady-member holding the portfolio for Public Health. British India was not slow however. As soon as the reformed Councils came into existence Madras gave the lead by giving the women the power of the vote. Thus a province, which was known as the most orthodox and the most bigoted, captured the unique honour of having been the first to give women equal political rights. This is a striking proof that India, the real great India, still lives in the heart of her people. The other provinces soon followed in the footsteps of Madras, and now with the exception of the little province of Bihar and Orissa, all the provinces in India have given women the franchise. In the province of Assam where there was no agitation for the granting of any rights on the part of women, the giving of political equality by throwing open the Legislative Council to women along with the giving of





franchise to them, came as a most unexpected surprise. Then gradually one by one the legislatures including the central legislature, called the Parliament of India, were thrown open to women, Madras once again taking the lead. Three women took advantage of this right of contesting an election but unfortunately none of them was successful, the ban having been removed too late in the day with the general elections very close at hand. One of them was defeated, by a narrow majority of 50 votes. But nominated women members now sit in three of the legislatures in British India, in Madras the lady-member also having been unanimously elected the Deputy-President of the Council.

Though in the field of politics the women have come into their own with lightning speed, one cannot say the same of their struggle in the field of social reform, although it must be admitted undoubtedly that appreciable progress has been made. But the curse of purdah and of child-marriage still haunts many an Indian home and blights its vernal beauty. Not only has it been found difficult to overcome that age-long custom of the orthodox Hindus, but there has been considerable amount of difficulty in convincing a Government pledged to the principle of non-interference. Thus where on questions of women franchise the Government was ready to take a sympathetic view, it shows excessive caution towards new legislative measures for putting a stop to some of these evil customs. But there is at present considerable agitation for putting down the practice of child-marriage by legislation. Women's organizations are unanimous on this point and are determined to fix the legal age of marriage at 16 and 21 for girls and boys respectively. A furious campaign is now being carried on



for bringing this about. The feeling against purdah is also fast gaining ground. Direct action in this direction has been taken in the Province of Bihar by a large body of women casting off the heavy veil and coming out into God's beautiful sunshine. One feels sure that the movement will spread rapidly. Purdah and child-marriage are the two out-standing evils that the women are fighting against. The lot of the widow is steadily improving and the stigma attached to her has practically disappeared. The widows show keener enthusiasm for education and are devoting a good deal of their time to social service. The prejudice against remarriage too is slowly disappearing, and there are definite organizations for the purpose of removing it.

The women in India have to fight more against unjust customs than against unfair laws, but there are a few glaring pieces of ugliness on the Statute book that need modification. Two important points are the question of inheritance and of divorce. It is only the Hindu women who suffer from these disabilities and now public opinion among them is so strong and so steadily gaining ground that new bills are being introduced in the Legislatures to modify the existing laws. The women are conducting a vigorous propaganda among all classes of people to make them get rid of the degenerate ideas that have demoralized them for a good many years now. Thus the supreme overlordship of man and particularly that of the husband is strongly questioned. The women seek to have their own free choice in the selection of partners in life, the right to enter the state of motherhood, when and if they desire, to seek divorce if necessity arise. These are some of the problems upon which the movement is working. The quick and sharp response from even the most illiterate



women and the keen co-operation that they offer are truly remarkable and show that the women of India are as progressive as the women in other progressive countries. Perhaps it is the old spark of ancient days that still lingers in them. At the recent Women's Day held in Madras under the auspices of the Women's Indian Association, there were over 3,000 women present. They were drawn from all communities and classes and participated most intelligently in all the discussions. One could not help being struck by their clarity of thought and by their direct approach to any question at issue, by the homely practical way in which they tackled each point. In this respect the more genuine souls unspoilt by the present hybrid education, far excelled the University products; they obviously had not lost their intimate and natural contact with life.

Yet, in spite of the general awakening that had taken place with regard to their social and political responsibilities, and although many were serving on local bodies and municipalities and as Honorary Magistrates, women had not, strangely enough, organized any definite movement in the direction of educational reform. There were several individual attempts here and there but they lacked organization and co-ordination. There was a general dissatisfaction among the women and one could easily discern that it was heading for something. Mrs. Cousins, who had for many years been an indefatigable worker in the women's cause, once again took the initiative in this by taking advantage of the discontent which had entered the heart of the Indian women with regard to education. In 1926 an appeal was made to the women of all provinces to come together and deliberate upon this important matter and arrive at some definite conclusions.



There were about 23 women's educational conferences held all over the country and early in 1927 they met in an All-India gathering at Poona, under the distinguished presidency of Her Highness the Maharani of Baroda. The Conference sat for four days and proved such a success, both from the point of interest as well as from that of usefulness, that it decided to initiate an educational movement on an all-India scale and to make the annual Conference a permanent feature. The country was divided into different constituencies on a linguistic basis, so that each individual part of the country might discuss and formulate its own demands and deal with its own particular problems. An All-India Standing Committee was elected, representing the various constituencies. Closely following on this came the Bengal Women's Educational Conference and soon there sprang up a number of educational societies of women to put forth their view point on education. One special feature of this movement has been the extension of its activity to the Indian States and the close co-operation of the women of the Royal houses in this work. In the course of 1927 there were 30 Educational Conferences of Women held all over India from Punjab to Cape Comorin. At the second session held at Delhi there was a huge gathering of representative women from every nook and corner of India; every shade of opinion was there. The official side was represented by Deputy Directresses of Public Instruction, Inspectresses of Schools, teachers and professors; the non-official section was represented by women from such institutions as the Indian Women's University, Seva Sadan, public workers, parents, students, etc. There were women of all castes and creeds and races, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Parsees and a good sprinkling of



Europeans, all come together with one ideal, one purpose, one thought, how to give to the world the best that woman has to give in the shape of ideal citizens.

Their demands have now been set forth in the form of a memorandum. In laying down that the ideal of social service be inculcated at every stage of education, they practically give the key-note of the whole movement. That is the background against which every other detail is worked out. A strong plea is put forth for the introduction of compulsory primary education. The demand for compulsory physical culture lays special stress on the need of rhythmic exercises and folk dances so that it will mean the cultivation of the beautiful along with muscular development. Emotional and artistic education, vocational training are some of the other points dealt with. An insistence is made on the vernacular being used as the medium of instruction with Hindi or some Oriental classical language as compulsory. A new departure has been made in the old order by asking for the introduction of agriculture as a compulsory subject in all rural schools and as an optional, in other schools.

It is now more than evident that the women of India have not only realized that they have their own special mission in life and their own unique contribution to make to the world's evolution, but they have also majestically risen to the occasion, acting up to this realization, as befits them; so that one sees, in the near future, the womanhood of India more resplendent than ever in the past, adding to the glory of the universe.





## PANDITA RAMABAI

AND

## THE PROBLEM OF INDIA'S MARRIED WOMEN &amp; WIDOWS

From time immemorial India has always abounded in prominent examples of good and great women. The praises of Sita, Draupadi, Savitri, Mirabai, Gayatri and hosts of others are sung in all languages ; and even to-day, throughout the length and breadth of this our Bharatland, they are an inspiration to millions of women. In each period of the world's history these great leaders appear, who meet the peculiar needs of their own epoch. (Pandita Ramabai stands out as one such leader in our own times. Her early training fitted her for the great service to which she was called. Her early education in her forest home where her mother was her teacher and her father her guide, her life of sorrow, her struggles, and finally her emergence on the platform of social reform, all these things show us clearly how God prepares His servants for His service.)

In a newly discovered letter written in 1883 to Sir Bartle Frere, the Governor of Bombay, the Pandita gives a charmingly simple account of her early life and childhood. (She was born in a forest village of the western Ghats.) Her father was a Shastri honoured for his learning in Mysore and in other States. In his youth he had studied under the teacher of the Peshwa Baji Rao II, and had so obtained entrance into the Peshwa's palace. There he had met the Peshwa's wife, Shreemati Varanese Bai Sahiba, who was also learning Sanskrit with Rama Chandra Shastri.



He had thus become interested in the question of women's education.

But though there were cultured ladies in the Mahratta palace, when he came to the matter of teaching his wife and daughters, he found the village tradition strongly opposed to him. In the Pandita's words, 'The people in the neighbourhood disapproved of him, and threatened to put him out of caste. When they found they could in no way prevail with him to leave off educating my mother, they went to the Dharma-Guru (a spiritual ruler) and brought the matter before him, begging him to enforce the law against my father, because he was a breaker of their sacred laws and customs. So my father was sent for by the Dharma-Guru and was asked his reason for breaking the law. My father replied by asking the Dharma-Guru, "What is written in the Dharma Shastras which in any way forbids the education of women?" The Dharma-Guru could give no satisfactory answer, so my father remained in caste.'

Several years after, when at Swade, the monastery of one of the Dharma-Gurus, many Pandits and one of the Dharma-Gurus were assembled to discuss the matter. There my father proved from the Dharma-Shastras that "women must be educated and learn their Dharma-Shastras." He received from the assembly a statement to this effect with their signatures affixed.

From her father Ramabai must have inherited, though in her case the goal was a very different one, her spirit of unswerving determination and devotion to an end. Anant Shastri had spent all his life in the service of religious contemplation and philosophical learning. Ten years he had spent seeking scholarship under the patronage of the





Mahrajahs of Mysore and Nepal ; then years seeking religion and learning on pilgrimages ; finally he had settled with his youthful second wife Lakshmibai in a lonely spot in the heart of the Gangamale forest where the sources of three rivers meet. The first nights they spent without the shelter of even a grass hut, with the jungle noises round them. Slowly they tamed the jungle and founded an *ashram* ; roses, champak, mango, flourished in the heart of the jungle and persisted long after when the spot had been deserted, though now the jungle has once more resumed its sway, and not a trace remains of the *ashram* or the orchard or the cattle that Lakshmibai had administered so well.

Here, under her husband's tuition, Lakshmibai became so proficient in Sanskrit that she could in his absence carry on his work and instruct his *chelas*. It was in the forest hermitage that Ramabai was born, into an atmosphere, not only of unworldliness and idealism, but of courage and initiative. From her mother she must have inherited much of the organizing genius she was later to display in her great institute at Khedgaon.

About the time of her birth her father's mode of life was changed. In the forest *ashram*, as during his residence at the Mahraja's court, lavish gifts had been showered upon Anant Shastri ; but money had meant nothing to him ; it has been said of the family that none of them had any sense of their own interests, and finally the folly and greed of their relatives caused their financial ruin. The family sought means of livelihood and found it, as expounders of the Puranas or Sanskrit texts. They wandered on foot from place to place, traversing the whole of India, visiting places of pilgrimage, reading and expounding the sacred texts to



groups of villagers, receiving for their livelihood the simple gifts that the poor brought to them. When she was a few months old, Ramabai started on her pilgrimage in a basket from the forest wilderness, and the wanderings continued till her parents' death. (She received most of her education from her mother, and at the age of eight was already learning Sanskrit. Both she and her brother assisted in the reading of the *Puranas*.) Her learning, and the fact that her father would not allow her to be married in her childhood, roused both wonder and hostility, even in their wanderings and more so when they occasionally settled in a village. The Pandita moved through all this, assimilating experience, watching with calm and critical eyes, unconsciously training herself for her life-work.

When her parents died in 1874, this village persecution caused the children to leave their home. There follows a graphic account of the wanderings of the brother and sister in the accomplishment of their missionary work. 'We travelled for six years in various parts of India. In our travels we were obliged to go on foot not having the means to afford conveyances. In this way we went a distance of two thousand miles. Thus we had a good opportunity of seeing the sufferings of Hindu women. We saw it not only in one part of India, but it was the same in the Madras Presidency, the Bombay Presidency, Punjab, the North-West Provinces, Bengal, Assam. (This made us think much of how it was possible to improve the condition of women.) We were able to do nothing directly to help them, but in the towns and cities (we often addressed large audiences of people and urged upon them the education of the women and children.) In order to be able to converse with the



different races, we learnt Bengali and Hindi. In the year 1880 in Dacca my brother died, and then I was alone in the world.'

Six months later she married a Bengali gentleman who shared her enthusiasm for women's education. But after two years of happy comradeship and endeavour, he died, and she was left with a baby daughter and the debts incurred in building their new home where they had planned to live and work together.)

But nothing could subdue her indomitable spirit. She planned to go to England to equip herself for her work of service to her country women. (She sold the house, paid off her debts, and by publishing a book made enough money to pay for her passage.)

But first she proceeded to Poona to be among people who spoke her own language. Here were working the most varying forces; a party of eager Hindu reformers were working ardently for the battle of women's freedom; on the other hand, the forces of reactionary orthodoxy were also very strong. Her fame as a Sanskrit scholar, her independence of action both before and after her marriage, had preceded her.

She was expected in the city with dread and dislike by the elderly women, with eager expectation by people like the Ranades, who saw in her a real woman of the Upanishads, of the old day before degeneration. A slightly built woman with large steadfast eyes, her courage, her singlemindedness impressed itself upon all those who met her or who heard her speak. She had by now made up her mind to devote herself to the cause of her fellow-women. She made many friends among the leaders of the social reform movement,



but she wished to proceed with greater audacity, greater impetus, than many of them. She decided to go to England and fit herself, by medical education, for the help of her fellow women.

(With the help of the Sisters of the Wantage Mission she came to England at last. A slight defect of hearing made it impossible for her to take the course in medicine that she had contemplated. At Cheltenham College she formed a life-long friendship with that pioneer educationalist, Miss Beale; and here she perfected her knowledge of the English language and published a book, *The High Caste Hindu Woman*.)

Ramabai went next to America, where her book had a wide circulation. American women, with their charm, eagerness and love for women of other lands, gave a great welcome to the Pandita, and took her to their hearts and homes. She stood before them, a fragile little woman clad in the spotless white flowing garb of ancient India, whither she proposed to return to work for the emancipation of widows.

(Finally, equipped with funds and experience, Ramabai arrived in Bombay and opened an educational institution, the Sharada Sadan in a bungalow at Chowpatty, Bombay) There were present on this auspicious occasion many friends of female education, amongst whom were the most prominent of the Hindus. The entrance to the house was decorated with plantain trees, and yellow-flowered garlands told of emancipation for the oppressed widows for whom educational facilities were now provided.

It was the privilege of myself and my husband to be there that day and I well remember what a wonderful sight



it seemed. The Pandita stood as hostess garbed in the white muslin of a Dakshini lady. Her hair was cut short, she wore no bangles on her arms, and her feet were clad in Brahman shoes without stockings. We were chiefly struck by the intellectuality of her brow, by her beautiful grey-blue eyes, and by her charming happy smile. She was true, she was noble, she was great. On this day, she was surrounded by grave Pandits, among whom were Rao Sahib Mandlik, Rao Sahib V. A. Modak, The Hon. Mr. Justice K. T. Telang, Dr. Bhandarkar, Mr. Chandavarkar, and others, all of whom were keenly interested in the cause of women's education.

The Sharada Sadan was so called from one of the names of the Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of Learning and Wisdom ; (to this House of Wisdom came numerous high-caste girls and persecuted young widows. After having become a Theist, the Pandita had adopted Christianity and the Sadan became a Christian Institution.)

Great as its work was, it still seemed circumscribed to the Pandita's great spirit. With the terrible famine of 1896 came a vast extension. She had herself suffered terrific privations from famine during her wander years. She had begged food for her dying mother, and had lived with her brother on roots and wild berries. (She departed now for the stricken area.) The first sight of three little famished skeleton-like forms determined her in her resolve (to admit into her institution all the destitute girls who needed refuge.) 'The Lord has put it into my heart to save three hundred girls out of the famine districts and I shall go to work in His name. The funds sent to me by my friends in America are barely enough to feed and educate fifty girls and several





people are asking me how I am going to support all these girls who may come from Central India. But the Lord knows what I need. Her helpers at the Sadan received loyally the burden of their new charges, wild, undisciplined, illiterate girls. When the Pandita returned, she organized at Khedgaon, near Poona, the Mukti Sadan, or House of Salvation. It meant an almost complete retirement along with these girls, from the active intellectual stimulus of life at Poona. But as the Pandita said. 'There is no room for murmuring.'

In time, all the work was concentrated at Khedgaon. The Sharada Sadan was transferred there as part of the larger project. It continued its work of providing higher education for girls who could take advantage of it. But the reach of the Pandita's compassion was henceforth unlimited. A third department was opened, the Kripa Sadan or Rescue Home.

In 1900, with the Gujerat famine, came a new time of trial and test. Twenty of her helpers went out to the area, 'Eight of them women who had been saved from starvation in 1896.' When she had had resources in 1896 for fifty girls, she had admitted three hundred. Now she had resources for five or six hundred, and she admitted thirteen hundred and fifty, bringing the total population at Mukti up to nineteen hundred, 'with over a hundred cattle.' With the help of a hundred and fifty devoted young women, she dealt with this new situation. A school was organized with over fifty classes and teachers. Four hundred children were occupied in the Kindergarten. A Training School for Teachers was opened, and an Industrial School with garden, fields, oil-press, dairy, laundry, departments for



baking, sewing, weaving and embroidery. For those who could only do very coarse work there were grain-parching, tinning culinary utensils, dyeing.)

It was a wonderful piece of organization. We are told that the Pandita's day began well before four o'clock in the morning, during the last twenty-two years. One can well believe it. Never were the gates of the Sadan shut to any who were in need. And yet in this vast work of organising, she never lost her serenity and her spirituality; no sign of bustle or worry marred the repose of her beautiful spirit. Her nights were spent in prayer and vigil; her great aim was to bring joyousness and blessedness into the lives of these girls, often so untrained, sullen, gross on their first admission. She never forgot this in the detail of management of this large scale work. Through the busy, bustling life of the place moved the slight serene figure with the great brow and the wide grey eyes, her spirit soaring above age, sorrow, labour, till at last she was called in 1922 to the rest she had always denied herself.

(My own work for married ladies began when I joined Pandita Ramabai's staff in Bombay. When she moved her school to Poona, I remained in Bombay and gradually developed the Married Women's School which has now been in existence for sixteen years, during which time 1000 women have taken advantage of the school courses; amongst whom have been child wives and widows in large numbers, also the wives of many professional men.)

The married woman in India presents a problem. As a rule she is not given much chance for education as she is bound by caste and tradition and she is called upon to fulfil solemn duties and responsibilities long before she is fit for



them. Homes being sacred temples, the Hindu woman is in the right sense of the term a Priestess in her own house.

Home is also the first school of every child, the mother being the child's first teacher. It is therefore very important to bring enlightenment and a fitting training to the married women, so that the foundations of home life may be truly built. Every girl's natural ambition is to possess her own home, but if she should become a widow her life can be consecrated to some special service for her country, such as has been rendered in the West by sisterhoods or cloisters. Widows have been sent for specialised training in Colleges or Hospitals where they learn to be teachers or nurses.

The work of my school has met with support from both Government and the general public. The success of this work in Bombay proves, (I think, that special schools for married women might well be attached to every Primary or High School for girls in which general and special courses of study are being followed.)

Educated women are waking up to their real responsibilities in public matters and, provided there is right guidance and proper organization, there is hope that some of the crying problems which affect women may be solved through an improvement in public opinion which has been brought about by extended education. Women who have become alive to the needs of their sisters are seeking opportunities for helpfulness and efforts are being made to break the bonds of custom and caste. In such work lies a most important sphere for the married woman and the widow. If educated on proper lines these women will prove to be the fit ones to solve all the great and small problems that involve the progress and prosperity of our land.





This call then is to the married women and widows. Let them in their leisure hours take up their duties, let them form committees and organize and open classes and special schools for widows and married women and as far as is possible let the teachers in such schools be married women. Education has so far advanced that it is possible for the married woman to spare her leisure hours for this important work.

There is no need to wait for Government or Municipalities to take the lead. It is the duty of individual women to start such work and Government and Municipalities should supplement the Funds.

Public bodies however do not need educated women on their committees as much as those are needed on the committees of homes and families. It is in the Home that the prime duty of the mother and wife lies.

Let us then seek out those and give them educational relief and then mark the changes which will follow.

(Two royal ladies, one a Maharani and the other a Navab Shah Begum have come forward to take the lead and it is hoped that many others will follow them.)

No structure dare be built without a solid foundation and that foundation is brave wives and mothers; therefore let us offer as many facilities as possible for the married women and widows that they may advance along the right lines and fulfil the needs of that noble domain the HOME with its many responsibilities.





## SHRIMATI RAMABAI RANADE

Ramabai Ranade the founder and president of the now famous Seva Sadan of Poona, was born in a little hill-girt town, in the Satara district, of a family whose faithful service to the Peshwas had won for them a *jagir* in Devarashtra.

We picture the little Brahmin maiden, sitting on her father's knee, listening wide-eyed, to his stories of saints and gods, and spirits, or watching her mother who was skilled in the knowledge of herbs and plants, distilling remedies for the villagers who came to her to be cured of their ills.

It was in such a wholesome unselfish atmosphere that Ramabai learned her first lessons of love for her fellowmen. No wonder that Justice Ranade found in her an apt pupil, when he began to prepare her (the little thirteen-year old bride, whom he had been compelled by his father to wed) for this great work that she was to do in Poona, after his death—a work that stands to-day a magnificent monument, showing what a good woman can achieve, if she will but yield herself, a willing instrument, to God's Omnipotent Hand.

We have illuminating glimpses of Ramabai Ranade's early life, in her *Reminiscences*—one such is peculiarly interesting. Her father was going to Poona—that wonderful town of which he used to bring home great stories to amuse his little daughter, as they sat under the shade of the dark trees in the hot afternoons, or beneath the feathery bamboos



when the harvest moon rode high in the cloudless sky. For very long Ramabai had coveted a doll—a beautiful doll, such as he told her was to be purchased in the wonder shops, patronized by English people. Now she ventured, as he bade her goodbye, to whisper her wish to him, and obtained a ready promise that when he returned he would bring her what she so desired. For days she went about hugging her delightful secret. At last, to make matters doubly sure, she thought she would breathe her hopes to the tutelary Deity of the house, when she did her morning *pooja*. No one else should know about it! Oh no, it must be a secret between her father, herself and Shiwa the Omnipotent, who was able to make her dream come true! So it was with a certain shock of surprise that she heard her brother say, ‘So father is bringing a doll home, for you!’ ‘How did you know?’, asked the little maiden. Was it possible—but no it could not be!—the silent Shiwa would never have betrayed her! Seeing her mystification the teasing brother would not tell her that the simple explanation of her puzzle was a letter he had received from his father, that morning. It is natural incidents like this that help us to see *why* Mrs. Ranade understood children so well, and was so loved by them. She never forgot, when with them, that she had once been a child, and so their little troubles and joys were always shared with a sympathy that was as natural to her, as it is rare with others.

When Justice Ranade decided to educate his girl-wife he set himself a task in which he had many opponents in his own household. From the time Ramabai, in the sanctuary of her learned husband’s own room, made her first obeisance to the god of learning (Ganesh), to the day when she made her



first speech before Sir James Fergusson, the Governor of Bombay, in the Town Hall, in Poona, regarding the necessity of establishing a High School for Indian girls, she had to suffer quiet, but bitter persecution, from the orthodox old women, in her own house. But she allowed nothing to deter her from the course her husband had laid down for her. The bitter taunts she heard, downstairs, could not damp the joy she felt as she sat upstairs, and recited Sanskrit *shloks*, or read Meadow's Taylor's thrilling *Tara* or *Sita* aloud to the Judge. What did it matter if, after a joyous afternoon at one of Pandita Ramabai's lectures, on coming home she was outcasted, so to speak, and not allowed to help in the kitchen work with the women of the family, until she had had a bath of purification? Even the water for the bath had to be drawn, (so said the scandalized ladies) from a well outside, not from the fountain, *within* the sacred precincts of their home. Patiently the brave-hearted girl, bent on learning all her husband wished her to know, and on attaining his ideal of an educated wife, pursued her course,—unmurmuringly. Quietly would she pick up the brass or copper vessel given to her, and go out to the dark well to draw water for the ablutions that would fit her to sit amongst her women relations again.

But this dark water brought on a fever which confined her to her bed for many a day. Then it was that Justice Ranade discovered all that she had been enduring, and put his foot down on the petty persecutions that had been going on, under his own roof, of the little girl-wife.

One cannot help thinking that it was thus that Ramabai Ranade learned the lesson of tolerance, and acquired that broadmindedness and sympathy which so fitted her for the



presidentship of an institution that aims at giving to Indian women, every opportunity for self-realisation and self-expression, and helps them to develop every God-given faculty. In the bracing atmosphere of her Seva Sadan she was able to give to her countrywomen what the human soul craves so ardently, and what is, in fact, its birthright.

Happy days, however, were in store for her—the Judge was appointed to Nasik, and there, at last, Ramabai had the joy of managing her own house. The golden memories, stored up in those days, helped immeasurably in brightening the dreariness of the ones that followed her husband's death. Whether in the house attending to the duties that every wife loves to perform, the duties that constitute the mysterious art of home-making (and are of an intellectual as much as of a social character), or in the garden which she so loved, where she coaxed the fragrant mogra, or the stately rose to grow, Ramabai's heart sang merrily.

She used to tell of how, when the Judge, in order to test her practical knowledge, asked her what sum she needed for the household monthly expenses, she who had never been allowed in Poona to know anything of the inner working of the domestic arrangements, named a figure below what was actually needed, and how, as the end of the month approached, when it hardly seemed possible that the little sum would last out the time, she was overcome with anxiety and shame, because she feared the emptiness of the household exchequer, was due to her lack of economy. She would not speak, however, of the trouble, and tried to eke out the sum, till the true state of affairs was discovered by the kind Judge who assured her she had done splendidly, and that he had only been waiting for her to ask him for



more money. The next household budget was, you may be sure, more accurately and more generously drawn up.

In Nasik, where some of the happiest days of her life were spent, Ramabai found a family that seemed a link, between the old orthodox world that had tried to hold so tyrannical a sway over her, and the new progressive world that was beckoning to her to come and taste the joys of freedom, education, culture and reform. This family were keenly interested in social service, and, encouraged by their example, Ramabai began taking part in activities that had the good of others as their object. She presided, at a school prizegiving, about this time, and was much interested in the school-children to whom she distributed the prizes.

But life is made up of sunshine and shadow, and the clouds gathered over Ramabai's horizon, when Justice Ranade in the course of his duties contracted cholera in a cholera-infected district. In a public resthouse the faithful young wife nursed him. Who can describe the agony of mind through which she passed in that lonely vigil by the sick man's bed. The local doctor declared his pulse was failing, and in her anguish she felt she must seek comfort in prayer, and so she stole out into the gathering darkness and made her way into the little temple in the courtyard, where sad and weary pilgrims for scores of years had sought and found relief in their despair, bowing, not surely as much to the little stone image there, as to the great God Who bids us seek His face; and to Whom the heavy-laden, stretching forth imploring hands into the darkness, cry 'Have mercy on me!' There, in the dimly lighted temple, the weeping woman fell prostrate and poured out her heart to Him Who alone could help her, and felt a sudden peace



steal over her. Somehow she knew her prayer had been answered, and she stole back to her post at the sick man's side, comforted and strengthened. Mr. Ranade recovered, and it was not till 1901, that he passed away.

Smitten, and well nigh overwhelmed, Ramabai shut herself up for a little; but then came the thought of the suffering womanhood around her, and it was in that temporary seclusion that (she consecrated her life to the service of her country-women.) Forgetting, or rather laying aside, her own sorrow, she went forth to minister to others in like trouble and to lift their eyes to the great fields of labour, the golden harvest of opportunity that awaited their sickles. New vistas opened before them, where hitherto they had seen nothing but a blank wall. Yes, to these hopeless and despairing ones she, like her friend Pandita Ramabai, came with a message of hope, of possibilities of service and usefulness, and bade them rise, and follow her. Together they ministered to the captive women in prison, to whom she took the sympathy and cheer they so much needed, to keep them from despair. They visited the little lads in the Reformatory, who were being given a chance to make good, and fit themselves for honest citizenship. Nor was the bedside of the sick and dying forgotten; and the hospital where lived the mentally afflicted ones. (Around her she gathered a band of women who used to gather, week by week, to listen to lectures on how to render First Aid to the injured, to work for the poor, and to hear accounts of women in other lands who served their fellows.)

Where did she dream that beautiful dream of a Home of Service, where would come as helpers all those whose



hearts God had touched with love for the great suffering world? One cannot tell, perhaps, as she sat at the feet of her husband, that prince of reformers, listening to his inspiring words; or in those dark days, where a simple English or Sanskrit lesson was taken in her husband's room; or when attendance at a lecture given by her friend Pandita Ramabai would bring down a storm of opposition and reproach. At any rate the dream became a reality, and one wonderful day, she formulated her plans, organized the work which has grown, so marvellously, into the colossal Institution, known as the Poona Seva Sadan, with its branches all over the Presidency of Bombay.)

How does the mighty oak grow from the little acorn? Who can follow the miraculous process? One can only watch, and wonder, and rejoice.

(As early as 1904, at the all India Women's Conference, in Bombay, Mrs. Ranade outlined the nature of the social service she proposed should be carried on by those whose motto, she declared, was to be 'Life is a sacred trust'.) How fully she herself realized her trusteeship, every day of her selfless life proved.

The great Seva Sadan had its inaugural meetings in Mrs. Ranade's own house (that home where her husband had brought the girl-wife whom he was to train for service). From a small attempt on the part of the members of 'The Hindu Ladies' Social and Literary Club' to educate women by means of regular classes and institutions, started to impart instruction of a religious, literary, medical, and industrial character, the work gradually grew into the splendid organization it is, and was at the time of Mrs. Ranade's death.

In a brief review, written by her ten years after she



began, she set forth some of the principal objects of the Seva Sadan. These were:—

- (a) To teach and educate women by means of regular classes and to impart instruction of a religious, literary, scientific, medical, and industrial character. To teach them the principles of First Aid, Hygiene, Sanitation and Domestic Economy.
- (b) To widen the range of women's knowledge by means of libraries, lectures, publications, books, magazines etc., and by tours, excursions, and other popular methods.
- (c) To enable women to participate intelligently in all domestic, social and national responsibilities, and to inculcate in their minds, the principles of self-reliance and mutual helpfulness.
- (d) To train women to render in a patriotic spirit, educational, medical, and philanthropic service to the motherland, and to their brothers and sisters in specially backward areas.
- (e) To help in the promotion of national work in all these, and similar ways for the social, material, and educational uplift of Indian women.
- (f) To promote greater fellowship amongst the women of India.
- (g) To start institutions for the promotion of these objects and ideals, and to affiliate those that are working for them.
- (h) To adopt such measures as will be conducive to the furtherance of these objects.
- (i) To work directly to promote the all-round well-being of Indian womanhood.



Everyone of these objects, this brave worker kept in view throughout the fifteen years she presided over the destiny of this Institution.

One of Mrs. Ranade's greatest achievements was the establishment of the Seva Sadan Nursing and Medical Associations. It was due to her inspiration, and influence, alone, that high caste Hindu widows and girls volunteered to take up a work, that above all others, is crying out to be done, in India. What marvellous forces she was harnessing for the service of the women and children of India when she took her first batch of probationers to the Sassoon Hospital Nursing Department, even Mrs. Ranade did not know! But all through the coming years, there will be a stream of women pouring into the hospitals, to be equipped for service to the suffering women and girls of this land! It was her hand that unlocked the door that will, and *must* remain open, as long as there are pain and suffering in our land.

The ordinary social worker, surveying the field of work before her might easily have been discouraged, but Mrs. Ranade's incurable optimism saw no obstacles—saw indeed only the greatest opportunities for service and seized them. There was hardly a phase of work to which she and her workers did not turn their attention. (To the Home, with its wide open doors, came widows, who sought hope and comfort, and found it in serving others; young girls with aims and hopes, and a longing to fit themselves for a wider life; little children who needed protection and love; the sick and sorrowful who claimed aid and advice. For all and sundry the Seva Sadan had help, and to all Mrs. Ranade, the loving mother and sympathizer, opened her heart.) In



the world of education, her help was claimed on text book and similar committees; she was the leader in Poona of an agitation for compulsory primary education for girls. Her reputation as a writer was established by the production of her book *Reminiscences*, now regarded as a Marathi classic.)

In politics, the versatility of this wonderful woman was evidenced when she threw herself heart and soul into the campaign begun to obtain the vote for Indian women. Surely a new era dawned for India, when she presided over a gigantic meeting of women who crowded (twenty or thirty deep) round the courtyard of the Seva Sadan, up to the second or third storey and even on the roof, to listen in rapt silence, to the eloquent speeches of those, who like their western sisters, were awakened to their duties and privileges as citizens.)

Sir H. Lawrence, a member of the Executive Council, declared at the excited debate on the question of Woman's Suffrage, that he would consider it an honour to serve on a Council of which Mrs. Ramabai Ranade was a member.)

She anticipated members of Council who to-day are introducing bills regarding a widow's title, or the lack of it, to her husband's property, by organizing lectures and debates in order to educate public opinion, to demand the alteration of the law to suit present day conditions.) Before she could accomplish much, however, she died.

A few years before her death, she was asked by the Poona Municipality to undertake the care of the thousands of women pilgrims and their little children, who attend the Annual Fair, at Alandi. With her faithful band of workers, who seemed, from the very first, to have caught her spirit of love and devotion, she set forth for the sacred place, and



there in the temple courtyard, day and night, she and her co-workers stood, organizing the women's visits to the shrine, taking charge of the infants while some weary pilgrim slipped in, to lay her offerings and her prayers, at the feet of the god. Through the hot days, they would deal out cool draughts of water to the poor thirsty ones, and so really and materially did they improve the condition of these countless frightened hordes of women, that they came and fell at Mrs. Ranade's feet in gratitude for the very real help rendered them.

Since her initiation of this great branch of Social Work, the Seva Sadan has been asked to work in co-operation with the Provincial Committee in organizing National Health, and Baby Sections, in the Exhibition that is held by the Municipality, for the benefit of the pilgrims that flock to Alandi from all over India.

One of her outstanding characteristics was her inability to see that there was anything extraordinary in her undertakings. Some one said to her one day, 'Dear Mrs. Ranade, how wonderful it is, that you should be able to do so much, and such great things for God!' 'Oh no!' she exclaimed quickly, 'there is nothing wonderful in what I am doing. I was fortunate in being the instrument that happened to be lying nearest God's Hand; and so He picked me up, and used me!' 'There lies the secret,' answered her friend, 'It is because you lie so near His Hand, that He uses you'.

Soon after her husband's death, when in her utter misery she shut herself up for a little, there went to her an English friend, one who divined that the only consolation, for Mrs. Ranade lay in consoling others. 'Come with me', she said, 'and let us carry a ray of sunshine to those who are



shut out, alas, by their own wrong-doing, from the world'. And so she carried her off to the captive women in Yeravda Jail. With that wonderful gift of sympathy that she possessed in such limitless measure, this good woman became the 'prison angel' to these unfortunate women, throwing herself, heart and soul, into the work she continued so faithfully for over twenty years.

(Nothing deterred her from those fortnightly visits to the jail, not the length, and loneliness of the drive out there nor yet the apparent hopelessness of the task before her. Summer or winter, rain or shine, her brougham used to be seen driving up to the big iron gates, behind which were so many miserable sin-burdened souls. Her gentle sympathetic inquiries about their health, and comfort soon drew a crowd of women round her; and then, when they had all gathered, generally about two hundred, in the open courtyard, she would read aloud an Abhang of Tukaram's, which she would translate into simple language, explaining the uplifting thoughts, and sentiments, to those who had wandered so far—so very far—alas, from the path of righteousness. And as she read, into the hard faces would steal a softness as new as it was beautiful, and eyes, unused to tears, would grow moist and wistful, as new thoughts and aspirations and longings were aroused by the gentle pleading of the one whose visits made the prison less dismal, and their lot less intolerable.)

(Is it surprising that away in far-off Africa a dying Indian woman on being told she could not live, much longer, gathered her new-born babe to her breast, and made up her mind, in her agony of fear, to cross the (to her) terrible ocean, in order to lay it in the motherly arms of her friend



Ramabai Ranade? How faithfully she tended the helpless infant, till the boy grew to manhood, is a story by itself.

Then came the end—It was a hot April afternoon, when the angel of Death hovered over the chamber where the great woman lay dying. For some days she had been ill—in agony, but oh so brave, so uncomplaining, so calm, even to the very end, thinking of others, rather than of herself. It was not, however, till the western sun had dipped behind the ghats, and the sudden darkness of the oriental night had settled down, upon the crowded city, that her soul took its flight to God.

They laid her in the large hall that bore her name—a noble beautiful figure she lay there, wrapped in her snow-white draperies, and covered with the fragrant roses and mogras she had loved so well to weave into garlands to adorn the life-sized portrait of her husband that always held the place of honour in her simple room.

The news of her passing, soon spread through the city and they came, one and all,—men, women and children—an endless procession, to file in silent reverence, past her who had been a mother to her people, Ramabai, the friend the enthusiast, the worker! She had spent her years in the up-lifting of her people—She had blazed the trail for them in a practically trackless wild!—Who, who would follow her? Thank God, there are many—many noble women, from her own dearly loved Seva Sadan, who have taken up the torch her dying hands dropped, who are now carrying on the glorious work she started and who are adding to their ranks every day, devoted, well-equipped, enthusiastic workers whose one object in life is to strive for the up-lift and betterment of suffering humanity.





## RECOLLECTIONS OF SOCIAL PROGRESS IN GUJARAT

We live to-day in an age of progress and the nation that does not keep pace with changing and advancing civilization must fail.

Progress implies an objective which lies still ahead of us. The things that seem to us so desirable and that we strive to attain to-day, soon become the things of the past. We pass them by and move on. Tennyson must have realised this when he spoke of 'the far off divine event to which the whole creation tends'. The very law of life is progress and no nation can stand still. If it does not advance however slowly, it must go back.

The forward movement of the East in time past has been admittedly slow but in recent times there has been real progress, the actuating force being the Great War. The war gave India an impetus and stirred her to new life. India had taken a part. It was visible to even the most casual onlooker that old ideas had given way to new. Changes which under normal conditions would have taken half a century to accomplish came in a few years, especially did such progress show itself in the uplift of women.

However long before this, education had given a new outlook, and the most thoughtful Indians had realised that child marriage, ignorant and fettered womanhood, down trodden untouchables, caste antagonism and such like, could not be tolerated. The promoters of such modern ideas met with strong and organised opposition from the defenders of the 'status quo' who produced religious sanction for old custom from their



Scriptures. It might be said in exoneration of the orthodox party that their religion had so often been in danger that they naturally suspected any departure from the customary path. Anti-reform campaigns were organised as a safeguard to religious life and impediments were placed in the way of reform. Even great reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy were looked upon as blasphemers against religion and as enemies not only of religion but also of their country. Early marriage was supported on the ground that if girls waited to an older age it might lead to immorality. Parents were taken to task for delaying marriage beyond the time common to the community. In some cases even, oppositionists forced parents to revert to an earlier marriage age than before.

When ladies of well-known families began to move in society with men, many newspapers predicted the rapid dissolution of society into chaos.

Those who contravened the dictates of the orthodox were often persecuted. Those who crossed the seas were threatened with social ostracism and when they returned sometimes found neither a home nor people ready to serve them. One pioneer Mr. R. S. Salipatram Rupram, the first to go to England in Ahmadabad, had to remain almost out-caste for 12 years. Marriages for the children of such modern parents became difficult to arrange.

What a change now! There is hardly a caste or a community which is not protesting against early marriage. It may be objected that this protest is a lip protest and is not followed up. But what is theory in India to-day becomes fact to-morrow. It is a big advance that theory has been accepted and that gradually increasing numbers are putting



theory into practice. Even in remote villages there is a change in thought, and in large villages and towns a practical demonstration of the acceptance of the theory is seen in the demand which is being made for girls' schools, and there is not wanting opinion in favour even of sending girls to boys' schools. The number of school girls is in fact increasing by leaps and bounds, so that it would seem that the bar to future progress will not be the will of the people, but the lack of educational facilities. In secondary and higher education girls are doing well though yet in small numbers. Girls however are competing with their brothers for the highest places in school and University examinations.

At Hingne, near Poona, a Women's University has been started where a course of studies especially adapted for women and taught in their own Vernaculars has been introduced. This institution which is entirely Indian in origin has branch schools at Baroda, Surat and Bhavnagar and a large number of girls attend them.

In other directions also progress may be noted. There is a great growth in women's organised work. Women's Conferences and Associations all over the country are doing sound constructive work. Perhaps the most remarkable feature in such movements is the unity of purpose which unites women of many different communities in service for their fellow women. Such an organisation as the Bombay Presidency Women's Council arose out of war work and helps now to give women valuable touch with organised social work in other lands.

Gujarat was never under strict purdah, but in whatever form it existed amongst Hindus, it is fast disappearing, and even amongst Mohammedan ladies there is a great change.



Amongst the ladies of ruling chiefs purdah was very strict in the past, but now many Ranis and Maharanis have given it up and many more are likely to come out of it shortly. In Kathiawar and among the well-to-do classes the custom of secluding women—not in purdah but in the home, and not allowing them to appear before gentlemen of the husband's family—existed. This custom too is dying out. Railways and outside contact with the world have helped to remove this seclusion to a great extent. The institution of purdah is in fact doomed and if social reformers launch out with decided initiative the opposition will not come from the women.

There is now no practical obstacle so far as sea voyages are concerned. Some may fear to face the ocean, but few are now afraid of it on account of social difficulties.

Almost every mail carries Indians to visit other lands, who return enriched by foreign travel. These are results undreamed of by the pioneers of social reform.

Nor must we think that such changes affect only the higher castes. The untouchable and depressed classes are rapidly awakening. What was at first suggested from without has now become a movement from within.

Even the widow's lot has brightened very greatly. They too were a sort of depressed class. But now they are permitted to remarry if they wish and many of them are becoming well educated and are training to be useful citizens. 'Vanita Vishrams or Widows' Home are springing up everywhere to improve the sad condition in which widows were placed by custom.

The social and educational progress of a country depends to a larger extent than is always realised on the condition of





its woman kind. The early reformers had the vision to see this and so they concentrated their efforts on the emancipation of women. It is the results of their early efforts that we see to-day—women and men working together for the emancipation of their sisters. This is a world wide movement in which the Indian women's movement finds its true place. Woman was made to be a helpmeet to man, but she can only be so if she possesses true freedom and education.





## SOCIAL WORK IN BOMBAY

Twenty-five years ago the gospel of social service and social work was little known. Yet it was about then that the seed was being sown for the many varied types of institutes dealing with various aspects of social relief that may be found in Bombay to-day. These are both communal and non-sectarian; in many cases it has been found that the task of dealing with poverty and unemployment is simplified by being attached within the individual community; in other cases, dealing with broad issues such as that of the social evil, institutions have been evolved that deal with the relief of conditions irrespective of caste, creed or race. This account includes only those institutions that are conducted by Indian women for the benefit of women and children.

The first of the non-sectarian institutions was the Seva Sadan, founded by two ardent social reformers, personal friends who worked in collaboration, Behramji Malbari and Dayaram Gidumal. Behramji Malbari was an ardent advocate of women's education and welfare. In 1887 he published protests against infant marriage and enforced widowhood. It was he and his co-adjutors who, after a bitter conflict with the orthodox party, succeeded in 1891 in having the age of consent for marriage raised to twelve for girls. Thus was set going the new trend in social legislation which resulted in 1925 in the fixing of the age within and without marriage at thirteen and fourteen respectively; strenuous efforts are being made at present to have it raised to sixteen and eighteen.



In 1908 these men founded the Seva Sadan. With them were associated certain ladies; Ramabai Ranade, whose life has already been related; a Gujarati lady, Jamnabai Sakkai who has also founded the Gujarati Women's Association for social work among Gujarati women; and a Mahomedan lady, Dilshad Begum Nawab Mirza. She too, while earnestly concerned with the welfare of her Mahomedan sisters, and taking an active share in the management of the Muslim Girls' Orphanage, showed her catholic outlook by her close association with the Seva Sadan. She was a member of the well-known Tyabji family, who were among the first to educate their daughters, and who took the lead in discarding purdah, the baneful effects of which India has not yet quite shaken off. She was the first Mahomedan lady to be appointed a Justice of the Peace.)

( The work of the Seva Sadan lies mainly in the provision of manifold departments for equipping poor women in the struggle for life. Its classes for primary teachers have developed into a full-time Training College, teaching up to the final certificate examination of the Poona Government Training College. This has met the keenly felt want for women teachers in the Municipal schools of the city and elsewhere. )

( For another type of women are provided home education classes for married women and older girls, who cannot attend ordinary schools on account of social barriers and other difficulties. Here are taught English and the Vernaculars, Singing, Home-nursing and Hygiene. )

To equip the very poor and illiterate women with some means of supplementing the meagre family income an Industrial Department is provided where Sewing, Laundry



Cane-weaving, Hosiery and other industries are taught.

Finally, there is a home for sheltering absolutely destitute women and children. These are maintained and trained in the various departments as teachers, nurses, midwives, etc. The total number of women at present attending the various departments is over 400, and the work needs increased funds to provide for the large numbers that are always seeking for admission.

Another leading non-sectarian Institution of later establishment is the Bombay Presidency Women's Council. Practically all the existing women's societies are affiliated to this, and are represented on it. It originated in connexion with war-work. As the result of an appeal made by H. E. Lady Willingdon, organized work on a large scale was undertaken by the women of Bombay for relief of the troops. The different sections of the community, and the different women's societies co-operated with a central office. Indirectly this war-work gave a great impetus to co-operative effort amongst women, and when the armistice came it was generally felt that some continuation should be made of such practical and organised work. Accordingly a meeting was called at which it was decided to form a Women's Council for Bombay. The example was followed later by other parts of India, and a National Council has since been formed. This organization is still in its infancy, but is an attempt at linking up the women of India with international organizations in other parts of the world.

The Council has been very successful in associating women for the purpose of considering and tackling questions concerning the welfare of women and children constitutionally and systematically. Busy women doctors, lawyers



teachers and social workers co-operate on the different sub-committees. In conjunction with the Graduates' Union, also an internationally organized body of women, a Parliamentary committee has been formed which follows the course of laws and social reform relating to women. Women's public meetings are held from time to time where a corporate expression is obtained of women's opinion on such subjects as the age of consent, age of marriage and social purity legislation. The vigorous propaganda carried on by the Council has helped towards the passing of the Children's Act and legislation on prostitution, maternity benefits, and the age of consent.

The Council has helped to foster in their earlier stages movements which later grew into large organisations. In this way the Council was closely connected with the start of the Infant Welfare, Girl Guides, Red Cross and Vigilance Associations.

(This year (1929) the Council's President, Lady Tata, led a deputation of women to H. E. the Governor of Bombay to ask for the abolition of the vice areas in the City of Bombay. In this connection also the Council runs a Rescue Home for Indian Women, which accomodates on an average 30 women.)

The year's work of the Council always includes the support or initiation of measures relating to the amelioration of the lot of women and children, or the improvement of the health of the city. Some of these measures are general in scope, others are more detailed. The 1927 report, for instance, records a letter sent to the Bombay Municipality requesting the enforcement of stricter supervision over the restaurants, sweetmeat shops etc. to ensure that all eatables



are kept under glass or gauze, and to make it obligatory on vendors to use fresh paper for the packing of eatables. The Council also gave its support to the scheme formulated by the Association of Medical Women in India on the subject of the registration of midwives and *daïs*. The Corporation has asked the Government to undertake the necessary legislation on the lines of the British Mid-wives Act of 1912. The Committee also sent a letter to the Government of Bombay strongly recommending the appointment of Honorary Magistrates to try in camera juvenile offenders under sixteen years of age. Government has since appointed women Honorary Magistrates to sit in the Children's Court.

The Council seeks to work as a co-ordinating and directing body for social and philanthropic work connected with women and children, affiliating and aiding existing bodies, forming new ones as required, thus checking overlapping in work.

The women's societies working among the different communities of the city are of earlier origin. The Gujarati Stri Mandal (Women's Association) founded in 1903 by Jamnabai Sakkai, conducts free educational classes for married women and others. The classes include girls of twelve and fifteen, and have occasionally had women of sixty-five. A nursery class is attached so that married ladies can bring their children with them. The Mandal serves also a social purpose, as a sort of Women's Club, the members meeting for lectures, garba parties, concerts, exhibitions of handwork. The total membership is about 1500.

In 1903 also was started the Zoroastrian Women's Association run by Parsi ladies. Besides chawl-visiting and



the provision of out-door relief in the way of milk, tonics and medicines, the Association opened industrial classes for the employment of women. These have developed into a large concern, the Sir Ratan Tata Industrial Institute, which provides employment for Parsi women, and enables them to add to the family income. The workers are provided with meals, tonics, and a fortnight's holiday on full pay at convalescent homes.

Somewhat similar in scope is the Maharashtra Women's Co-operative Credit Society which works among Marathi speaking women. The Society started by advancing loans to poor members and getting from them ordinary articles of clothing, pickles, preserves and other home-industries which it sold to the general public. It thus combined the functions of a Credit Producers' and Sellers' Co-operative Society. Since 1927, the society has had to confine itself, on technical grounds, to credit work.

It has been found that, in a large city like Bombay, the progress of adult education and health propaganda among women and the relief of poverty are better secured not so much by a central organization as by numerous Women's Societies or Stri Mandals which work among different communities. Along with those mentioned above are the Bene-Israel Stri Mandal working among the women of that community, and the Jain Stri Mandal working amongst Jain women. The Arya Mahila Samaj, started as early as 1882 by Pandita Ramabai, amongst other activities promotes women's education by providing school and college fees and by holding classes for married and adult education. The problem of the spread of adult education among women is met also by the numerous classes held by the Women's Indian Association, an



All-India organization with local branches, by the Hind Mahila Samaj, by Mrs. Nikambe's Married Women's Institution, and by the Mahila Mandal.) This last runs also a Co-operative Credit Society and is the women's branch of a large and organized body of Indian social workers, many of them pledged as life-members to the cause of social work. The Social Service League and the Bhagini Samaj, started in memory of the late Mr. Gokhale, are attempts to organize a society of women workers on parallel lines to the present Servants of India Society.

There are many other bodies, such as the Children's Aid Society, the Vigilance Association, the Infant Welfare Association, where women secretaries and members have a large share of the work though these are not entirely conducted by women.

With these numerous existing organizations, whereby women of all communities were playing a large and valuable part in the service of their city, the need began to be felt for a Training Centre which would provide a course of practical and theoretical training in social work. An experiment was made in this direction through missionary agency, and a Social Training Centre for Women has been working for the last three years and is at present situated at Bellasis Road, Byculla. The theoretical course includes Social History, Economics, Psychology and Public Administration, and the practical work includes Play Centre and Nursery School work, Chawl and Hospital visiting. The Bombay Social Service League has instituted a Diploma Course in Social Work for which the students of the Training Centre are prepared. The working of the Training Centre has shown the very large opportunities for further extension.





of social work in different directions, and the last paper in this collection contributed by Miss Tilak, the Directress of the Centre, gives an account of the possibilities of such extension.

An attempt has lately been made, partly as a result of the activities of this Training Centre, to realize in a small way, the establishment of a Settlement for social work in industrial areas, on the lines of similar institutions in industrial cities in the west. The Seva Mandir is a centre for social work organized by a small group of young Indian women social workers, most of whom have studied at the Social Training Centre for Women. The Settlement is located in one of the mill areas of Bombay, and the work includes chawl-visiting and health-propaganda, a nursery school, women's class and clinic. The earlier institutions had dealt more definitely, either with the relief of the entirely destitute woman, or with the education and assistance of the woman in the home who suffered from the system of child-marriage or enforced widowhood. With the growing industrial population of the city, the need is increasingly felt for a new type of work among women mill-workers, the Seva Mandir has made a small but earnest attempt towards meeting this need. With this brief notice of the youngest social institution in Bombay, this account may close.





## THE SPHERE OF INDIAN WOMEN IN MEDICAL WORK IN INDIA

(It was in 1888, when (A. W. Jagannadham the first Indian woman crossed the waters to study western Medicine in Scotland. She felt the call to help her suffering sisters and their children, her sisters who would suffer silently even to death rather than be examined by men.) Whatever the personal cost may have been, and the obstacles and prejudices she would encounter, she was ready to overcome them with courage and fortitude. There were not many facilities in India itself at that time for the study of medicine. The task she was taking upon herself was great and she wanted to equip herself in the best possible way before beginning her life's work. She commenced her medical studies in the Medical College, Madras in 1884, where a few women were studying medicine. This was the first college in India to open its doors to women; the triumphant victory having been won by the first woman student there in 1878, just over fifty years ago. This was the young wife of a civilian, the well known and much revered Dame Mary Scharlieb. The women students in Madras were drawn from all parts of India. Amongst its first Indian women was a lady from Bengal, no less a personage than Lady Bose, wife of the famous plant physiologist, who, casting aside all purdah and religious and social customs, journeyed a thousand miles south, to study medicine in Madras. The way opened by these noble pioneers has been continued and has steadily



widened, for to-day Madras has no less than 664 women medical students, of whom 251 are in the colleges and 413 in the schools. There are in India six medical colleges and thirteen medical schools that take in women and of these, one college and four schools are entirely for women and staffed only by women. Two of these schools are mission institutions and two are Government. The remaining colleges and schools have co-education.

(The Lady Hardinge Medical College Delhi, was opened on October 8th 1916. The College was named after its founder, the late Lady Hardinge of Penshurst, who knew that one of the greatest needs of the women of India was the provision of medical help, and that such help could best be given by their own countrywomen, provided that these could be satisfactorily trained.) A certain number of Indian women were receiving medical education in the existing medical schools and others in Europe, but she felt that social and religious customs did not permit of co-education to all and the close association between the sexes which necessarily must exist in mixed schools. For these and other reasons, she urged the establishment of a medical college, staffed entirely by women, in which medical education of the first order could be obtained, and she undertook to collect money for this purpose. Lady Hardinge's enthusiasm and her charming, gracious personality gained the interests and the help of the people, and it is worthy of note that the cost of the College and Hospital has been provided almost entirely by Indians—Hindu, Mahomedan, Parsee, Sikh—all contributed willingly. The cost of the scheme was over twenty-two lakhs of rupees.

There are 113 women students in the College, 89 of



whom are Indians and 24 European or Anglo-Indian. The College teaches for the M. B. B. S. of the Punjab University. Of the eight professors, four are Europeans and four are Indians.

The Lady Willingdon Medical School, Madras, was established in 1922. It is the second largest of the women's medical schools in India. It has ninety-five students and it is staffed wholly by Indians, all university women, five of whom have foreign qualifications. The staff of other schools and colleges are composed of European, American and Indian women. The colleges in India train students for university degrees which entitle them to registration on the British Medical Register and the privilege of practising in Great Britain and its colonies.

A number of Indian women marry after qualifying, yet their knowledge is not wasted as even after marriage they carry on their good work. Unlike the Durham County Council, which prohibits the employment of married women, the Councils in India welcome them, as married women in India get a much readier hearing from the lay public than unmarried women, especially with regard to maternity and child welfare work. The women doctors of India feel even as Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in the west, that men as doctors cannot do all that should be done to improve the home, the school, the state. They are persuaded that the qualities of mind and heart which have come to women through ages of motherhood are needed for the full comprehension of the physical nature of girls and women, and that it is essential for women to be medically educated in order to help on the good work of the prevention of disease both physical and moral, the education



of girls, and the management of the state. (The work done by Mrs. Muthulakshmi Reddi, M.B., C.M. the first woman on the Legislative Councils, does not disprove the idea before the Indian woman doctor of to-day. By education, legislation, example and precept, she is, with the co-operation of her sisters, helping to set things right. Her bills for the suppression of brothels, immoral traffic and *devadasis* and for the raising of the age of consent are tending towards the goal aimed at. Miss Commissariat, F. R. C. S. I., a senior medical officer of the Women's Medical Service for India, and Superintendent, Medical Aid for Women, United Provinces, has greatly helped to extend medical aid in rural areas by opening several new hospitals while improving the status and work of the hospitals in her province. She has established maternity and child welfare centres and helped Baby Weeks and Health Weeks in towns and villages, thus emphasizing the need for preventive medicine.) (Mrs. Veerasinghe-Chinnappa with her powers of organization and foresight, started the maternity and child welfare scheme of the Corporation of Madras in 1919. The efficiency and utility of the scheme have so advanced that there are over sixty midwives, twenty-two health visitors and ten child welfare centres, with a woman doctor in charge of each centre. The steadily growing appreciation by the public of Madras, of the invaluable benefits of the free maternity service rendered by the scheme, in particular to the women belonging to the wage-earning classes, whose husbands lack the finances necessary to engage the services of qualified private nurses, is clearly reflected in the statistics of work done. The work of the Scheme is educative, preventive and curative.) It is educating the poor to good midwifery and an increasing



number of the poor are taking advantage of this free attendance. In 1919, 11.9 per cent of the total number of births in the city were conducted by the Scheme, while in 1926 the percentage of births attended by the Scheme, rose to 27.3, while 29.8 per cent of the births in the city were conducted in hospitals as against 16.9 per cent of 1918. It has greatly decreased the infant and maternal mortality also, as the infant death rate among Child Welfare infants fell from 276.8 to 181.4. This, even as it stands, is a high figure; but the maternal mortality rate for all deaths among cases brought to the notice of the scheme was 0.72 per cent, several of these deaths being due to General Diseases.

The Madras Presidency Maternity and Child Welfare Association of the Red Cross Society, is also doing much for the propagation of health. Here east and west meet to work together for the very poor of the Presidency. There are Health Centres established in the city and mofussil towns with a nurse or Health Visitor in charge. She is assisted by ladies of means and leisure, European and Indian who find time to get to the centres and carry on their work of love and service. They befriend the poor, attend to their needs, teach them mothercraft and arrange for their confinements either in their homes or, if not suitable, in hospitals.

(The Lady Chelmsford All-India League for Maternity, and Child Welfare was founded in 1920. The work of the League divides itself into three main activities, namely, Health Schools, Health Centres and Propaganda.) There are five Health Schools, which train women as Health Visitors, one in each of the Governors' Provinces—Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Lahore, three of which are supported by



the League. The Punjab Health School was taken over by the Government from the Lady Chelmsford League in 1927.

There are several centres scattered all over India but the number directly assisted by the League is small. The work of the Centres comprises Maternity and child welfare work, antenatal care and house visiting. In addition, the centres except in south India, undertake the training of *dais* or indigenous midwives.

Propaganda is carried out through conferences, travelling exhibitions, cinemas and lantern slides, National Health and Baby week celebrations and publications. National Health and Baby Week is celebrated throughout India at most of the large towns and in Indian States during the cold weather. It is gratifying to note that people are beginning to take an intelligent interest in the aims and purpose of the Week and that the lessons taught during it are bearing fruit, and in a small measure are doing their part in the attempt to solve the great problem of maternity and child welfare in India.

In Indian States, Indian women doctors are doing all they can for medical relief, education and the State. (Mrs. Poonen-Lukose, B. A., M. B., B. S., the daughter of a great educationalist of the Travancore State and one who laboured not a little for the advancement of female education, is a member of the Travancore Legislative Council and is in charge of a large women's hospital in the State.)

(Dr. Maya Das in Baroda, Dr. Kanga in Hyderabad, Dr. Prem Pyari in Jaipur, Dr. Dalal in Gwalior and Dr. Rukhmabai in Rajkot, are but a few of the many Indian women, in Indian States, who are working towards the same goal of India's women doctors.





There are several women doctors who, in spite of their pressing duties, find time to serve on municipal bodies, educational committees and maternity and child welfare associations.

In 1885, the most Hon'ble the Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, learnt of the needs of the sick and suffering women and children in India and founded the National Association for supplying Medical Aid by women to the women of India. The aims of the Association also included the training of women as doctors, as nurses and midwives. An appeal was made and the ruling princes and princesses and aristocracy of India readily came forward with donations and endowments. Branches were formed in the provinces, and hospitals staffed by women were established in cities and towns, named after our great and good Empress Queen Victoria. The work of the Association increased so much that private funds alone were not sufficient to expand the work, maintain the hospitals up to the required standard with modern equipment and buildings or to found hospitals in new areas. In 1913, the National Association founded the Women's Medical Service with a subsidy from the Central Government, so that medical women, whether English or Indian, with the highest standard of qualifications, might be attracted to practise in India. The services of officers of the Service are lent free of cost to first class women's hospitals to enable local bodies to spend more money on suitable buildings and equipment. This is the premier service of women doctors in India. It has 44 officers working in 25 first class and up to date hospitals, with one medical college and two medical schools for women. The number of patients admitted into these hospitals during 1927 was 41,646



in-patients, 284,165 out-patients, 7782 labour cases of which 1594 were abnormal. The total number of operations performed was 18,563. The increase in the number of patients admitted is not necessarily due to any seasonal variations or increased unhealthiness of the localities, but that patients are less prejudiced against hospitals and western treatment. They are learning to take advantage of the opportunities they now have for early diagnosis and treatment leading to a more speedy recovery. The predominance of normal labours over abnormal ones is another proof of the increasing popularity of women's hospitals, whether State, mission, aided or private. In former years (and the practice still continues in some Government headquarters hospitals in mofussil stations) women were paid five rupees to induce them to go to hospital for their normal confinement, but nowadays in the city State hospitals there is not adequate accommodation for all the needy cases seeking admission, and those whose husbands get a monthly income of Rs. 60 or more have to pay hospital stoppage fees. About forty years ago, when the National Association for supplying Medical Aid by Women for Women, was founded and hospitals opened, there were a larger number of abnormal than normal labours. Patients were admitted generally moribund and succumbed shortly after admission or lived only a few days, so that hospital and death were generally associated together. But this prejudice is now far removed in cities and the larger towns. Patients seek admission and treatment readily, asking for operation or injection, even if not indicated, for the simple reason that their friends or relations were cured and that they feel the same would cure them also. Another fact that goes to prove that the treatment in hospitals is



appreciated, is that donations and gifts to hospital still continue, donations made, not with the purpose of pleasing the officials whose wives made the appeal, nor of getting a title or honour from Government, but out of gratitude and in appreciation of the benefit gained. I know of a case where the patient made a vow for a son. After the birth of the son and her safe recovery, she was anxious to fulfil the vow she had made. She consulted her husband and they both agreed that, instead of making a pilgrimage to the deity to whom she had made the vow and spending money on her journey and offering it at the temple, it would be better to build a ward in the hospital, naming it after the deity and so observing the true spirit of the vow.

The Victoria Caste and Gosha Hospital, Madras, which was founded by Dame Mary Scharlieb and was endowed by the Ruling Chiefs of the south, had during the years 1921 to 1927, 9670 labour cases. Of these 8309 were normal and 1361 abnormal. This hospital is for high caste Hindu and Mahomadan women. The number of first-mothers (*primiparae*) among those confined was 2208, of whom 1865 were Hindus and 343 Mahomadan. Of these first-mothers there were only three Hindus who were 13 years old, 8 who were 14, while 1331 were between the ages of 18 and 25. There were 16 at 35, 3 at 38 and 2 at 40 years of age. Among the Mahomadan first-mothers, there were 2 at 14, 236 between 18 and 25, 6 at 35 and one at forty. The average age of a primipara among the Hindus was 20.42 and among the Mahomadans 21.24. Although child marriage still continues, especially among orthodox Brahmins, the consummation of marriage is not till after puberty. There is a gradual rise in the age of consummation owing to education, health



exhibitions and social influences. Among the higher caste non-Brahmins, girls are not married before puberty and often not till they are 17 or 18. The steadily increasing number of unmarried students—Brahmin and non-Brahmin in the women's colleges and secondary schools scattered throughout India, must necessarily raise the age of marriage and of motherhood.

The number of more highly qualified Indian women in mission hospitals is small. Most of the hospitals have a foreign missionary in charge and have not the funds (nor perhaps is it the policy of the Home Boards) to engage Indian women to be in charge. The missions can generally afford those of the lower grade Sub-assistant Surgeons or L.M.P.s. There are quite a number of these trained at the Union Mission Medical Schools at Ludhiana (Punjab) and at Vellore (S. India), who have proved quite efficient assistants and are able to carry on the work for short periods during the summer or autumn vacations when the missionary leaves the hot and stifling plains to recuperate her health in the hills. There is a proposal to raise the school at Vellore to the status of a college, and it is hoped then that Indian women with higher qualifications will be called to carry on the noble service of women mission doctors.

There is a clear call to Indian women doctors to take their full share in human progress. They have not met with the same opposition from men doctors as did their pioneers in the west. In schools and colleges where there is co-education, men students have been known to be most polite and considerate. Indian men doctors welcome a consultation with women doctors in the case of their women patients. They understand the feelings of their women



patients and their finer feelings suggest and do not repel a consultation with a women doctor in diseases peculiar to women. A man doctor is often handicapped as his patient either refuses to give him a full history of her symptoms, while physical examination of any kind is out of the question and so he may be compelled to seek the aid of a woman doctor. Thus in India we have not competition but co-operation between men and women doctors. Women doctors specialise in midwifery and in diseases peculiar to women (gynæcology). A woman patient who is not purdah, as is the case with the majority of patients in southern and western India, may not hesitate to consult a man physician for ordinary ailments, but in diseases relating to women and mothers, she would continue in suffering silence even at the risk of her life, rather than go to a man for relief. The women of the north are strictly purdah and will not on any account see a man. Even those who have come out of purdah or do not observe purdah, with their generations of inherited bashfulness, modesty and shyness, would still prefer hospitals staffed by women and attendance by women. It is not her false modesty, but her quiet, shy and bashful nature that sometimes makes it difficult for an Indian woman to relate her symptoms even to a woman doctor. She generally pours out her tale of woe to her nearest woman relation or friend who is her spokeswoman. As long as this attitude of mind remains, and it is her privilege to choose her medical attendant, the need for women doctors in India will continue and not in the field of curative medicine alone, but in preventive medicine and in the uplift of humanity. The number of women's hospitals and women doctors are far too few to meet the growing demand for such. Often patients



are brought in from great distances, fatigued and exhausted from the trying journey over rugged cart tracts and in springless conveyances, for want of medical aid at closer quarters. Much pain and suffering could be lessened and life saved if rural dispensaries could be established in villages. Government have done much to encourage medical education among women by given them free education and stipends to certain students in the schools. These students after graduation should not be allowed to collect in the cities and larger towns, but be encouraged to go out into the villages and settle down in rural areas, perhaps, in their own villages, form dispensaries and be given a midwife to assist them in their work. Much equipment would not be necessary. Cases diagnosed early and requiring major operations or special treatment could be sent to the district headquarters or women's hospital without much risk or delay. The doctor would be able to divide her time between dispensary work, antenatal clinics and child welfare work, health talks and health exhibitions. Thus we may look forward with hope to the future, and to a more widespread influence of Indian women physicians who, with sympathy and reverence guiding intellectual activity, will continue to apply the vital principles of their Great Master to the healing art in every walk and way of life.





## SOME IMPRESSIONS OF INDIAN WOMEN'S COLLEGES

When under the deadening influence of long wars and foreign invasions the old educational systems had died out and the whole cultural inheritance of the Hindus and Mahomedans was at a low ebb, a new system heralded by Macaulay's famous Minute came into being. And the new system entirely ignored the question of women's education. There was a tacit and wholly gratuitous assumption that the schools and colleges were intended only for boys and men, and that there was no demand for women's education in any part of the country. The educated gentlewomen of nineteenth century England had their counterpart among the Brahman and Mahratta women of the higher classes. But the women's High school and College movement being still in its infancy in England, it was natural that the scheme initiated by the British Government made no provision for women's education. This was confirmed by the country's own tendency, especially at this period of degeneration, to confine unduly the sphere and activities of women. But such a state of things could not persist; as the country revived from torpor, province after province took in hand the question of education for women. Among the first was Bombay. Here as elsewhere private teaching and then educational institutions for girls under private and missionary agency gradually began to make headway; and in time these educational institutions became the regular girls' schools, that slowly stepped into line with boys' schools. In 1883,



the Bombay University roll shows the names of eight girls who matriculated. But collegiate education for women was in general yet unthought of and if the idea was entertained, the ridicule of commonsense at the imposition of additional burdens upon the frail feminine mind must have effectively negated any tentative proposals—even as in Victorian England.

Hence when in 1886 a Parsi gentlemen of Bombay wished his daughters to have the advantage of college education, he found great difficulty in procuring admission for them in the Arts Colleges of the city. He was considerably assisted, however, by the encouragement of Dr. Mackichan, the principal of Wilson College—then known as the Free General Assembly's Institution.—Dr. Mackichan admitted them and later got the University authorities to enact that the word 'he' wherever it occurred in the university Calendar should also mean 'she'. These were among the first girls to enter college. In 1926, forty years later, the returns for the different colleges affiliated to the University show a total of 450 women students, among them being candidates for degrees in Arts, Science, Medicine, Teaching, Law, Commerce and Agriculture. A short comparison may be drawn concerning the state of things in the different provinces. In the Madras Presidency, the figures for 1927 show 550 women students in the Arts Colleges and about 140 in the Medical Schools, the largest total of the different provinces. The first woman was admitted into the Medical College, Madras, in 1878, but the real advance did not commence till the establishment in 1914 and 1915 of two women's colleges in Madras city with bright surroundings and residential quarters, followed by a third at Trivandrum.



At Calcutta there are two women's colleges,—one of them Bethune College dating back to 1849, the first Government institution for girls in India,—and about 300 women students, including those studying at the medical and men's colleges.

At Delhi is an All-India institution, the Lady Hardinge College for women, founded in 1916 with accommodation for 100 medical students and its own hospital attached. Its students are largely drawn from the Punjab, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces with a few others from all over India. In practice it has been found that the large cities, like Bombay and Madras cater for their own women medical students.

At Lahore are two women's colleges with about 70 students; at Mysore, two Intermediate Colleges and one constituent college, the Maharani's College, with a total of about 30 students.

In most provinces in India, where women are studying in any number, the principle of separate women's colleges has been accepted. In every case, at the commencement, women were admitted into men's colleges, but it was found that the establishment of separate colleges attracted a much larger number of women students. In Bombay, however, the principle of co-educational colleges seems by now to have been definitely accepted and preferred to separate colleges. The evidence given recently before the Bombay University Commission seemed to show that separate colleges, in Bombay city at least, would if anything be considered a retrograde step. This may be ascribed to the influence, at the outset, of the Parsi community, and later of the Marathi.

The figures given above will show that the real advance is confined to Bombay and Madras. Bombay will be taken



here as a fair index of the forward movement in higher education for women.

To turn our attention first to the intellectual aspect of this movement. It has often been said that the standard of attainment in Indian Universities is low compared with that in those of the West: the remark applying with greater force to women. It is true: the achievements of women's education are less than they might have been; yet, in justice, two great mitigating causes may be suggested.

The difficulty, inseparably connected with Indian education at its present stage of evolution, that of teaching through the medium of English rather than the vernacular, pursues one into the college course with complications equal to those created in the High schools. As a result of the methods of teaching English, the vast majority of students come to college with a very imperfect, fragmentary, and incoherent ability either to speak or write: it may be added that in general the women are far better than the men. Where all the advanced teaching is in English, considerable emphasis has to be laid on the student's capacity for expression in speech and writing; yet often that gives a very unfair impression of even the students' actual reading and still less of his intellectual maturity. I have often, after discussing a piece of literature with students, found their appreciation very incoherent and immature; later, in an informal talk with the students in the vernacular on the same subject, I have been surprised to find how much of the apparent immaturity was due to the utter incapacity for felicitous or even consistent expression in English. The problem is fraught with added perplexity when we consider the many vernaculars of the Presidency.



This difficulty of teaching through the medium of English is also a potent factor in the limitations of the High School curriculum, which is the other mitigating factor. In the average Indian school more periods in a week are devoted to the actual teaching of the English language than are given to any one subject in schools in England or Europe; naturally, therefore the time spent on other subjects is much more restricted: with the result that the High school courses, having English as their centre, are elementary and incomplete and leave too many loose ends. The students feel quite rightly that it is not possible to stop short at such a point: for many of them the natural requirement is a further two years of High school with a course which even if elementary is better rounded-off and complete in itself. Few of them have the more speculative and specialized interest that would fit them for college work, nor the independence of mind that would enable them to dispense with school-room methods of teaching. All these are compelled to come to the colleges if they desire to follow up the fragmentary education the schools provide, and consequently the colleges have to adapt themselves to suit their needs. Elementary and incomplete as are the courses, a further difficulty is evident in that they offer to the callow student the fruits of an alien culture, that can only be assimilated by a riper intelligence. This state of things has led to reiteration of the cry that it is impossible to lecture to the students of a college, till the schools equip them with greater capacity for reading and understanding books and a better grasp of the aims and methods of private study. From all sides one hears with increasing insistence the complaint that college students are doing higher Secondary school work—for the Indian educationalist has no



illusions ; no one is more alive to the limitations of our educational achievement.

Much has been said in India as elsewhere on the subject of alteration of the curriculum to suit the special needs of women. Such an alteration would certainly be an asset in the High schools, where a curriculum on a much broader basis is necessary to suit the varied needs of a large number. But it is doubtful whether a university can so circumscribe cultural aims as to propose and equip women as house-keepers, wives or even mothers. Its great aim should finally be to produce accurate, far-reaching and critical thought.

An account of women's colleges would, however, be incomplete without mention of a very interesting development in what may be called the intermediate stages of collegiate education. This is the institution at Poona, known as the Indian Women's University, initiated and supported entirely by private agency. Its most interesting feature is the endeavour to teach collegiate subjects through the medium of the vernacular. Professor Karve, the founder, an intensely practical educationalist, felt strongly the necessity for some means of rapidly bridging over the widening gulf between the cultural achievement of men and women in India. If women's education was to show both rapid advance and diffusion, it was necessary to resort to the natural method of teaching in the vernacular. The importance at the same time of English as 'a language of world wide culture and of special importance to India on political and national grounds, was recognized by including it as a compulsory second language. Among other compulsory subjects are Psychology, Study of the Child Mind, Biology, Sociology and History. The standard aimed at in most subjects is not higher than



that of the Intermediate examination of other universities. Though objection has been taken to the name as marking out an unnecessary separation in the higher education of men and women, the importance of the work as an experiment conducted on sound and practical lines is being recognized. There is an increasing number of girls' schools in the Presidency affiliated to this institution, the figures for 1926 show 7 High Schools and 8 Middle Schools, most of these staffed by women who have graduated from the institution. This is rapid advance for ten years—the University was founded in 1916—and shows that it has succeeded in one of its aims, the rapid diffusion of education among girls. On the other hand the actual numbers in the three Arts colleges is very small compared to those in women's colleges conducted on the usual lines, being in 1926, 17, 8, and 7. In general, the establishment and progress of this University seems to show that the question of higher education in the vernacular is by no means finally settled and there is room and indeed necessity for such an experiment; though a wholesale adoption of the vernaculars as the media of instruction in collegiate subjects does not seem immediately possible when even the recent committee on University Reforms in Bombay has declared that 'the introduction of the vernaculars as media of instruction is not in the interests of the higher education of women'.

However, though education, collegiate and otherwise, is hampered considerably by the vexed question of the vernaculars, there is a brighter side to the picture. While these difficulties minimize the intellectual quality of the colleges, the production of accurate and keen habits of thought is promoted by opportunities for varied social intercourse. An



account of some of the debates in a Bombay College at which the writer was present, may be of some interest in throwing light upon the activity of mind of the Hindu girl. At the outset it may be mentioned that all formal rules of debate were rejected as comic encumbrances by the practically minded Hindu girl: the debates were in the nature of informal discussions and were conducted with much more vigour and understanding when they dealt with social rather than literary questions. A vigorously contested subject, that might be of interest to European readers, was that 'the Joint Family System should be suspended'. The arguments relating to the hardships of the system have been too often repeated to need mention. But the ably contested defence was an interesting proof of the often forgotten fact that the ameliorative factors of a system are always far less apparent to an outsider than its hardships. Much was made of the far brighter and joyful childhood that was conditioned by the congregation of so many children under one roof—the games, festivals, flower-wreathings, outings, surprise meals, and treats in which nine children participated being contrasted by one speaker with the childhood of her more westernized friends brought up in homes containing two or three children. It was amusing to hear Crichton-Miller and western psychology quoted as a defence for the joint-family system, the speaker's point being that inhibitions, daydreams, brooding, and so on, were impossible to the child with the companionship of so many of its fellows. Another pathetic picture was of a worn-out middle class mother attending, servantless and irritable through overwork, to the needs of her baby, who would have been much better looked after among the profusion of aunts and female relatives in a family of the



older system, where the older women could provide the experience to deal with baby's illnesses and the younger women the leisure and health to occupy his playfulness.

These debates were of considerable interest to me, a Parsi, one of a community among whom the system is not prevalent except among sections of the poor: that is why I quote it at some length, as having a similar interest for those who have no intimate acquaintance with the inner working of Indian domestic life. Another debate was on the proposition that 'marriage by arrangement has done less harm to Society than Marriage by Choice', the slightly humorous phrasing of the proposition being the work of the most thoughtful among them. The students of the senior year were particularly keen about it, having studied during the year a course of Modern English Literature, which had provoked much discussion and thought. This was drawn upon considerably by the defenders of the proposition. Scathing references were made to the women of western novelists who 'took life-long vows of marriage, met men they liked better than their husbands, waved good-bye and went.' The tone of the debates showed a marked difference from what it would have been in the past. The best and the most thoughtful of the students were now critical of, if not distinctly antagonistic to, the wholesale adoption of things foreign. Fifteen years ago it would have been a different matter; students of this type would have been among the most anxious to urge adoption of western modes of thought. But the war and its aftermath produced a far more critical attitude towards western civilization, an attitude which was assisted by the natural reaction towards the earlier attitude and by the growth of national consciousness. Most



people European and Indian will agree that even if often aggressive and intolerant, this was a much healthier frame of mind than in the days when, it is said, the fascination of western civilization was so great that prominent Bengalis prided themselves on even dreaming in English instead of Bengali

These casual glimpses of a critical attitude towards western modes of thought are given partly as an indication of the considerable tension that prevails in the mental life of the universities. For there is room for criticism of the curriculum on far more radical lines than the inclusion of a few subjects dealing with mothercraft and home-hygiene for women students. It is a criticism that concerns both men and women, and no paper on collegiate education, can ignore it. This is the complete ousting of the national culture in the Universities by the study of the English language and western science. Where separate courses exist for the study of oriental learning, they are on lines meant only for the antiquarian and the specialist. Hence the resulting effect on the Indian university student; the disquiet and excitement of the few under the stimulus of a foreign culture unassimilated with their own and the stagnation of the many at the imposition of a culture so alien.

A brief historical sketch may throw light on the question. As an example of the pursuit of learning before the adoption of modern western methods, we may turn to the life of Anant Sastri, the father of Pandita Ramabai whose life has been already narrated. Learning was the passion and vital principal of his being. His life was spent in wandering and contemplation in pursuit of learning. He sought it in the courts and libraries of Rajas at Mysore and Nepal and



wealth and patronage (which meant nothing to him) were showered upon him. He sought it in pilgrimage throughout the length and breadth of India. He sought it finally for twelve years in the wilderness, building a little hut in the heart of the Ganganule forest where an *ashram* of devoted students gathered round him to be taught by him and his wife. But this learning and speculation that he pursued with such intensity of devotion was purely religious and philosophical. Much of it would be characterized by western educationalists as hair-splitting. It was remote from all the concerns of life, understood by the average westerner as practical wage-earning business. It produced great subtlety of intellect, but in particular fields of speculative thought. As such the more positive spirit of his daughter as of Raja Ram and the early reformers rebelled against it. They welcomed the new fields of knowledge and culture opened out by western thought. And western science and thought superseded it completely; with western modes of the spread of education the high school for the forest *ashram*.

The result included much positive gain. Western education gave a profound stimulus both to industrial development and the cause of social and political reform. It left a permanent tincture, a positive cast in the Indian mind. Many of the students of our colleges fail to realize how much of their cast of mind, their individualism, their ideas of evolution, of democracy, of self-determination were due to the complete absorption of the western modes of thought, which they so often and so strongly criticize.

But there was also much loss that counterbalanced this gain. Much was lost in spiritual content by the divorcing of education from religion and the home, the two great vitaliz-



ing forces. A state of things was produced where, according to an educational authority, 'Students could write a better English essay on Chaucer than on Tulsidas and Tukaram, where Indian homes of educated people resembled third-rate English suburban lodgings or, at their best, contained English period furniture ordered wholesale from reputed English furniture-dealers. Instead of national culture, language study occupied a disproportionate part of school and college life—English being studied for utilitarian purposes as the key of entrance to Government service or to the professions. It is not to be wondered at that higher education could achieve so little. Behind the practical difficulties imposed by teaching in a foreign language was the intense mental confusion imposed by the struggle of two cultures with widely differing schemes of values and standards of life. These have so far been antagonistic rather than fused. For the Indian student coming to college from a village home where three sets of values; the one arbitrarily taught in schools and colleges, the second, the standards prevalent in the traditional outlook of often illiterate homes; and the third, the ideal of which the second was the practical reflection which he faintly glimpsed in the lost national culture that had been ousted from his normal life. With the passion for coherency of the Indian mind it is not to be wondered at that higher education produced stagnation in the mediocre, dissatisfaction and restlessness in the able. The Indian mind cannot be content with an acceptance of the fragmentation and disharmony of personality, or the struggle-for-life principle, such as seem possible to the English and the American.

The exploitation of the sources of wealth is one of the greatest achievements of the nineteenth century to the





westerner. It is touched with romance and heroism. But it leaves the Indian cold. The exuberant enthusiasm with which even a Babbitt can redeem the grossness of his material pursuits is denied to the Indian. And in spite of increasing reform in social and political adjustments, the secret of happiness seems to have been lost and the universities cannot provide it. Is it so impossible to achieve a fusion of the two cultures? At Santiniketan is a school and college, a women's college and hostel and Research Institute, a School of Art and Music and finally an Institution of Rural Reconstruction, all closely associated, whereby is promoted a vigorous and full intellectual life with great possibilities of assimilation.

In the meantime, in spite of the depression of spirit produced by a survey of the immense difficulties that stand in the way of a full and free type of University education, there is still much practical achievement and progress in the development of this higher education. Even our brief glimpse within an Indian College may suggest the vividness and buoyancy of spirit which can characterize college life, and in which lies much source of hope for the future of women's work in India.

On the social side particularly beneficial have been the results of the spread of college education among Indian women, especially in the co-educational colleges. I wonder if colleges in any country have done so much for the breaking down of barriers between the sexes, castes, communities and classes as the Indian women's colleges and even more, the co-educational colleges. This is an important factor in a country which is almost a continent and which has communities with such different traditions, as well as numerous



castes within the community.

Indian High schools are usually more distinctly communal; and the college-going age is particularly suitable for the development of enthusiastic friendships and sympathetic co-operative work. The colleges started by private Indian agency and by Christian missions have both done a great deal to promote the best and wisest sort of co-operation, which consists in agreeing to differ.

In a Bombay hostel for university women one may meet with the interesting and refreshing spectacle of a number of young college students of different traditions, customs and castes, sitting in happy fellowship in the same dining-room but with different kinds of food served to them. Though the complications and perplexities of the housekeeper must be endless—she has to see for instance that not even the eggs even penetrate into the ‘vegetarian’ kitchen—she can and usually does feel that she has helped towards the achievement of the spirit of mutual forbearance and understanding that is one of the most tangible results of college education for women in India.

Finally, one may express the conviction that despite the limitations, the lowness of intellectual standards and its attendant ills, it is this college education that has both by corporate influence and individual achievement made possible new movements, has opened out new vistas of social thought and action for the many and in general has helped the amelioration of woman-kind in innumerable, incalculable ways. On the one hand, the corporate influence is revealed in a body like the women Graduates’ Union. These Unions which have been formed in the main Presidency towns, have always taken an active part in initiating or assisting all



movements connected with women's amelioration: they now form the Indian branch of the International Federation of University Women. On the other hand, individual achievement is expressed by creative and constructive work, though not original, in many fields—social, medical, educational, and even political. Take as illustration, some of the writers in this book. Add to this that the colleges turn out an increasing number of Indian women of mature abilities, some of whom go on to complete their education at the foremost British and European universities. Again men have not been slow to recognise the partnership of women in affairs: for a Mahomedan University has as Chancellor, the Begum of Bhopal—perhaps the only woman in the world to hold an office of this nature: and the universities of Bombay and Madras have women sitting in their Senates.

And viewed relatively, collegiate education has shown a more substantial advance than either Primary or Secondary. The achievement in the past thirty years has been swifter, more varied, more vivid than the corresponding achievement in mass education. The advance however, has not been all over India: Madras and Bombay making a disproportionately large contribution. But the future of mass education for girls will lie very much in the hands of the increasing number of young and enthusiastic women that the colleges turn out.



## LITERARY ACHIEVEMENTS OF INDIAN WOMEN \*

“The Names of the ‘authors’ of the epics are but shadows” writes Dr. Coomarswamy in his “Dance of Shiva”, “and in later ages it was a constant practice of writers to suppress their own names and ascribe their work to a mythical or famous poet, thereby to gain a better attention for the truth that they would rather claim to have ‘heard’ than to have ‘made’.” Similarly scarcely a single Hindu painter or sculptor is known by name, and the entire range of sanskrit literature cannot exhibit a single autobiography and but little history. Why should women have sought for modes of self-advertisement that held no lure for men?” This self-effacement is the keynote of Hindu Psychology. It forms a great stumbling block in the way of writing a literary history of ancient India. It explains why only a few names of women writers have come down to us from an age which marked the golden era, when intellect had reached its highest level and culture its highest water mark. This short narration therefore, will be incomplete in so far as it will have to be content with only a few names of women handed down to posterity from times immemorial, of women who have occupied a niche or a corner in the great classic temple dedicated to Saraswati, the Goddess of Light and Learning, of Wit and Wisdom.

*\*SPECIAL NOTE.* The quotations in this article are taken from “Poems by Indian Women” (page number and translator’s name being given in each instance, at the foot of the page) edited by Margaret Macnicol—The Heritage of India Series—and used by the permission and courtesy of Association Press, Calcutta.





Among the bards who sang their sonorous songs in the early dawn of Indian history were Vishwavarā and Ghoshā. The Vedas have a unique place in the literature of the World. They form one of the most ancient heritage of our literary wealth. The Vedic period, the Satya-yuga, was an arcadian age when life was simple and human mind was fresh and young : imagination had no bounds and emotions had their fullest play : science had not shattered the lovely illusions ; creation had not been explained away by the cold light of reason. Nature in all her beauty and grandeur inspired the child-like minds of our ancestors with reverence and awe. They burst forth into a Pæan of praise of Ushas, the lovely dawn, of Savitar the Sun—the giver of light, of Soma the Moon—healer of disease. The rush of mighty rivers terrified them. They sang hymns to appease the wrath of Rudra, the Lord of tempest and of Maruts, the storm Gods. Agni the fire God, the symbol of purity was the most cherished deity of all. One of the hymns attributed to Ghoshā is an invocation to Ashwins, the twin Gods—the forerunners of dawn.

\* “Your car the swiftly rolling circumambient,  
To be saluted day and night by worshippers,  
Áswins, that car of yours we here invoke,  
Just as the name of father, easy to entreat.

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Arouse the lovely hymns and make our thoughts to  
swell,  
Stir up abundant riches, that is our desire ;  
Make glorious our heritage, ye Áswins pair,  
Yea, make us for our princes like the Soma dear.”  
etc. etc.

\* Translated by H. D. Griswold, op. cit. p. 39



The age which followed this lyric outburst of poetry was an age of pure reason. Though a prosaic age, it was a great era for the Hindus. In that age Brahminism or Hinduism rose on the crest of the wave. The social and religious systems of the Hindus were established. Law and philosophy were fully expounded.

As the Aryans began to spread themselves more and more to the East and the South, they came in contact and conflict with the aborigines of the country. The caste system which was in a rudimentary stage in the Vedic period became more defined and rigid. The Brahmanās were written at this time. They were treatises often prosaic and elaborate on the rituals found in the Vedas. They form the bulk of the religious literature of the Hindus. The Sutras sowed the seeds which later on in the hands of the Smritikars developed into the legal system of the country. Life became more and more complex. The wondering mind of the early Aryans, as it developed, began to ask questions. The why and wherefore began to puzzle the minds of the Sages, and Philosophy was born. The Upanishads—the exposition of the great philosophical thought of the Hindus were a creation of this age.

A new light had dawned upon the people. Every branch of knowledge was explained. The great epics—Ramayan and Mahabharat—which were written in the early stage of this period, though highly poetic and imaginative, were in fact an attempt at a historical version of the conquest of South by the Aryan Hero—Rama—and the great conflict for supremacy between the two Aryan races—the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

For the purpose of this narration we might as well



skip over the period for though we come across names like Gargi, Maitreyi and Sulabha, who took active part in the philosophical discussions of the times, we cannot lay our finger on any work written by women. Gargi Vāchaknāvi was a woman of great learning. She remained unmarried and dedicated her life in search of truth and knowledge. She challenged the great sage Yagnavalkya in full Court, "O Yagnavalkya, as the son of a warrior from the Kasis and Videhas might string his loosened bow, take the pointed foe-piercing arrow in his hands and rise to battle, I have risen to fight thee". Women who challenged so boldly must have made some intellectual contributions to the thought of the age. However, it is in the next period that followed namely the Buddhistic, that we again find women wielding their pen

With Buddhism dawned a new era in the history of India. Buddhism rose as a revolt against the tyranny of the priests who were the Brahmins. Brahminism in its later stages had assumed very arrogant airs. Learning became the monopoly of these human gods, for in the ignorance of the other three castes lay their power. It was the Brahmin who laid down the law of the land to be obeyed alike, by the prince and the pauper. The sudras had to suffer most at the hands of the twice-borns. They had no right to listen to the incantations of the Vedas, much less to learn them. The shadow of this strife has not yet left the land. Buddhism dealt a blow to sacerdotal India in more ways than one. It brought a new hope to the caste-ridden country, for to the fold of Buddha came all alike without distinction of caste or creed or sex. A Kshatriya prince became the teacher of the world and not a Brahmin. The power of the Brahmins lay in their knowledge of Sanskrit, the language of



culture and religion. The great Buddha taught through the medium of vernacular *viz.* Pali. His message reached the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low.

With the advent of this creed, a new wave of emotion spread all over India. The great renunciation which has no parallel in the history of the world, filled the imagination of the people. Buddhist Art and Buddhist Poetry centred round the great figure of Buddha. The sculptor and the artist depict the life of Buddha through their art. The Jatak tales are stories of the cycle of births through which Lord Buddha had to pass before attaining the final goal. Happiness and peace of mind lie in renouncing the world forms the motif of the poetry of that age. (The Therigatha or the psalms were written by women who had found peace at the lotus feet of the Master. Vasitthi, Ubbiri, Sumanā, Patāchārā, Shāmā, Sanghā, Muttā, Sumanglā's mother and Mittikā were the composers of these psalms. Some examples of their work will not be out of place here. Vasitthi distraught with grief at the death of her son and consoled by Buddha sings:—)

\* “ Now here, now there, lightheaded, crazed with grief,  
Mourning my child, I wandered up and down,  
Naked, unheeding, streaming hair unkempt,  
Lodging in scourgings of the streets, and where  
The dead lay still, and by the chariot roads—  
So three years long I fared, starving, athirst.

And then at last I saw Him, as He went  
Within that blessed City Mithilā ;  
Great Tamer of untamed hearts, yea, Him,  
The very Buddha, Banisher of fear.

\* Translated by Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids, *op. cit.* p. 40.



\*Came back my heart to me, my errant mind ;  
 Forthwith to Him I went low worshipping  
 And there, e'en at his feet, I heard the Norm.  
 For of His great compassion on us all,  
 'Twas He who taught me, even Gotama.

I heeded all He said and left the world  
 And all its cares behind, and gave myself  
 To follow where He taught, and realise  
 Life in the Path to great good fortune bound.  
 Now all my sorrows are hewn down, cast out,  
 Uprooted, brought to utter end,  
 In that I now can grasp and understand  
 The base on which my miseries were built."

Sumanā sings thus :—

Hast thou not seen sorrow and ill in all  
 The springs of life ? Come thou not back to birth !  
 Cast out the passionate desire again to Be.  
 So shall thou go thy ways calm and serene.

Sanghā says :—

Home have I left, for I have left my world !  
 Child have I left, and all my cherished herds !  
 Lust have I left, and ill-will, too, is gone,  
 And Ignorance have I put far from me ;  
 Craving and root of Craving overpowered  
 Cool am I now, knowing Nibbāna's peace.

Sumangalā's mother sings :—

O woman well set free ! how free am I,  
 How thoroughly free from kitchen drudgery !  
 Stained and squalid 'mong my cooking-pots  
 My brutal husband ranked as even less

\*Translated by Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids, op. cit. pp. 40, 41, 42, 44.





\*Than the sunshades he sits and weaves always.  
Purged now of all my former lust and hate,  
I dwell, musing at ease beneath the shade  
Of spreading boughs—O, but 'tis well with me!

and lastly Mettikā feels the breath of liberty :—  
Though I be suffering and weak, and all  
My youthful spring be gone, yet have I come,  
Leaning upon my staff, and climb aloft the mountain  
peak.

My cloak thrown off,  
My little bowl o'erturned: so sit I here  
Upon the rock. And o'er my spirit sweeps  
The breath of Liberty! I win, I win  
The triple lore! the Buddha's will is done!

Buddhism reached its zenith in the reign of Asoka, the Constantine of India. Asoka's own daughter (or his sister) Sangamita went to Ceylon as a Missionary Lady. Centuries rolled away between this rise and the final fall, when Shankaracharya in the 8th century A. D. once again established the supremacy of Hinduism; centuries which saw Empires flourish and decay; centuries which saw dynasties rise and fall. Kanishka, Samudragupta, Vikramaditya and Harsha came and went. They were great Kings, great patrons of art and literature. In their courts gathered learned men, Buddhists and Brahmins alike artists and poets. Sanskrit literature took a new turn. The drama came into existence. Kalidas, Bhavabhuti and a host of others wrote master-pieces of Sanskrit literature. The first novel or romance in prose was written by Bana

\*Translated by Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids, op. cit. p. 44.





Bhatta, who belonged to the court of Shri Harsha and wrote a biography of his Royal patron. (King Harsha's sister Rajyashri was a lady of great learning. It was a brilliant period. A great flare before India plunged into darkness.)

The story of Shankaracharya's religious conquest would not be complete without mentioning the name of (Saraswati. She was a sister of Kumaril Bhatta, forerunner of Shankaracharya in his efforts to revive Hinduism, and wife of Pandit Mandanmishra, the last pillar of ritualistic Hinduism. Saraswati was noted for great learning. It was she who was appointed an umpire at the well-known dual of words between Mandanmishra and Shankaracharya. If the former won, Shankaracharya was to give up his celibate wandering life and become a householder; if the verdict was announced in favour of the latter, Mandanmishra was to don the yellow robe and become a sanyasi. On the decision of Saraswati hung her own fate. The lady, however, gave the victory to whom it was due and gave up her riches and wealth to follow her husband as a Sanyasin.) This victory of Shankaracharya enabled him to establish his creed all over India from extreme North to extreme South from East to West. The advent of this great philosopher and poet gave a new turn to the religious thought of the Hindus. The Bhakti cult or the cult of devotion whose high priest was Ramanuja indirectly rose out of the teachings of Shankaracharya himself. Of this creed we shall have to speak at length. For the whole range of subsequent Indian literature was affected and soaked through and through by this doctrine of devotion. Before we launch upon the theme, however, I should like to mention in passing the name of (Lilavati the daughter of



Bhaskaracharya, Astrologer and Mathematician who flourished in the 12th century A. D. Lilavati herself made some contributions to this abstract science, and one of the methods of calculation is known by her name.)

Coming back to Shankaracharya, he was born in 788 A. D. During the short period of his life, for he died when he was thirty-two, he achieved great things, greatest among them being his religious conquest of India. His cry was "back to Vedas". In his Vedant Sutra he propounded his famous advait philosophy. The ultimate reality is One Supreme Being called Brahma. The rest are manifestations of this Being—Maya or illusion. The Supreme Being can be defined only negatively, as It has no attributes. This doctrine of absolutism could not appeal to the masses whose faith rests more in a personal deity. This flaw in the system of Shankaracharya was corrected by the various sectarian schools that soon sprang up. The Shaivaites considered Shiva as their personal God and the manifestation of the Supreme Being Brahma. The Vaishnavite sect led by Ramanuja claimed the same for Vishnu. Among the avatars of Vishnu, Krishna seems to be the favourite. His life was a romance compared to the austere life of Rama, another incarnation of God Vishnu and hence Krishna became the hero of popular song. While Rama has a few advocates among whom was Tulsidas, the great Hindi Poet, who flourished in the 15th century, Krishna had a legion. In the 12th century Jaydeva wrote in classical Sanskrit his Gita-Govind—song of Govinda or Shri Krishna. In this song of great lyric beauty, the poet tells of the love of Radha and Krishna. According to some this is all an allegory. They



explain it by saying that Radha is the personification of the human soul yearning for union with the Divine Soul or God, for in the union or merging of the human soul with or into the Divine Soul lies its salvation. The doctrine of the Bhakti School was that the human soul desires to be one with God, that One alone is true, and the rest *maya*. Bhakti School had, therefore, two sides, one was intellectual which emphasised the Reality of the One and devotion for that One alone the rest being illusion; the other was the emotional side and marked the passionate adoration of the human soul for the Divine.

In this latter category came the greatest of Indian poetesses Mirabai, the Sapho of Indian song, who flourished in the 15th century. Like Sapho she was burning with love, but unlike Sapho her love was for the Godhead. "Utter not, utter not, utter not any word but Radha Krishna," what mad passion flow from these words! It is impossible to translate into a foreign tongue the ecstasy of love that flows in Mira's song. She wrote both in Hindi and Gujarati. She was a Rajput Princess and married to the heir-apparent of the Maharana of Udaipur. She became a widow, perhaps very soon after her marriage. Mira, however, never recognised this human marriage, for she considered herself wedded to Lord Krishna to whom she had dedicated herself body and soul. The central theme in her poetry is Krishna and his love adventures with Radha and other gopis. Every line of her poetry breathes the strong passion that burnt in her heart for this Great Lover. Her surrender of self to the Beloved is almost pathetic. For this mad love for Shri Krishna she was persecuted by her husband's family. Stories have been told of miracles that



saved Mira from their wrath. Once she was offered a cup of poison. Mira smilingly took it and with the name of her Beloved on her lips drank the whole contents without coming to any harm. At another time Kumbha Rana her father-in-law with sword in hand went to kill her. Instead of one, he saw four Miras and did not know whom to kill! From the following pieces it is not possible to get an idea of the rhythmic grace that adorns Mira's poetry, the soft melody that haunts Mira's songs. )

\* Kanh have I bought ; the price he asked I paid :  
 Some cry, "Too great" while others jeer "'twas small":  
 I paid in full, weighed to the utmost grain,  
 My love, my life, myself, my soul, my all.

Again—

† Govind is my life ; the world tastes bitter to me.  
 I love Rāma and Rāma alone ; let my eyes see no  
 other.  
 In Miran's palace dwell Hari's saints ;  
 Hari dwells far from intrigue with his saints.

Wailing about her loneliness she sings :—

‡ Apart from Rāma, sleep does not come to me.  
 Through the sufferings of separation no sleep comes,  
 And the fire of love is kindled.

\* Translated by Sir George Grierson, op. cit. p. 59.

† Translated by Mrs. Tailor and Lady Ramanbhai Nilkanth,  
 op. cit. p. 61.

‡ Translated by Mrs. Keay, op. cit. pp; 65, 66.



Without the light of my beloved, the temple is dark;  
 The lamp does not please me.

\* \* \* \*

O, my companions, what shall I do and where shall  
 I go?

The pain of my heart is in no wise removed.  
 The pain of separation has stung me like a cobra.  
 My life ebbs away like a wave.  
 Prepare the herb and bring it to me—

Who will bring my beloved back to me O, my  
 companions?

O, my Lord, when wilt thou come to see Mīrā?  
 Thou art pleasing to my heart.

When wilt thou come and talk and laugh with me?

The poetess who actually got herself married to the image of God was Andāl a Tāmilian lady from the South. She lived in the 12th century or thereabout for her exact date is unknown. Her father was a priest in a Vaishnavite Temple. She was so devoted to Lord Krishna that she refused to marry any one. The legend says that with the approval of God she was married to His idol in the temple. She was an author of two books which are included in the works of other Vaishnavite saints and singers. The purport of one of her songs:—

\* I garland thee with holy flowers and bow at thy feet  
 and worship and praise thee thrice a day.

If thou wilt not see that I live with and serve without  
 blemish the God who slept on the sea of milk,

\* Translated by Miss Abraham and Y. S. Masilamani,  
 op. cit. pp. 62; 63.



I shall weep and mourn and thou wilt find it hard to comfort me.

My suffering will be like that of the ox that is unyoked from its team and refuses to eat anything and pines away because of the separation.

Again—

\*O, Cuckoo, who singest merrily, playing with thy beak in the Shenbaka flowers, laden with honey.

The god, who holds a white conch in his left hand, has not shown his form to me, but has entered into my heart and has made me suffer sorely.

Wilt thou sing, but not too loudly, so that he may come to me ?

---

Another poetess whose devotion amounted to passion was Janabai from Maharashtra a contemporary of Mirabai. She was a foundling and was taken care of by the poet Namdeva and Jana and became his servant subsequently. One example from her pen will suffice—)

† May I but cling to thy dear feet,  
 No other Paradise crave I.  
 With heart of faith thy name I'll sing,  
 O, ‡ Atmaram, true friend indeed.

\*Translated by Miss Abraham and Y. S. Masilamani.  
 op. cit. p. 65.

†Translated by Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu,  
 op. cit. p. 52.

‡ Atmaram = "Joy of the Soul."



Before thy feet I bow for aye :  
Then being and its ills depart.  
I'll feast mine eyes upon thy form,  
And utter thus my heart's full joy.  
Thou who dost help the helpless one  
And in thine hand the discus bear'st,—  
Jani, the servant, ever holds  
Within her heart the thought of thee.

A number of poetesses came under the category which emphasises the intellectual side of Bhakti. I shall give a list of names according to the century they flourished in.—

12th century	...	Avvai,	Tamil
		Mahadevika,	Kanarese
13th	„	Muktabai,	Marathi
14th	„	Chokha's wife,	„
		Lal Ded,	Kashmiri
15th	„	Rami,	Bengali
16th	„	Madhavi,	„
17th	„	Bahina Bai	Marathi
		Shrungaramma,	Kanarese
		Honnamma,	„
18th	„	Sahjobai,	Hindi
		Dayabai,	„
		Gavaribai,	Gujerati
		Anand Mayi,	Bengali
19th	„	Diwalibai,	Gujerati

It is not possible to give examples of the work of all these poetesses in this short space. However, I wish to give a few, by way of contrast with the poetry of Mira, Jana and Andal. Avvai was a wandering bard and lived by begging. She begged for food in exchange for a song.



She sings about the futility of this world and its possessions :—

\* We slave, we beg, we cross the seas ;  
We revere, we rule, we compose, our songs, we raise,  
All to feed this wretched body of ours,  
Which tortures us for a measure of rice !

Again—

† Ye that toil hard to seek riches, foolish men !  
And bring under earth to save it from harm listen!  
When your spirit flies away from its cage at last,  
Who will enjoy this vast wealth of yours ?

Muktabai was the first and perhaps the foremost of the Maharashtra poetesses. She had a very unhappy life. Tradition says that she died at the age of sixteen. Singing about Brahma she says—

‡ Though he is void of form, yet have mine eyes  
Beheld him, and his glory shines  
Resplendent on my sight. Do thou, my mind,  
Grasp then that inner, secret form of his,  
Worthy to be conceived of by the soul.  
That which transcends our mind, no attributes  
Should limit, for in it our senses find  
Their ending—Mukta says “Though words cannot  
Contain him, yet in him all words exist.”

\* Translated by V. S. Dornakal, op. cit. p. 70.

† Translated by Miss Abraham and Y. S. Masilamani,  
op. cit. p. 70

‡ Translated by Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu,  
op. cit. pp. 47,48.



Again—

\* Above beginning and beyond continuance  
The worshipper of Hari rises free.  
Within, without, for him Hari alone exists.  
Why, then, should he now seek the holy shrines?  
The invocation of the all-powerful Name  
Contains the virtue of all sacred texts.  
By this name dull-witted man is freed.  
Through it the stones themselves float on the sea.  
Muktā by Hari's name is freed for aye;  
Neither rebirth nor death remains for us.

(Chokha's wife another Marathi poetess was a Mahar—  
untouchable by caste. She sings—)

† “The flesh is defiled”—so they all declare;  
But the spirit is pure, clearly discerning” etc. etc.

(Lal Ded, the Kashmiri lady was a saivite yogini.  
With her God is the friend. She sings—)

‡ O heedless one! speedily lift up thy foot:  
Now it is dawn: seek thou for the Friend.  
Make to thyself wings: lift thou up the winged  
(feet);

Now it is dawn: seek thou for the friend.  
§ Ah, restless mind! have no fear within thy heart.  
The Beginningless One Himself taketh thought  
for thee

\* Translated by Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu,  
op. cit. p. 53.

† Translated by Margaret Macnicol and D. K. Laddu,  
op. cit. p. 49.

‡ Translated by Grierson and Barnett, op. cit. p. 51.

§ Translated by Grierson and Barnett, op. cit. p. 52.



Again—

(And considereth) how thy hunger may fall from thee,

Utter, therefore, to Him alone the cry of salvation.

I shall close this theme with one final quotation from (Dayabai the Hindi poetess. Dayabai and Sahjobai were sisters. They were charandasis or followers of Charan, a Vaishya. The sect founded by him still exists.)

\* O great Lord, the source of happiness,  
Beloved of all, praise be unto thee.

Thou that knowest the secret of the heart, thou  
ocean of mercy.

Daya bows to thee.

Thy impersonal form is like the ocean of  
immortality

Which is very deep and unfathomable.

The waves of joy are constantly rising,

But my heart is restless.

Thy real form is such that all desires of my mind  
are fulfilled ;

Having seen the marvel, Dayā worships with  
great feeling.

Side by side with the Bhakti doctrine there was another influence working that gave a different bent to the literature of medieval India. For four centuries beginning from the 8th the tide of Mohamedan conquest ebbed and flowed on the North-Western shores of India. It was, however, after the defeat of Prithviraj Chohan, the last



Rajput King of Delhi, by the Mohamedans under Shahabuddin Ghori of Ghazni that the Mohamedan rule was established in India. Shahabuddin left Qutbuddin his slave in charge of the conquered territory, who became the virtual ruler at Delhi after the death of his master in 1206. The first Mohamedan Empire in Delhi was thus founded by a slave. It was in that slave dynasty that a woman—Sultan Raziya Begum was born. From 1236 A. D. onwards for twelve years she ruled India with vigour. I wish to mention her, however, as the first Mohamedan Poetess in India who wrote in Persian. Persian was the court language of the muslim rulers.) Since the establishment of the Mohamedan Rule in India, Persian Art and Persian literature began to influence the native art and literature of the country. (With the exception of Zeb-un-nissa who was a sufist and sufism was akin to Bhakti, all the poetesses belonging to this new school sang about human love, very often of the most sensuous type. They sang about the love of Farhad and Sherin, of Leilla and Majnun. They sang about their own love and of their own desires.) This human touch in their work forms a marked contrast to the philosophical and religious poetry of the Bhakti school. (Among the women who came under this new influence were Empress Nur Jehan, wife of Emperor Jehangir. Jahanara Begum known as Begum Saheb daughter of Emperor Shah Jehan and Zeb-un-nissa and Zinat-un-nissa the daughters of Emperor Aurangzeb. Shirin, a dancing girl from Lucknow, also comes under this category.)

(The famous Epitaph on Nur Jehan's tomb was written by her. It says—



\* On the tomb of us poor people there will be  
 neither a light nor a flower, nor the wings of a  
 moth, nor the voice of a Nightingale.

Again singing on love's fulness she says—

† Thy love has melted my body and it has become  
 water. Any antimony that might have remained  
 became the antimony of the bubble's eyes. The  
 bud may open by the morning breeze which  
 blows in the garden, but the key to the lock  
 of my heart is the smile of my beloved.

Zeb-un-nissa singing about her own beauty says—

‡ When from my cheek I lift my veil,  
 The roses turn with envy pale,  
 And from their pierced hearts, rich with pain,  
 Send forth their fragrance like a wail.

Or if perchance one perfumed tress  
 Be lowered to the wind's caress  
 The honeyed hyacinths complain,  
 And languish in a sweet distress.

And, when I pause, still groves among,  
 (Such loveliness is mine) a throng  
 Of nightingales awake and strain  
 Their soul into a quivering song.

There were two Hindi poetesses who also were affected  
 by this new trend of thought. The famous Rupamati  
 whose romantic tale has inspired many a poet was herself  
 a poetess. She flourished in the 16th century when the

\* Translated by Barkat Ullah, op. cit. p. 79.

† Translated by Barkat Ullah, op. cit. p. 76.

‡ Translated by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, op. cit. p. 77.



great Akbar was ruling over India. Baz Bahadur her husband and the ruler of Malwa was very fond of music. Rupamati composed delightful songs for the amusement of her lord. For seven years they lived happily when the tragic end came. In 1560 Akbar sent a force under Adamkhan to conquer Malwa. Baz Bahadur being betrayed by his men fled. The story says that Rupamati consented to receive the Mogul General. When he went to see her, however, he found her beautifully dressed lying on her bed dead. The poem below tells of her devotion to Baz Bahadur—

§ Friend! let others boast their treasure;  
 Mine's a stock of true love's pleasure,  
 Safely cared for, every part,  
 'Neath that trusty lock, my heart;  
 Safe from other women's peeping;  
 For the key's in mine own keeping.  
 Day by day it grows a little,  
 Never loses e'en a tittle;  
 But through life will ever go,  
 With Bāz Bahādur, weal or woe.

( Shaikh Rangrezin another Hindi poetess flourished in the 18th century. Her tale was equally romantic. She was a dyer by trade. Once a Brahmin poet gave her his turban for dyeing. She found a slip of paper tied at one end with an incomplete verse written on it. Shaikh Rangrezin dyed the turban, completed the verse and sent them to the owner. The poet was amazed to find his verse completed. He gave the lady an anna for dyeing his



turban and a hundred gold coins for the verse. In the end he became a Mohamedan and married her. To-day alas! the dyer would cost more than the poet!)

Two other ladies both belonging to Royalty bring up the rear. Nawab Bahu Begum, Queen of Nawab Asaf-ud-Dawla of Oudh flourished in the 18th century. She wrote under the pseudonym of Dulhan—meaning bride. The other Bahu Begum lived in the 19th century. She was the wife of the Ruler of Rampur. They were both Urdu poetesses.)

With the 19th century came another epoch in the literary history of India. In the year 1833 A. D. Lord Macaulay in his famous minute on Education declared by a stroke of pen the futility of imparting oriental learning including the teaching of Sanskrit, the sacred and classical language of the Hindus. In 1854 English education was systematically introduced in schools. Ever since the establishment of the universities in 1857 English became the medium of instruction as far as higher education was concerned. Lord Macaulay's ignorance of the vast wealth of oriental literature may be an excuse for this step which has proved in the long run to be highly injurious to the country. For the time being, however, it produced wonderful results. Like Open Sesame knowledge of the English language opened the gates of the Occident. The Indian mind was tired wandering in the same old grooves. A new vista opened before it. This contact with the West proved highly fruitful and highly refreshing. With the zeal of a convert the Indian mind plied itself to the task of mastering a foreign tongue. (We have Aru Dutt and Toru Dutt writing their poems in English. Later on Mrs. Sarojini Naidu whose command over the language would



cause envy in the mind of an Englishman himself a master of English literature, followed suit. To talk in English, to write in English was considered the acme of culture in those early days of Western cult. In the preface to the "Golden Threshold" Mrs. Sarojini Naidu has confessed "I was stubborn and refused to speak it. So one day when I was nine years old my father punished me—the only time I was ever punished—by shutting me in a room alone for a whole day. I came out of it a full blown linguist". While in the poetry of the Dutt sisters even the thought seems to be imbued with the Western ideal, the poetry of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu breathes an atmosphere of India. Her song of the Palanquin Bearers has even caught the rhythmic motion of the men carrying the palanquin.

\* Lightly, O lightly we bear her along,  
 She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;  
 She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream,  
 She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream,  
 Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,  
 We bear her along like a pearl on a string.  
 Softly, O softly we bear her along,  
 She hangs like a star in the dew of our song;  
 She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,  
 She falls like a tear from the eye of a bride.  
 Lightly, O lightly we glide and we sing,  
 We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Uptil now Indian literature with very few exceptions was poetic. Whether it was the influence of the West or the nature of the prosaic scientific age, the age of reason,



writing in prose became the order of the day. (Mrs. Satyanathan wrote in English her two novels "Kamala" and "Saguna".) In this century was also born another kind of literature *viz.* journalistic. It is coming to very recent times, however, that women have taken to it.

It is not possible to mention all the names of women, who are contributing to the modern literature of India, for their name is legion. We have women poets, women novelists, women dramatists and women journalists writing in their different vernaculars. But we do not find in most of them the same conviction, the same sincerity, the same vigour found in the older creations. With few exceptions, alas! the modern productions are of the most ephemeral type. For a century and a half India was torn to pieces by her internecine quarrels. From this fitful fever of life, she sank into a deep slumber thoroughly exhausted. It is true the West aroused her from this lethargic sleep. It is also true that this contact with the West went to her head and intoxicated her with everything Western. To-day we are feeling the evil after effects of her debauch. To absorb everything good from an alien civilisation had been the policy of Indians throughout the ages. It was this policy that enriched India and enabled her to weather the storm of time. To accept a thing blindly without the least thought of the consequences can only be the work of a blind fool or a hypnotised being. Our political life, our social life, our literary life even our everyday life has got the impress of the West till we cannot call our soul our own. What are the results? Caste distinctions are and were bad enough, but the artificial distinctions created by the Western education



are still worse. English has failed to be the mother tongue of the millions, with the result that people are divided from people, a man is divided from his own wife and his own mother. The present system of education has proved to be highly disintegrating, denationalising in its character. Our literary efforts which had gained in freshness by its first contact with the West have sunk into mere nothings—mere imitations. We waste our time and energy in trying to master a foreign tongue, while our own vernaculars with all their potential wealth remain neglected. If India wishes to assert herself as of old, she must rouse herself from this hypnotic trance. It is a matter of gratification that we have begun to realise our drawback. It is still more gratifying to see men and women striving to free themselves from this bondage of intellectual slavery. The national movement which began with the birth of the National Congress has made us realise our political serfdom. We are in a very patriotic mood. Our literature has taken up the cry of the country in danger. *Bande Mataram*—Bow to Mother-land of Bankimchandra has become our National Anthem. 'Hindustan is the best country in the world' sang Sir Mohamed Iqbal. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu roused herself from her dalliance with fairy neems, fairy flowers and fairy what not. She makes a passionate call to India to awake—

“Waken O Mother! thy children implore thee,  
Who kneel in thy presence to serve and adore thee.  
The night is aflush with a dream of the morrow,  
Why still dost thou sleep in thy bondage of sorrow?  
Awaken and sever the woes that enthrall us  
And hallow our hands for the triumphs that call us,



Are we not thine, O Beloved to inherit  
The manifold pride and power of thy spirit?  
Ne'er shall we fail thee, forsake thee or falter,  
Whose hearts are thy home and thy shield and  
thine altar.

Lo! we would thrill the high stars with thy story,  
And set thee again in the forefront of glory."

Patriotism is a passing phase. To produce a literature for all time and for all people, a bigger ideal, a higher motive must be before us. To-day even our ideals are vague. We are torn between our feelings for the old and our desire for the new. Our reason cannot accept old as it was, our emotion cannot give up what was once so beautiful. Let the old and the new blend together to produce a new world worthy of our traditions, worthy of our glorious heritage of the past.

Time is in travail with the birth of a new era. The sign of time indicate the new leading role Indian woman is going to play, intellectually, socially and politically in this new world to come.



## INDIAN PAINTING

The history of Indian painting dates far back into the night of time; its beginnings are lost in the mists of antiquity, and like all other things in India it is traced to divine origin. An old tradition says that Brahma taught the art of pictorial representation to a Brahmin devotee who lost his son and prayed to Brahma to restore him to life, and Brahma asked the Brahmin to produce the nearest likeness of his dead son in a pictorial form and breathed life into it. (Another ancient tradition has it that it was a woman who painted the first portraiture in India. A princess of ancient India, so the story goes, dreamt of a beautiful prince in her sleep and fell in love with him, and her *sakhi*, (maid) Chitrlekha, painted the portraits of all the great princes of her time for her royal mistress to identify her dream-lover. The earliest reference to the art of painting is to be found in the two great epics of India, Ramayana and Mahabharatta. There are classical treatises on the subject in the ancient books, especially in *Vishnudamottram*, and in the writings of Sukracharya, Taranath and others. These writings give us a wealth of details not only as to the theories of the art of painting but about the technique, mannerism, method and materials of the art. They tell us of the art of making colours, brushes, and what colours to be used for certain types of pictures and in what conventional manner they should be treated. They deal exhaustively also with all kinds of canons of art which must closely be followed by the artists. This may, at the outset, appear as too arbitrary, too rigid, too binding for any



original creative expression, but it is not really so. The Indian artist has the fullest freedom to give spontaneous expression to his creative genius, but he is asked to make use of certain conventionalised forms, which are deep-rooted in the national consciousness of the people and which embody their racial characteristics and which have an idiom of their own, so that the language of the art will be understandable to the people for whom it was meant. All great arts in India are mere means to an end; they are *sadhanas* for the ultimate aim of life, Self-realisation.

This ideal is the fundamental basis of Indian painting also. A picture is not painted for its own sake, not even for its aesthetical value or technical skill. These are secondary factors; the main purpose is to symbolise some great abstract idea, to concretise some ideal abstraction, to give form and colour to some inner experience. Hence Indian art is more religious than secular; spiritual significance is the chief motive of Indian art. It is not realistic or representational because of this very subjective nature of its psychology; and inasmuch as art expresses life, Indian art is the best method of approach for a proper and intelligent understanding of the peculiar characteristics of the Indian people. The Indian mind is more introspective, imaginative and intuitive, and this is clearly seen in all great works of Indian art. The mere skill of hands and acuteness of eyes to depict things as observed is not considered as "great art" in the East; it is the power to conceive imaginatively some ideal form, to embody some sublime thought or idea, which is considered as "great art". And therefore it is that Indian art is essentially idealistic, symbolic, religious and suggestive, where devotion, sincerity and imagination play a greater part than mere skill of hands.



The Indian mind is subtle and hence the Indian artist prefers subtle forms, subtle colours and subtle modes of expression. The attenuated physical bodies that he draws in his paintings, the soft subdued colours that he uses, his preference for water-colour, all these are necessary artistic reactions to his racial psychology. The elongated eyes, the wasp-like waist, the tapering fingers are not merely artistic conventions based on a larger and wider understanding of *ideal forms* in nature, but are characteristic of his racial genius. The physical perspective is often ignored because his view-point is more psychological and mental, and this consciously finds expression in his art. "The perspective of the academic type as it is taught in Western art is too rigid for the purpose of artistic design and it obstructs the flight of vision and interferes with the Indian notions of mental and imaginative visualisations". Further his experience of optic illusions does not give him the certainty of the correctness of physical perspective of which so much is made in European art. To the Hindu artist the manifested world is but an expression of the Divine, and consequently you see reflected in his art the underlying unity of life, and therefore the assembling of human beings, animals, birds, flowers and even gods into a decorative scheme in a picture, is most natural to him. The philosophical idea of rebirth gives him the inner rhythm of ebb and flow of life which is such a striking feature of Indian art, both ancient and modern.

The earliest examples of pictorial art, now extant, are the world-famous fresco-paintings of Ajanta. Ajanta lies in the north of the Nizam Dominions and is well-known for its Buddhistic rock-cut temples and their frescoed-walls. There are over 28 caves cut on the face of a cliff that runs in



a horse-shoe-like curve along a most beautiful ravine in one of the secluded valleys of the Indhyari range of hills. The *Chaityas* and *Viharas* are elaborately carved and richly painted. The earliest of them is considered to have been sculptured and painted in the 1st or 2nd century B. C. and the latest about the 7th century A. D. The paintings are strikingly beautiful, done in *tempera* colour, of natural products locally procured. The subject matter is mostly anecdotes and life-incidents from the Jataka stories and the last earthly life of the Lord Buddha. These paintings form the classical background for Indian painting, and the modern artists go to Ajanta for their inspiration. The wall-paintings of Ajanta represent a most unique phase of mural decorative art, and are, perhaps, the finest series of primitive painting left for man. The Buddhist priest-artists, who painted these great masterpieces, were not only great creative artists but interpretative geniuses. The truth and precision of their work are most admirable; the sweep of their brush is bold and vigorous, their colourings pure and fresh. The glory of Ajantan art is Woman. Mr. G. Venkatachalam, the well-known art-critic writes: "Nowhere in the world of art has woman been so honoured, worshipped and immortalised as in Ajanta. Though the Lord Buddha was the inspirer of their art, Woman was their chief decorative *motif*. Woman is the glory of Ajantan art. She is painted in all her moods, in innumerable poses and in a thousand and one bewitching ways. A 'garland of women' greets you at every turn and lively sparkling eyes smile at you all round. They fascinate you with their gentle warm looks; they charm you with their sinuous forms and languishing attitudes; they haunt you with their eternal



femininity.....Woman, to these ancient artists of India, was not a temptress, a seductress, to be shunned and avoided, but an eternal companion on the road of destiny, who ennobles and enlivens life's pathway. Ascetics as these artists were, they saw the divinity in womanhood, and hence this 'Worship of Woman' in Ajanta".

The Bagh Caves in Gwalior State contain some excellent fresco paintings, almost contemporaneous with Ajanta, with the same craftsmanship but dealing with more secular subjects and which give us an insight into the social conditions of the people of that period. The vividness of life depicted in these wall-paintings shows with remarkable clarity the high standard of culture and civilisation attained by the people then. The brush work is bold and vigorous as in Ajanta but in sheer aesthetical quality Bagh excels Ajanta. The group of dancing girls in a music party, the procession of elephants and horses, are all delineated with a sureness of composition and an eye for artistic grouping. There are other caves which contain old paintings, chief among them are the Siguriya caves in Ceylon and the Sittanavasal cave in the Pudukotta State in South India. The paintings in these caves are fragmentary but of equal artistic merit. The joyous creation of these early artists has all the supreme quality of divine creation, spontaneous, exuberant, unfettered, noble and pure. They stand out as marvellous achievements of human genius, faith, sincerity and love. Hence their unquestionable greatness.

The historical continuity of Indian painting of the succeeding centuries can be traced in the literature of the time, though no samples of the art are yet available to apprise their value correctly. The recent findings in Gujarat,



of old illustrated manuscripts of 12th to 15th centuries, the reference to painting on cloths in the ancient University of Nalanda by the Chinese travellers of the 7th and 8th centuries, show that the art must have been practised to a high degree and that there was a continuity of this art of picture-making in India right through the centuries. A great output of artistic creation, almost rivalling the classical era of Ajanta and Bagh, is to be observed between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, in the mediaeval schools of Rajput and Mughal painting in India. The Rajput school of painting was an indigenous art rooted in the folk-art of the people. It was purely a Hindu art, depicting the religious thought of the time. Vaishnavism was the prevailing religion in Northern India then, and the artists indulged in rendering the beautiful stories connected with Shree Krishna and his Leelas into pictorial forms. These paintings were miniatures in size, brilliantly coloured and exquisitely finished. The faces are mostly done in profile but the expression is most wonderfully delineated without any light and shade effect. The Rajput art is indeed an unique contribution to the pictorial art of the world, and in its later development in the hill school of Kangra, it reached a state of perfection in miniature painting unrivalled in the world. The Kangra artists painted stories, myths and legends associated with the life of Shiva, and also created visual forms for musical melodies, known as Ragini pictures. They represented the various seasons in nature and the different moods of men and women in delicate little paintings which are at once informing and charming. This school of painting was spread all over Northern India, in the Punjab, along the foot-hills of the Himalayas, in the valleys of



Garwhal, Chumba, Basholi and Kangra, as well as in the plains of Rajputana. Woman, to these artists also, was the central feature of their art, but here she was symbolised in Radha, the Beloved of Krishna. She is conceived in these paintings as an ideal type with a round moon face seen in a bewitching profile, with large sensitive eyes, graced by eyebrows which rival the bow of cupid and whose raven hair ends in the fairest curls; and she is painted in various moods, now dancing joyously with Krishna, now feeling the pangs of separation, now toileting, now in mischievous merry-making and so on. Mr. O. C. Gangoly, the editor of *Rupam*, sums up the main characteristics of this art as follows: "The whole composition is architectural, built up by the bold juxtaposition of masses of severely defined colours. There is not much drawing and the whole design is expressed in colours. They are characterised by unconventionality and originality of design. The personification of musical modes in terms of pictorial art is one of the remarkable achievements of Rajput painting. The leading theme is the cult of the divine cowherd, Krishna, idealized in a series of religious mysteries, the Gopis being the symbols of the souls yearning for the Divine".

The sixteenth century saw also the introduction of a new culture into India in the coming in of the Mughals, which enriched the art of the country. The political conquest of India by the Mughals resulted in the cultural conquest of the Mughals by India. The culture and civilization that followed in the wake of the conquerors became soon absorbed into the Hindu culture, and there was consequently an enrichment of Hindu life and arts. The Persian art that the Mughals brought with them became



fused with the indigenous art of the Rajput school, and the result was the birth of the Mughal school of painting. There were certain affinities between the two arts in feeling and technical expression. They mutually influenced each other but retained certain unassimilable ingredients natural to their respective arts. The Rajput art was religious, homely and impersonal, while the Mughal art was secular, courtly and personal. The Mughal emperors were great patrons of learning and arts, and under their fostering care the art of painting developed very rapidly. Akbar was eclectic in his taste and permitted Hindu painters to illustrate Hindu religious books for him; his son Jehangir was a great lover of beauty, and during his time the Mughal art reached its zenith, and some of the greatest painters of the Mughal period lived in his time. Bishandas, Keshavdas, Mansur, Manohar, Hasan are some of the foremost artists of that time. The emperor took delight in encouraging artists to paint for him the great personalities of his time, the wonderful birds, flowers and animals of the Himalayas and Kashmir. Mughal art did indeed produce one of the finest portrait galleries in the world. Shah Jehan was a great builder and during his time the art of painting began to decline and with the reign of Aurangzeb it became degenerated. The Mughal painting is not so rich in emotional contents nor so spiritually significant as the Rajput art, but it is more aesthetical and delicately refined.

With the downfall of the Mughal empire and with the political domination of the English Power in India, the arts much declined, and except for a few stray straggling artists scattered about in the courts of petty rulers, there were not any real creative works of art produced. The



School of Art method introduced by English education was barren of results; artists like Ravi Varma copied European styles of painting which were neither Indian nor European. It was left to an Englishman of great sympathetic understanding and imaginative feeling to see the folly of this wholesale transportation of foreign methods in painting into the Government Schools of Art and "of making Indian youths tenth-rate copyists, where imagination was starved out and originality was killed and where there was no scope for free creative expression and spontaneous production of idealistic works of art." He protested to the authorities, and with the help and co-operation of his colleague and fellow-artist, Abanindranath Tagore, sowed the seed for the modern revival in Indian painting now nearly twenty-five years ago, which has since then attracted the attention of an admiring world. The movement had for its leader a great enthusiast, a visionary, a sensitive artist, in Abanindranath Tagore. Tagore, like his great uncle, the poet Rabindranath, is an eclectic soul, and embodies in himself all that is best in the West and in the East. His art is rich in expression. He seeks inspiration from the ideals of his great ancestors, but utilises every *media* of expression for his creative genius. He borrows freely from Japan, China and Europe, all their techniques and mannerism, but keeps the Indian feeling and atmosphere for his pictures. His portrait-studies have all the characteristic qualities of the Mughal painting; his idealistic works have all the charm of Rajput miniatures; his ambitious works are a harmonious blending of the art of Japan and of India. Like all great masters, Abanindranath Tagore is a great experimentalist, and some of his finest works are mere experiments in



pictorial art. Great as he is as an artist, he is greater still as a teacher, and his eclectic spirit and catholic genius are to be seen in the ideals of the present revival. He gathered round him a small group of young artists who have since become world-famous. His brother Goganendranath Tagore is another versatile genius of the family of the Tagores. He is a painter of gorgeous sunsets, wonderful landscapes, interestingly clever, cubistic and impressionistic pictures, and above all a great caricaturist. His artistic moods express themselves in gorgeous colours and intricate patterns. He is a delightful man, short, square-built, cardinal-looking and full of fun. Abanindranath is his antithesis in this respect, tall, well-built like a Roman soldier, he is serious and aristocratic.

Nandalal Bose, the first pupil of Abanindranath Tagore is now as well known in the world as his master. Nandalal has not the eclectic genius of the Tagores, but is a true representative of Hindu culture, and his chief contribution to modern art is the introduction of Ajantan mannerisms, Ajantan poses, Ajantan types and styles into modern art. He has coined new types for his mythological subjects, and especially in his studies of Shiva. He is not a delicate colourist like his master but his lines are strong and vigorous and his compositions bold and big. He is the head of the Art School at Santiniketan, and his students show remarkable progress under his tuition. He is a lovable person with a child-like heart.

South India has the proud privilege of producing another great master-artist, as great as either Abanindranath or Nandalal, and his name is K. Vankatappa of Mysore. He was also a student under Tagore for over six years and was his favourite pupil. Mr. Venkatappa paints after the best



manner of Rajput and Mughal artists, and in certain respects even excels them. His miniature paintings on idealistic subjects are exceedingly charming. His finish is superb and his colourings soft and subdued. An ascetic by temperament and in life, he is pure, sincere and fearless, and his art reflects, the man. As a landscape painter he has few rivals in India, and his landscape-studies of Ooty in her different moods are a classic by themselves in that class of art. "Though they are realistic works" writes Mr. G. Venkatachalam, in his book on Modern Indian Artists, "they transcend the formal realism of ordinary European art, and catch for eternity in colour and lines the fleeting beauty of nature's varying moods. You are nearer the 'soul of things' when you see through those landscapes, the very 'spirit of nature'." Mr. Venkappa is also a sculptor and his plaster-cast of the master-musician Veena Seshanna, is a fine work of great 'feeling' and sensitiveness. Some of his beautiful paintings are in the possession of Lord Carmichael, Lord Ronaldshay, Raja of Digapathia, Mr. B. N. Treasuryvala of Bombay and in the Chitrasala of Mysore.

Another of the young artists who studied under Tagore and who is also a great sculptor is Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury of Calcutta. A handsome looking young man, tall, strong and sensitive, Deviprasad is an artist to his finger tips. In his paintings he combines harmoniously the technical features of both Western and Eastern art, and produces a type of painting which is very aesthetical and full of sensitive feeling. He has painted charming studies of the hill-women of the Himalayas and Assam which have been universally admired. His portrait-paintings in water-colours are exceedingly well done; moreover as a painter of soft twilights,



morning mists and evening shadows, he stands supreme. He is also a skilful craftsman, clever at designing jewels and furniture.

Mr. Asit Kumar Halder, the present Principal of the Government School of Arts at Lucknow, was also one of the earliest students of Tagore, and has painted some striking panel pictures, full of charm and beauty. He has an eye for rhythm, movement and balance; and his studies of *Ras Leela* or Krishna's Dance with Gopis, are full of those qualities. As a mural painter he has no equal in India. Mr. Mukul Dey, the newly appointed Principal of the Government School of Art Calcutta, is a pioneer painter-etcher in India. He has enriched his art considerably by his extensive tours in Europe, America and Japan. His early paintings, while yet a student under Tagore, showed considerable skill and originality, and his recent success in his artistic career was therefore not a great surprise. There are other young artists of this new movement who are carving out a great future for themselves; there is D. Bhattacharji, a fine colourist, Sailendra Dey, a delicate illustrator of lyrical feelings, Kshitendranath Muzumdar, a sensitively emotional artist, Promode Chatterjee, the most mystical of artists, Rahaman Chughtai with his elegant and attractive line-drawings, and promising young girl-artists like Sukumari Devi, a decorative painter, Pratima Devi of the Tagore family and Sunyani Devi the folk-artist. These and many more have richly contributed to the modern development of Indian art, and are rightly considered its leading artists. ) This movement", writes a well-known Indian art-critic, "represents in its strength and in its weakness, in its quaintness and in its truthfulness, the real





aesthetical and spiritual nature of India's creative genius, and, therefore are they the true pioneers in this renaissance of modern Indian painting". There are yet other artists of equal merit and outstanding ability, who are great in their own way and who have contributed their individuality to Indian art. Of them and their art I have not written here as I am concerned in the present sketch with a rapid survey of the historical development of Indian painting in its three great epochs of the classical Ajanta, mediaeval Rajput and Mughal and the modern renaissance started by this small group of Indian artists. This group has not achieved anything wonderfully great as yet, but all those who have tried to understand intelligently the trend of its modern development, believe that it is capable of achieving infinitely more.





## MUSIC OR BRAHMA-NÂDA

Music, to us in India, is Brahma-Nâda, the Voice of God. It is an integral part of our worship and inseparable from our conception of Divinity. We look upon it as a spiritual exercise of the first order, and we turn to it when we feel the need of a medium between our weak human minds and verities too great to be grasped or visualised by the intellect alone. What, for example, can be a more perfect symbol of Divine Love, than the flute of Krishna, sounding faint, though hauntingly sweet, from the other side of the Jamna of consciousness, drawing nearer and nearer to the Brindaban of our hearts, filling it at last with a melody so divinely beautiful, so altogether irresistible that the soul, afire with love, can no longer withstand it but must answer the call, snapping all worldly ties, flinging away all worldly desires, discarding with a gesture of supreme renunciation, all that would hold it back and prevent its utter surrender to the Lord of Hearts. So music flows, a celestial stream, between the Lover and the Beloved, taking to Him, our messages of longing, bringing back from Him glorious promises of fulfilment and ultimate union. Music is the most intimate, the most personal mode of self-expression that the human mind has evolved, and Indian music, I think, is even more individual and personal than the music of other countries. It is absolute self-surrender in revelation.

A few words may be said with regard to technique. Our music is mostly improvisation within the particular limits of a given Raga, thus giving to each musician, an unlimited



freedom to express himself to his fullest capacity, unhampered by any necessity to consider the arbitrary rulings of a composer, whose mood may not have been in perfect harmony with his own, and whose mode of expression may militate against his own re-actions to the emotion and meaning of the theme, thus obstructing the free working of his creative impulse. This being so, our music is a perfect reflection of our intellectual growth and spiritual aspirations, and the Indian mind, being subtle and introspective, with an inherent tendency to seek the truth behind appearance, restless, ever haunted by tantalisingly elusive visions of the Beyond that hovers maddeningly midway between mystery and revelation, has evolved a music that will best express its yearning and its ecstasy. Hence that quality, I believe, in our music, which is so often described as "haunting." Yet this divine sorrow must not be confused with weak human melancholy. There is in it something excellent, powerful, a discontent infinitely more desirable than satisfaction. It is the call of the Divine, shackled, to the Divine, Eternally Free.

I spoke, a while ago, of "Raga". Our music is a system of Ragas, each Raga expressing certain emotions and apportioned to that hour of the day whose mood corresponds with its own. The word "Raga" itself means emotion. A "Raga" is a particular combination of a certain number of chosen notes of the gamut—which has at least twenty-four definite notes in Indian music—placed in such a relation to one another that the whole melody, when sung or played, produces a particular impression upon the hearts and minds of musician and listeners alike. In improvising one must be very careful not to dwell more or less long than the prescribed length of time on a certain note, not to produce combinations



of notes alien to the spirit and composition of the Raga, otherwise one is apt to find oneself suddenly faced with a quite different Raga! Each Raga has a distinct personality of its own, and to mingle Ragas is considered as heinous a crime, in the graphic metaphor of one's Ustad or music teacher, as to cut off a man's nose and stick it on the face of another. The reasons are obvious; the triumphant mood of noon can hardly harmonize with the devotional mood of dawn or the contemplative mood of night. There are six sovereign Ragas, each with a number of Raginis and a vast family of smaller Ragas. It is amusing, at first, to hear one's Ustad talking of these Ragas and Raginis as though they were live people with habits, moods, features, even pedigrees and families and habitations of their own. But one begins to understand, as one gets closer into the spirit of Indian music. A time comes when the musician finds himself losing his own personality and becoming the Raga he is striving to interpret, surrendering throat or hands to it. The Raga enters into, takes possession of him. The very atmosphere becomes impregnated, as it were, with that Raga, and the very walls and roof and ground become vocal with its melody, and the audience, utterly spell bound, sways with the spell. It is in this utter self-surrender that the supreme triumph of the artist lies. He is not an "Ustad" who, while performing, can remain an Ustad. He must become a devotee, finally an incarnation of the Raga; he must convert the audience into fellow-worshippers and then, through an ever-growing intensity of worship he must merge into the deity. That is true music, an exercise, most of all, of the spirit.

What part, in the glorious past history of our music, has been played by women? Always in India the tradition of the



artist has been strict anonymity. The artist is so utterly absorbed, so lost in his art that he never thinks of immortalizing himself with his creations. If this is true of all the arts, it is truest of music where this surrender to pure art is greatest of all. Hence, perhaps the explanation why no names are known of women who were excellent singers or musicians. Of Tansen, one of the greatest of our musicians, legend tells how he was corrected in his pride by a village maiden, but, as is usual in such matters with the Indian people, she remains nameless. Side by side with the entirely traditional nature of Indian music, lies the historical evidence that from the earliest times there were women singers and temple vestals, and so it is evident that the preservation of music in India owes not a little to women. Though the "Ustads" or teachers of music may have been men, the preservers and performers—the artists—have been women. Of the Indian Poetesses, many must have been musicians as well. Kalidasa, in his famous play, *Malavika-Agnimitra*, speaks of the heroine's absolute mastery of the science as well as the art of music, and among the judges of the performance is also a woman,—a Buddhist nun. Ever since, and much earlier still, music has been traditionally the art *'par excellence'* for high-born women as well as of professional singers. Music formed an integral part of women's education in classical times. Even now, the popular *garbas*, with their combination of song and movement, keep alive the flame of music in every village.

But, if we turn from this past to the present, the atmosphere is chilling, or was, till about a decade ago. A nation enslaved, barren of ideals, caught in the clinging meshes of a fatal despondency, groping in the darkness of self-created



delusions, uncertain which way to turn feverishly seeking a way—some way, any way—back to the light, has little urge towards the spiritual in artistic expression. The attitude of a people towards their art is the best index of their cultural, intellectual, and spiritual attainments. We had lost contact with our old culture, broken away from our old traditions, forgotten our ideals. Where should we find the energy to study our art? We blindly accepted everything that was handed to us by the West. We drugged ourselves into a condition of unthinking acquiescence, and the result was that Brahma-Nāda, that voice of God that had thundered its wrath in the Niridang of Shiva and lured our Souls in the Flute of Krishna, which had released its creative energy in the wild exultant music of the Damru, lingered but in a few faint echoes, where faithful Ustads still fed it with their devotion,—or else came to be regarded as an instrument of allurements in the hands of a certain class of singers, and so was regarded with distrust and suspicion. No longer was music an integral part of a woman's education; the writer can remember a time when parents expressed horror at the thought of their children learning Indian music! But they could, with safety, learn to play the piano as an accomplishment!

When it was popularly practised, it was still in a degraded form. We had lost our musical ideals. What with theatres and the gramophone on the one hand and the harmonium on the other, we had become worse than deaf. Leaving aside all the lovely and potent instruments of Indian music, we concentrated on the harmonium. In every household one found a harmonium, ruining the ears and the voices of its votaries, filling the air with blaring discord. The harmonium was turned to as the one faithful



friend, who would cloak all the player's deficiencies under merciful swathings of uncontrolled discord.

Now, however, there are many signs of a musical revival. Music as an expression of the deepest religious experience, music as a spiritualiser of character, music as a reflector of all forms of beautiful experience, is recovering the high place it formerly held in the culture and genius of the nation. In Bengal, in Southern India, in Bombay, in Gujarat, music schools are springing up, organised by gifted musicians, who after years of seclusion, are receiving at last their meed of appreciation for their unswerving devotion to the ideals of their art during the period of depression. The Sitar, the Dilruba, the Vina, are once more finding their rightful place in the musical scheme. Efforts are being made to reduce our music to notation and so simplify the teaching of it. Numerous art festivals and musical conferences are being held all over the country; many of these have been initiated and organised by women: women have presided at many of them. As this is being written, one reads of a lady, Miss Bahadurji, the head of a Bombay Girl's High School, presiding over the Gandharva Maha Vidyalaya where were discussed, plans for drawing up music curriculums for schools, and Universities. Another sign of the revival of music has been in its association with the attempted revival of an Indian literary theatre.) In the plays of Rabindranath Tagore, as of other younger Bengali dramatists such as Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, music is associated with poetry. The performance of these by groups of distinguished amateurs, has assisted considerably in rousing the interest of the intelligentsia. Women have taken part in these performances, and have often taken a leading share in organising them; for instance in Bombay we have had



lately the performances of the *Shama'a* Players, a group organised by a lady of distinguished family and ability, Shrimati Mrinalini Chattopadhyaya, who is the editor of the literary quarterly, the *Shama'a*.

Music is again becoming an integral part of the education of our girls. If it is to be, what it once was, a part and parcel of our consciousness, of our religious life, "a household goddess, a familiar friend," women can help most to re-absorb it, first into the family consciousness, and so into the national consciousness. Our women have sometimes been blamed for their conservative instinct; but it is because of that they have clung more to, and been able to preserve better, the atmosphere and traditions of the old culture. They are therefore better fitted to be restorers of that culture. And in an art so intuitive, so wide-spread, as music once was in our country, women must have a very large share. At Bolpur, among the many educational institutions founded by Dr. Tagore, this has been recognized. Here has been an attempt to form an educational institution with the broadest basis. With the school, the college, the research institute, there is also a Kala-Bhuvan, a school of Art and Music; all the girl-students from the girls' school and college attend this school.

Again, if we want to become musically alive as we once were, we must breathe "the word of power" into the ears of the young. Women are best fitted to be teachers of the young. Music is now felt once more, by the unthinking to be at least "a desirable accomplishment by the thoughtful," a valuable and integral part of the education of our girls. Soon, I hope, there will be no bar to its becoming a legitimate means of earning our livelihood. Everywhere people are





calling out for teachers and more teachers. The difficulty of obtaining suitable teachers is very great, for hitherto those women who were best fitted to interpret Brahma-Nâda, refused to act as its interpreters. Until women of the intelligentsia study it, bringing to bear upon it, not only an enlightened intellect but an awakened soul, it can neither be understood nor truly interpreted. Those educated women who have become teachers of music among the young, have felt it a great joy and mission. And as these increase, our land will once more become what Iqbal the poet calls her in his impassioned outpouring of love, the "house of God," uniting young and old, rich and poor, in the flood of joyous melody.





## WOMEN AND THE LAW

During the last twenty years there has been a strong movement towards the emancipation of women from legal disabilities. After the Government of India Bill of 1919, various provinces granted the franchise to women on the same terms as men, so that at present women in Bombay, Madras, the United Provinces, Bengal, and the Central Provinces are enfranchised and have also the right to become members of Legislative bodies and to exercise all civic rights.

Apparently even in earlier times and during the Middle Ages the study of law for women was not quite unknown. The names of two women who wrote commentaries on Law are well known. Women's property, or *Stridhan* is a special branch of Hindu Law. Hindu women, married or unmarried, could from the earliest times hold property in their own rights which they could dispose of, without their husbands' consent. Balampatti was a woman commentator who has written a masterly commentary on the Law of *Stridhan*. Lachmadevi, another commentator who lived in the 15th century A. D. wrote the *Vivadachandra*, which is a commentary on the Hindu Law of Succession as followed by the Mithila School.

(Miss Cornelia Sorabji was the first Indian woman to pass the examination of Bachelor of civil Law at Oxford as early as 1892. She also obtained the LL. B. degree of the Allahabad University, but was not allowed to practise. In 1904 she was appointed Legal Adviser to *Purdanashin* women, Court of Wards, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam, and Consulting Counsel by the Government of Bengal. ) Other



women also began to study law and passed the Bachelor of Law Examination of their respective Universities; but they had a very restricted field for activity, as they could not practise as pleaders or vakils, and at best their interest in law was only academic.

By the Legal Practitioner's (Women) Act of 1923, the disabilities against women legal practitioners in India were removed. In January 1920, the four Inns of Court in London had for the first time admitted women students, thus giving them the right to be enrolled later as barristers. In January 1923 the first two women were called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn, one of them being an Indian, the writer herself, who has been practising since 1924 at the Bombay High Court. Several women are now qualifying themselves and practising in India.

Professional disabilities have therefore been practically entirely removed. Executive and political posts are not yet open to women, nor can they be appointed to diplomatic posts. Women have been appointed J. P.'s since 1925, and as Honorary Magistrates they work with their men colleagues in the children's courts and other courts. Women have not yet been admitted on juries in criminal trials.

But the chief disabilities that women suffer from relate to personal laws. These differ according to the different religions and legal codes. Marriage, Divorce, Inheritance, Guardianship were all regulated by the personal law applicable to the individual; the law has in some cases remained unchanged for hundreds of years with the result that women suffer many disabilities. The following detailed analysis will show the position as it stands at the present day as regards Hindu and Mahomedan women.



## HINDU WOMEN

Amongst the early Aryans the joint family was the unit, the father or the eldest male member of the family being the head, the *patria potestas* who along with the other male members had the control and management of the family property.

The family owned lands in common, being joint in estate, food, and worship. The property was vested in all the male members jointly, the women being mere dependents upon fathers and husbands. At the very early period the texts represent women as being absolutely without independent rights. "Three persons, a wife, a son and a slave, are declared by law to have no wealth exclusively their own; the wealth they may earn is regularly acquired for the man to whom they belong". (Manu viii. S 416).

The same causes which led to the break up of the family union, would introduce women to the possession of the family property. When partition took place the fund out of which the women were maintained would be split up in fragments. Some portion would have to be set apart for maintenance. Further, if a man died without issue and without coparceners, it was natural that his womenfolk being in possession of the property, would be allowed to enjoy it, rather than that they should be handed over to distant relatives who might be utter strangers to them. In this way their right as heirs, and not merely as sharers, arose. But that right would not extend beyond the reason for it, *viz.*, their claim to personal maintenance. The preference for the male over the female remained, and would thus prevent the property inherited by the women passing out of the family into the hands of



strangers. The woman was not allowed to become a fresh stock of descent, so as to transmit the inheritance to her heirs.

A little later the women were more favourably treated. According to Yagnavalkya ii. S. 115 if a partition takes place in the lifetime of the father the fortune in the house and the wife's ornaments were to be set aside for the benefit of the wife. If the sons partitioned after the death of the father, a share equal to that of the son's was set apart for the mother and the unmarried daughters each received a one-fourth share to that of her brothers. (Vyasa, Brihaspathi, and Yagnavalkya.) However, as far as the daughters were concerned it soon came about that the later commentators held that the mention of a one-fourth share for a daughter was meant for her maintenance and marriage expenses, and that she was entitled only to maintenance up to marriage and marriage expenses. Thus the daughters were deprived of their one-fourth share and given maintenance instead, and the law remains the same at present.

## INHERITANCE

Under the Mithakshara, in an undivided family where there are co-parceners, on the death of one of the co-parceners, the widow and the daughters are excluded and the property goes to the surviving co-parceners subject only to the right of maintenance and residence of the widow and the unmarried daughters. If there are sons or sons' sons, they take all the property, subject only to the liability to maintain the females. In the case of divided families or if the property is self-acquired and there are no sons or sons' sons the widow inherits the property with full rights as to the use of the income thereof, but restricted rights as to its



alienation. She can alienate it only for legal necessity or with the consent of the next reversioner. If there are daughters, the daughters succeed to the estate as heirs of their father with the same rights in the property as possessed by the widow. As a general rule all females inheriting property either from males or females take as limited owners thereof, (except in the Bombay Presidency) i.e. a woman cannot be a new stock of descent, but on her death the property devolves not on her heirs, but on the heirs of the last full owner thereof. In Bombay women heirs are divided into two groups,— (1) those who come into the gotra or family by marriage, (2) those born into the family. The persons belonging to the first category, widow, mothers, daughters-in-law, take only as limited owners, whilst those who are born into the family i.e. daughters, sisters, take the property they inherit absolutely and the property on their death passes to their *Stridhan* Heirs. There is at present a strong movement to equalise the laws of inheritance as relating to women; that the wife and daughter should get some share in the estate of the father in ancestral property.

*Stridhan.* Besides property inherited by a woman there are other kinds of property, such as gifts made to the girl on various occasions at the time of marriage etc. which she possesses and over which she has absolute rights and which she can alienate without the consent of the husband. Such property is called *Stridhan*, and on her death it passes to her daughters and sons according to the source of acquisition of the property. In default of children it passes in certain cases to her husband and to the father's family in certain others.

*Marriage.* Marriage according to the Hindu Law is



a sacrament and in theory the tie is indissoluble. The re-marriage of widows especially in the higher castes therefore is looked upon with disfavour by the law-givers as being something akin to adultery. Such marriages were held to be invalid and the offspring of such marriages held to be illegitimate. However, by the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act 1856 the legal impediment to widow remarriage has been removed and a Hindu woman can now contract a valid second marriage; Hindu sentiment, however, is not yet much in favour of such marriages. Yet in ancient times, remarriage of widows was not unknown and the earlier law books show that under certain circumstances, the wife was allowed to remarry, even during the lifetime of the husband. Says Narada in XII 103, 97: 'When her husband is lost or dead, when he has become a religious ascetic, when he is impotent and when he has been expelled from caste, these are five cases of legal necessity when a woman may be justified in taking another husband.' However the opinion of Manu and others has been against widow remarriage and that has prevailed all down the ages. There is no divorce amongst Hindus. A man may put away his wife and take another but, though he may live apart and there may be sufficient grounds to claim maintenance from him, she cannot marry again. A wife has a right of maintenance against her husband, if she has left him for just cause such as cruelty on his part which would make it unsafe for her to live with him or if she has been wantonly driven out from the house by the husband. Habitual illtreatment not amounting to cruelty or the husband's taking another wife does not entitle her to leave his house and claim maintenance.

*Guardianship.* The father is the natural guardian of



his children and as such entitled to the custody of their person and property. Next to the father the mother is the guardian unless the father has appointed another person as the guardian of the person of his children. When the father is alive he is entitled to the custody of his minor children, however young they may be, in preference to the mother: and no court has power to appoint a guardian of the person of a minor whose father is living unless in the opinion of the court he is utterly unfit to be the guardian.

### MAHOMEDAN WOMEN

In certain respects Mahomedan Law is more liberal to women than Hindu Law i.e. in inheritance and marriage.

*Marriage.* Under Mahomedan Law 'marriage is a contract which has for its object the procreation of children.' The rights and duties of the husband and wife depend, except in certain specified particulars on the term of the marriage contract. On marriage a woman does not lose her individuality. 'No doctrine of coesture is recognized and her property remains hers in her individual right'. The contract of marriage does not give the husband any rights upon her goods or property in her lifetime. It is usual for the husband to let a dower upon her under the nuptial contract; and she has a distinct lien on her husband's property for that time.

*Inheritance.* A woman is as much an heir as a man under Mahomedan Law, and the son does not exclude the daughter from a share of the father's property. The wife has a one eighth share in the property of her husband when there are children. But if there are no children the wife takes a quarter. The mother has a one sixth share in the property



of her child, and when there are no sons the daughter takes half the property of the father as sharer, or, if more than one, they take two thirds, the other sharers taking their respective shares. If however there are sons, the daughter takes with the son as residuary, the son taking double the portion of the daughter. When there are no children or father or brother, the sister takes half as a sharer, but with the brother she takes as a residuary, the brother taking twice the share of the sister.

The property which a woman interests or which she receives as gifts or by her own exertions is her personal absolute property, whether she be single or married; and she can alienate it during her lifetime without the permission of her husband. She suffers from the same restraints as to testamentary capacity as the men.

*Divorce.* Marriage being a contract, it can be dissolved by either spouse under certain conditions. The man can dissolve the marriage at will, but the wife has a right to ask for divorce if she has reserved the right in her antenuptial contract and if the terms thereof have been broken. It is usual for her in such cases to release her dower. She may also sue for divorce in case of the impotency of the husband, or on the ground of imprecation of unchastity by the husband. She can marry another person again after observing, a three months period of *Iddat*.

*Guardianship.* The right of a mother to the custody of her young children is established in law, and she is entitled to the custody of her male child until he is seven years old and of the female child until she has attained puberty, and the right is not lost though she may have been divorced by her husband. She is entitled to obtain maintenance allowance



for the children from the husband even though she be divorced. The father is the guardian of the property of the children and of the person after the above mentioned ages, and has the right to give them in marriage. Thus the position of a Mahomedan woman is in many respects better than that of a Hindu woman or women in some continental countries. Yet the system of polygamy and the husband's unrestricted right of divorce even without cause has materially reduced all the privileges accorded to her by the law.

On the whole it will be perceived from this analysis that the position of a woman in India with regard to ownership or property, moveable or immoveable, is in some respects more advantageous than that of married women in some countries in Europe, especially the Latin countries, where up till recent times, the doctrine of unity of person prevailed, with the result that on marriage the woman and everything belonging to her became the property of the man. In matters of inheritance and divorce there is much scope for improvement and equalisation of laws, and in the general outlook towards the sex as a whole.

The growing number of women lawyers described in the introduction may by their specialized knowledge and interest facilitate the removal of these legal disabilities that still affect women in matters of personal law. In a large amount of social work also, as in matters relating to the Children's Act and Children Courts, the participation of women lawyers is valuable. Moreover women are taking a keen interest in political reform; in many provinces they have the right to be members of the Legislative Councils; their knowledge of law and procedure will help them in their Public work.



## SOME ASPECTS OF MEDICO-SOCIAL WORK IN INDIA

One of the widest fields for social service has been opened up by the maternity and child welfare movement.

It has led to various paths of investigation the most important being the causes of the enormous mortality amongst mothers and infants. This question is not peculiar to India but much yet remains to be achieved here in this direction.

In the west, a great reduction in infant mortality rates has been brought about through persistent efforts, but work along similar lines has not met with the same success in reducing the maternal mortality. The reasons given for such failure are many and varied as can be seen by following the correspondence going on in some of the leading medical journals.

In this country the high mortality rates simply baffle us, and the main causes are not far to seek. Apart from the mortality rates, the percentage of mortality, both amongst mothers and infants, must be very high judging from the character of work seen at hospitals and dispensaries.

What should naturally be a normal physiological process is morbid mostly through ignorance.

Looking through the statistics of any large maternity hospital, one would notice the fact that the largest percentage of maternal mortality is due to purely obstetric conditions which are preventable. Still-births also show the highest percentage of avoidable causes, thus showing the great importance of preventive work in midwifery.

Ignorance and superstition are two great factors



preventing access to modern methods. Indians are naturally fatalists, which is helpful when unavoidable accidents occur, but certainly a very trying attitude when confronted with remediable complications. Old mothers and grand-mothers still hold great sway in Indian families, and while we are still busy trying to form large committees, meeting in Town Halls for discussing welfare problems, or organising welfare exhibitions on grand scales, these women continue to impart their time-honoured customs to the next generation, which has grown up directly under their influence, and has been carefully guarded and warned against the advances of modern teaching

Is it a wonder then that many a time we are met with such adamant resistance to any suggestion of change even from the younger generation ?

The untrained midwives, known commonly as *dais*, are very popular, in fact indispensable, in these families. These women fall in with the superstitious ideas, and carry out every instruction with great detail.

They are very sympathetic, and will turn their hand to anything. They are really handy women, and, more important still, they are well up in the latest gossip of the town. No wonder they are so popular. If only they had some scientific knowledge of the subject, they would form a great asset in social work. Their opinion is highly valued, and many a time I have noticed that, even if eminent doctors have urged certain treatments, unless the *dai* agrees with it, patients will not follow the doctor's advice !

*Dais* may have been and perhaps still are a valuable aid in confinements and all may go well if everything is straightforward, but the least abnormality is tackled so



artlessly and heartlessly by these women, that in the long run they are a real source of danger to humanity.

With the evolution of modern methods in midwifery, we have come to realize the great value of preventive work. Medical women with special training are indispensable for such work in India, and if this work is carried out thoroughly, all normal maternity work can be safely and profitably left in the hands of midwives. The question of replacing *dais* by trained midwives has been and is still being widely discussed—There is first the economic difficulty, as the provision of sufficient number of midwives in any town means a large outlay.

Some of the foremost welfare workers are still of opinion that the indigenous *dai* should be befriended, given a course of training and allowed to continue her practice. There is much to be said in favour of such schemes, for everyone realizes the difficulty, nay the impossibility almost, of dethroning these women from the position they occupy in most Indian families. The difficulties of befriending them are just as stupendous, for these honourable women take a prejudiced view of the modern doctor and midwife, and I do not feel it can be an easy task to bring them round to our way of thinking. Theirs is a hereditary profession and they have too many of their own ideas and practices deeply ingrained within them to allow of easy conviction as to our methods. The period of training for midwives hitherto in force in England has been thought to be quite inadequate and has been increased to *one year*. If it takes so long to train a fresh person properly in the practice of midwifery, is it possible that a much shorter course is sufficient to train our already biassed person?



An indigenous *dai* has to start by unlearning all her former practices which cannot be achieved immediately she enters a training institution. It will take months for her to realize how fallacious her own methods were. In face of this one can see the absurdity of giving nominal courses, lasting only a fortnight or so, to these women brought for the first time into a civilized town from remote villages, and then expecting that these women will introduce modern methods into their own practice. Why! they have hardly had time to get over the wonders of large spacious buildings, and the uniformed staff that glides about the place.

The *dais* are still a great asset in our maternity services particularly in the villages, but they will need a much more thorough grinding, followed by continuous and persistent guidance and supervision.

The problems of maternity service in a large town are easy enough to be solved if only the local municipality will realize its responsibility and make an adequate provision for it in its annual budget, but the difficulties of country practice still remain. It is not possible for a midwife from another place to go and settle in a new village. She will always be looked upon as an alien.

The reform must come from within the village itself, and efforts should be made to take up the rising generation of the existing *dais* and give them a proper preliminary education, and then an adequate training in midwifery.

The effects of the spread of education are noticeable even amongst some of the most orthodox families. The mother or grandmother is generally *the* authority in these families and younger women are under the thumb of these. But the education of the menfolk is bringing about a change and many



a time an educated son may be able to persuade his old-fashioned mother to see things from his angle of vision. The rising generation of men are certainly a great stand-by in introducing reform into families, hence fathers' classes are an essential part of any welfare movement in India. Social workers can do much in organising such classes, and one of the most hopeful signs of the time is the number of young men attending social service training classes every year. The salvation of our country lies in the hands of social workers but not so much in those who delight in denouncing old customs from public platforms. The real workers are those who carry on their propaganda quietly from house to house. Theirs is work which cannot be measured by numbers and statistics, but it is none the less certain. For success in social work, intensive propaganda rather than work on an extensive scale should be the aim. Large schemes may show big figures at the end of each year, but they do not necessarily prove success, unless a sufficient amount of individual work has been done at the same time.

The great task before social workers in this field lies in raising the masses from their ignorance and superstitions. Education, by creating sound public opinion, stimulating agitation against early marriages, and education in sex relationship, is a preliminary to work for any welfare scheme. Such reforms will go a long way towards helping in the progress of preventive medicine. But whatever schemes are set afoot careful consideration must be given to make them suitable for local needs. Blind following of Western methods will only increase the prejudice of the masses and the only way to success is by evolving methods adaptable to Indian ways of living and thinking.



## MATERNITY AND WELFARE WORK IN INDIA

It is surprising to every social worker to see how neglected the care of women and children has been up to very recent times in India, and that the extraordinary rate of mortality in labour cases has been taken for granted as the "Toll of nature" or the "Will of God" by the Government as well as the people. Had it not been so, we should have had maternity hospitals built first and general hospitals provided afterwards in all the Presidencies. Now, when we are beginning to realize the importance of this part of medical work, we feel that nothing can be done, not only for the women, but for the nation, until we have a normal labour mortality for women and infants. Well cared for and well nourished babies who would be, in future, physically strong men and women is what every civilized country is striving for. If you try to raise the economic condition of the labouring class in a town, the bad physique and small capacity for work of the men comes in your way. This is probably a result of pre-natal and post-natal neglect on the part of the mothers.

If we want to start schools for children or classes for married women, the sickly mothers and the sickly children bring down the average percentage of attendance to half of what it might have been. Take up any kind of nation building activity and you at once feel hampered by the poverty and the bad health of the boys and girls and of the men and women.

It seems to me that if we supplied good maternity



hospitals and midwives for every town and village in India, our mortality would be reduced by half and the number of patients in ordinary hospitals would also be reduced to half the number and the vitality of the people would increase rapidly—thereby increasing the capacity for work, so that the economic condition of the labouring classes would be improved automatically.

We cannot expect to see happy homes, when the woman is either crippled or injured in some way or other by lack of care at the time of childbirth, and the man continually suffers from malaria or some such disease which is caused by lack of stamina and vitality.

We must try and set this matter right and the only way to do that is to make up for our past neglect, by spending all our energy and money on the care of women and children first. It is said that prevention is better than cure. Medical relief must begin with institutions which prevent disease, the curing hospitals can be attended to later on. The conditions in towns and in villages are different to some extent but the work ought to be co-ordinated. The town association should spread a network of maternity homes in villages.

The educating of public opinion, especially feminine public opinion, by holding meetings, lectures, baby weeks, magic lantern and cinema shows, should be followed up by the formation of associations for nursing and maternity work. At public meetings the most effective way of rousing opinion on such subjects is to tell people the plain truth about the existing conditions amongst women and children without mincing matters.

I find that men are horrified to hear of what is going on



around them. They never seem to realize the amount of needless suffering and pain which falls to the lot of women, which could very easily be prevented, and which women suffer almost uncomplainingly. It is more difficult to persuade women that their suffering could be easily prevented. They seem to take it as a matter of course and refuse to believe that there can be normal labour cases without fever and other difficulties. This can be remedied by organizing baby weeks and health exhibitions where models of sanitary dwellings and wells and labour rooms can be shown with great advantage. A good cinema film attracts a crowd everywhere, and is very effective in educating the Public and the contrasted clean and filthy labour rooms are also of very great educative value.

After the babies have been awarded prizes, the excitement and enthusiasm is apt to evaporate, if care is not taken to form an association before the end of the "Week". The association undertakes to do propaganda work, supports nurses, health visitors, trained midwives and *dais* for taluka headquarter towns.

For village work—sending a trained teacher or *dai*, who reads Hindu and Muslim religious stories to attract a gathering of women and then interests them in sanitary matters in general and maternity and infant welfare work in particular, has been found to be effective. I find house to house visiting in villages the most satisfactory way of educating public opinion. A personal chat with an expectant mother, a glance over the room, bed and clothes to be used at the time of delivery is an essential matter.

Every effort must be made both in towns and villages to get the local *dais* to co-operate with the trained worker.



It is a good plan to ask the local *dais* to go round with the worker and employ and train the most influential *dais* to help in each maternity centre that is opened in any town or village so that they may not feel that bread is taken out of their mouths. Unless that is done, there is a great likelihood of maternity houses being opened but no cases coming in. I remember once a beautifully equipped Home had to be closed for lack of cases.

My scheme for organizing maternity work in a district is first to enlist the sympathy and help of every Patel or chief Zemindar in each village, to approach the District Local Board or Municipality to bear the cost of at least two nurses in the district,—to form a local association (which supports a trained *dai*) in each district taluka and to appoint a trained nurse in each taluka headquarter. The trained nurse should hold classes for all the *dais* in the taluka every day. The untrained *dai* is induced to attend the class for an hour each day by being paid annas 4 for every lesson she takes. After examining the *dais* who have taken a three months' course and seeing them conduct 12 cases the lady doctor (or trained nurse who examines them with the help of men doctors) gives the *dais* a certificate. Each *dai* who attends a course of lessons is given a "Dai box" which contains necessary articles like lysol, a good pair of scissors, some cotton wool, boric lotion for washing the child's eyes, nose and mouth, three or four cups of different sizes and a cake of disinfectant soap. A small box containing these articles costs Rs. 5-0-0. We find it a great attraction for *dais* who could not have been induced otherwise to attend the lectures. Women members of the association who are not trained nurses or *dais* can help a very great deal by



supervising delivery cases. Each worker can see that the midwife has had a bath and is wearing clean clothes, that the delivery is not taking place on the floor but on a cot, that the mother has had a bath and is wearing clean clothes, that the rags have been boiled and disinfected before being used, that the *dai* has not been attending a septic case before coming to the house, that all bangles, rings, and jewellery have been removed from her person, that the *dai* does not interfere in any way and allows nature to do its work. If it is an abnormal delivery or faulty in any way the worker can send for the nearest doctor. All the doctors in each locality should be requested to become honorary workers. The Civil Surgeon in each district should be requested to be a member of the committee.

#### *Rules for the Nurse :*

Every indoor patient is kept and treated free of charges. For outdoor cases anything from Rs. 10 to Rs. 15 is charged within a radius of 5 miles. (The patient to arrange for a carriage for the nurse). Half the fee, that is Rs. 7-8-0, is given to the nurse. Rs. 7-8-0 goes to the association. The *dai* who attends the case with the nurse is to be given Re. 1-0-0 by the patient.

For distant cases, Rs. 50-0-0 or Rs. 100-0-0 are charged. Rs. 25-0-0 for the nurse and the rest goes to the association.

It will be seen that an effort is made to make every centre self-supporting as far as possible. Great care must be taken to choose the right kind of nurse for district work and to pay her an adequate salary. The success of the home or centre depends entirely on her temper, personality and capability. I make it a point to choose the district nurses after personal interviews. The life of the district worker





is very lonely therefore every woman member of the association should make an effort to keep in touch with the district *dais* and nurses—sending them newspapers etc.—asking them to come occasionally to headquarters and making them feel that there is some one on whom they can rely for help and sympathy. It is a good plan to try and arrange that the school mistress and the nurse either live together or very close to each other. The nurse should be given free quarters to live in, a good reliable servant and a peon. It must be borne in mind that the district nurse must be carefully protected. Otherwise we shall never get the right type of district worker on whom the success of the association depends.





## PURDAH-THE NEED FOR ITS ABOLITION

It is an extraordinary thing what unnatural cruelties can be perpetrated all over the world under the crushing weight of long-established custom and superstition. Open air and sunlight may not be denied to plants and animals if healthy growth is to be secured and yet, under strict Purdah conditions, they are denied to women young and old all through their lives. From the time they attain puberty, numbers of young girls, Hindu and Mahomedan, often just children in instinct and feeling, retire into seclusion. They see no men except those of their own household; they go out veiled or in closed and curtained conveyances when they do go out at all; and even this degree of liberty is denied them under the stricter Purdah conditions.

Purdah, the seclusion of girls who have attained puberty, is a Mahomedan institution more rigidly enforced in north India. In that part of the country, it has been frequently adopted by the Hindus, especially in Rajputana. It does not prevail at all among south Indian Hindus; or among the people of Maharashtra and a large section of Gujarat, or in the Madras and Bombay Presidencies. As a result of this, it is less rigid among the poor Mahomedans of south India. Unfortunately there is a tendency, even at the present day, for communities that have not originally adopted Purdah to do so as a mark of growing social status and prosperity. The Kathiawaris, for instance, have adopted it only in the past fifty years; and doctors working among them have already felt the deplorable physical results of this adoption, the



increase of tuberculosis and of early maternal mortality.

Purdah differs very much in the degree of seclusion practised in various parts of the country. At its best and especially among the poor classes, women can move about on the public road and go about their outdoor work with a veil over their faces. If rich they can use curtained conveyances, and social intercourse of a restricted kind is not denied them. Even under such conditions the system is an infliction on the natural dignity of womanhood, and, on the purely physical side, results still in a deplorable lack of air and exercise that will lead to the physical deterioration of the race. On the other hand purdah may be so rigid that a woman may, among the poor, be confined to a small house, practically windowless or with openings high up in the walls, and she may not leave the house even to fetch water for household purposes. However poor the household, she can take no share in the work, except for the cooking which she can do indoors. It has been said that a Rajputani may not leave her house to fetch water though the house may be in a jungle and the well in front of it. The experience of doctors working among these *Purdah nashin* women is a tragic revelation of numberless cases of tuberculosis, stunted growth, disease, both among the women themselves and their children.

Purdah has pressed least hard on the very poor and the rich. For the rich there could be alleviations, air and light were not denied them, in the physical or in the cultural sense. There have been in Indian history, many very cultured Moghul and Rajput princesses. They had spacious gardens, they painted and read. For the poor the demands of hard necessity often raised the veil, though less so in India





than in other Moslem countries and much less so in north than in south India. The conditions of modern town life have also intensified the worst physical evils of purdah.

If in the richer houses, especially the households of those Princes and Zamindars who have adopted purdah, there is less suffering from lack of the elementary essentials such as air and sunlight, the mental effect is still often disastrous. Because of the restrictions on education, companionship, and the development of outside interests, women are thrown for companionship on the society of female servants, and the atmosphere is often clouded with domestic gossip, jealousy, intrigue. Undoubtedly numerous instances may be quoted of Moghul and Rajput ladies, cultured in the arts and music, living within Zenana walls a free and liberal life. But these instances are not numerous enough to be considered any real alleviation of the system and assuredly they are not a justification of it.

Women of the wealthier classes and of the aristocracy have in other countries contributed considerably to social and philanthropic work. Purdah has been a restriction on the activities of a considerable body of women similarly situated in India, and the country has suffered thereby. Voluntary social enterprise has lagged behind in India as compared with other countries and in India itself those provinces where Purdah prevails are far behind those where women have been able to do organised social work.

Progress is being made, though with painful slowness in the attempt, to increase the spread of education within purdah. Even as this paper is being written one reads of a Girl Guide Rally held at Secundrabad under purdah, of a Women's Conference on Educational Reform to be held at



Ajmere-Merwara in Rajputana, the stronghold of Hindu purdah, the conference in its agenda laying considerable stress on the need for physical training. One reads of Purdah Clubs with facilities for games and social intercourse. In all these cases, "under purdah" implies the absence of men from the proceedings. The Women's Political Conference recently held at Meerut was more militant in spirit ! There the Purdah arrangements provided for the ladies were strongly resented by them, and it was not until all the screens and curtains were removed that they would enter the pandal !

The attempt to educate girls while still maintaining purdah conditions has led to many comic anomalies. An Urdu primary teacher may often have to take her Normal examination in the practice of teaching under a male Inspector of Schools. In that case both the teacher and the class may be in purdah, while the Inspector sits outside behind a screen, with the guidance of a senior lady teacher inside who affords assistance by remarking, "Now the teacher is writing on the black-board," "Now the class is doing an exercise." The unfortunate man on his part has been known to complain of being stifled, as the windows on his side are firmly closed, so that no chink of light may assist him to glimpse behind the curtains.

A sweeping change through legislation would finally be a simpler matter than cautious attempts at compromise. Turkey has completely abolished purdah by such legislation.

A very slow and laborious method has often been suggested and occasionally followed of attacking this institution by education, by a method of house-to-house visiting in order to teach Moslem girls, and by holding classes under



secluded conditions and at times when it is possible for these girls to leave their domestic work. But the method is slow, laborious and very costly in proportion to the results attained. These attempts, though praiseworthy, are an ineffective means of dealing with the strongly conservative influence of the older women of the house. And this influence is often a very strong factor in the Moslem purdah household. Such women have no outside interests, and have often a dominating personality. With adult natures and no general interests or education, this personality is a considerable reactionary force in all domestic affairs, against which the invasion of the house-to-house visitor is ineffectual. If schools are provided, it is practically impossible to enforce regular attendance. In fact it has been stated ironically by an educational authority that, "It would be as easy and far more profitable for a provincial Government to legislate against child-marriage as to enforce the regular school attendance of girls and prolongation of such attendance after puberty." This applies to purdah as to child marriage. Under such conditions, the adoption of compulsory primary education for Moslem girls becomes almost impossible.\*

Surely the work lies in the hands of the younger women who have energy and enthusiasm to work decisively for the immediate abolition of this deplorable custom, which by causing unhealthy conditions for mothers drains the national vigour, and which degrades India in the eyes of the world.

\* A beginning in compulsory education for Muslim girls has however just been made in some Municipal Schools in Bombay City.—  
*Editor.*





## POSSIBILITIES OF SOCIAL WORK IN INDIA

"The Sky remains infinitely vacant for earth to build there its heaven with dreams," says the poet and it is certainly true of this book in so far as it relates some distinctive work done by Indian women in the past and only briefly indicate the possibilities in the near future in the various spheres of education, art, medicine and social uplift.

It is about the possible scope of social work for women that I propose to speak in this article.

Generally speaking the women of India have, until a quarter of a century ago, remained entirely within their kingdom, the home. Here they have lived and played the 'rôle' of a daughter, wife and mother worthily, showing to the world uncommon heights of selfless devotion, unquestioning loyalty of heart, high idealism, together with sweet simplicity of life and the charm of their gentle and serene spirits. Sometimes they have stepped into the garden and gladdened the hearts of the passers-by with the bounty of their homely riches. But with time they have gone forward on the open road and seen life outside their limited world. They have witnessed the changes that have taken place in the life of society during their life-time. Also they have not been left untouched by the influences of modern education and the impact of civilizations other than their own. With these has come a new awakening—a realization of their latent powers as individuals as well as members of society.

Along with the right sense of power comes a sense



of responsibility. The various papers in this book describing the different aspects of women's work in India are a testimony to the fact of women's ability to assume responsibility. The idea of service is not foreign to the Indian mind. On the contrary it has always had its place in the life of society, though in the past it has largely found its expression in the home or in the communal group.

Ever since people began to think in national terms, the idea of service has become a bigger thing and Indian women's activities are a concrete illustration of this. It has reached a higher level in so far as it is not considered simply a way of acquiring merit or self-realization for the door of good deeds but a national expression of a person's love for his fellowmen.

This has been beautifully expressed by Tagore:—

“Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where  
live the poorest and lowliest and lost.

When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot  
reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among  
the poorest, the lowliest, and lost.

My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest  
company with the companionless, among the poorest,  
the lowliest and lost.”

and again

“He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard  
ground and where the path maker is breaking stones.  
He is with them in sun and in shower and his  
garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy  
mantle and even like him come down on the  
dusty soil.”

Each generation has its problems and here we find



ourselves in the twentieth century faced with problems of our own, problems which are peculiarly women's but which are inextricably intermixed with the general problems of social and economic life in the country. With the dawn of industrialism in India, certain conditions have been created in cities which are centres of industry, such as Bombay, Ahmadabad, Sholapur and Nagpur with their cotton mills and Calcutta and Jamshedpur with their jute and steel manufacturies. Besides these industries a certain proportion of women are employed in the coal mines and on tea-plantations. There are over 30,000 women employed in the cotton mills of Bombay City alone. The employment of women in industry means a good many things. It means a complete disorganisation of home life. When the woman in the house has to be out for eleven hours per day, she has no time to devote to the hundred and one duties of the household, much less to give individual care to the members of the family particularly to the children of tender age, who need it most. She has to be up in the early hours of the morning, to do the cooking and household work before she goes to the mill or factory at 7 a. m. She can take her food with her and have it either in the work-room amidst the machinery or under the shade of a tree in the mill compound. But very often she has to hurry home and probably feed the hungry ones at home in the hours of rest from industrial work. About six in the evening she goes home again, already worn out by the monotonous work in the mill, thinking of the evening meal she has yet to prepare before she can rest at night. So she goes on, day after day, always longing for the day when she will return to her village. She is practically always on the point of complete exhaustion. She is a



prey to every disease. The disastrous consequences do not stop there but affect the next generation that comes into the world with a legacy of poor health. The conditions of women's work and living are partly responsible for the very high rate of infant mortality. The working class women in cities certainly work at least sixteen hours a day if not more. Ten hours per day, except one day in the week, are spent in the noisy and close atmosphere of the crowded work-room and the rest in an equally unhealthy room of a chawl. In a city like Bombay where overcrowding has reached its maximum limit, the houses in which the average working-class person lives are in ninety cases out of a hundred single rooms 10 by 15 feet at the most. Generally speaking 5 to 6 persons live in one such room; but in a great many cases, more than one family may be found sharing this room. Most families accommodate as many lodgers as they can with the hope of supplementing the family income. In these overcrowded houses, there is none of the privacy necessary for the decency of home life. For the men there are enough places of attraction, such as the liquor or toddy shop, the cheap picture-house or the den of vice where they can spend the late hours of the evening; but in each case the greater sufferers are the womenfolk who pay the cost for this indulgence. The housing conditions are aggravated by insanitary ways of living due to ignorance of the elementary laws of personal cleanliness and social sanitation. Thus the overcrowded slums of any big industrial city are a problem by itself very difficult of solution. This is the story of the big centres of industry.

In these days great tides of national feeling are sweeping over the country and filling the minds of old and young, men and women alike, with a consciousness of their rights and



duties and a vision of their country's great future. The task is tremendous and demands honest hard labour, and selfless service of every one of the sons and daughters of the motherland. In the past women have led the way, but what is the answer of "Young India" to this call? The paper on Social Work in the previous section will show that Indian women have in the past 25 years, done considerable Social Service work outside the home. But now a new problem has arisen, that of the needs of the industrial women workers who did not exist in such large numbers before the present-day increase in industrial development. The problem has existed for long and has been tackled in the industrial areas of Great Britain. Let us see what we of this age and in India can do towards the solving of these problems.

The possibilities of welfare work are great in cities where there is a big industrial population. There is just as much inside the work-room as outside of it that needs doing to improve the conditions of women's work in the mills. We have already seen that a woman working in a mill averages a 16 hours' work-day. A reduction in the hours of work is highly necessary. Similarly action must be taken with regard to the employment of women under ground, and payment of maternity benefits. All these are measures to be effected by legislation. Previous to legislation comes the difficult task of creating and educating public opinion with regard to certain facts connected with women's work. Women who understand these needs, can put forward the case most effectively.

The minimum provision in the way of protection and care that the management of any mill or factory is legally expected to make for the worker is very little. It does not



amount to more than certain safeguards against conditions which may prove injurious to the health of the worker and medical help in cases of accident. The provision of welfare activities such as a dispensary or co-operative credit society or stores is absolutely voluntary. Splendid work has been started by certain mills like the Tatas, Currimbhoy Ibrahim, N. Morarji in Sholapur and others in Ahmadabad and Nagpur. Though this touches only a very small proportion of the workers, it is a worthy example to be followed by others. Moreover, do the people take advantage of the facilities that are provided for them? Why is it that a crèche, run for a group of mills, often attracts as few as 25 to 30 children? It is worth while going into the reasons. (1) A general reluctance to try anything new, (2) failure to see the use of it, (3) ignorance of the existing facilities. More than half the work is done if these are overcome. But at the same time one other thing ought to be mentioned. There are certain special reasons why women do not take advantage of the welfare activities carried on for them. (1) They have not the comparative leisure that the men have. (2) Unless the welfare centre of the mill is very near, they cannot go out of their houses after a certain hour in the evening on account of the social restrictions put on them. Taking all these things into consideration, we can say that whatever help is given to the women, it must be taken right to their door at least in the initial stages. A worker will be needed to do all such work of creating interest in the people by personal methods and friendship. Such is the part played by the welfare worker in the factory in England and the West generally. The worker is a necessary part of the management of every



good industrial concern. Though a start has been made already in India, much remains to be achieved and this cannot be done unless educated women will come forward and take up this work which will demand a great deal of initiative, intelligence and courage. Besides this type of work, there will be an increasing demand for women workers who can be inspectresses as well as doctors to work for women and children in the mills.

This description of the possibilities of social work in industrial areas would be very incomplete without the mention of "Settlement Work." A Settlement is a centre of friendliness where people of all classes and positions in life can meet as friends and share the good things of life out of mutual love. Usually one finds a "Settlement" situated in a very crowded and poor part of a city, such as the East End of London, because it is here that the needy live. Those who want to help them cannot do so unless they get to know them and their needs. So it was first that a group of University men went and settled in the East End of London, with a real desire to share what they had with their less fortunate brethren and out of this arose one of the best English 'Settlements'—a centre from which radiated life, light and good cheer to many a soul.

Such centres which radiate light, love and beauty are greatly needed to bring new life into the existence of hundreds who live in the darkness of city slums. One need not define the activities which are carried on by a Settlement for those living in the district, as they are bound to vary according to the needs of the people living there. In some cases it may be classes for women, a play centre and clubs for the children, girls and boys, of the neighbourhood.



A Settlement always works in co-operation with existing institutions and with the municipality, supplementing their work by providing the personal element which makes such work effective. One cannot help thinking of the tremendous possibilities of an institution like a Settlement in the work of educating and uplifting the masses of India, in adjusting the relationships of different groups of people and welding them into one harmonious whole—a common city problem.

If a Settlement is such an institute, it is the thing that will help to solve a good many problems of our city life.

From the city let us turn to the village and see what are the possibilities of social work there. The problems here, though different in a way, are just as great. The apathy of the agricultural labourer towards questions of education and hygiene is appalling. Here extreme poverty and ignorance stare the worker in the face. The woman worker must be willing to go and live among the people and find out their needs and there will be plenty for her to do. Women can play a great part in what is known as "Rural reconstruction" work, because they can get at the womenfolk and, through the mothers, reach the children in their homes and in schools, and so build up the life and character of future India. The possibilities of a Settlement in rural districts are just as great as in the crowded districts of a city. In connection with villages the work that a district nurse or health visitor does in western countries needs special mention. She has been found most useful in raising the level of health of the people in England. In an Indian village where medical help is very inadequate, she would be a real blessing to many. The great thing about her is that she not only brings relief to those who are



suffering physically, but a knowledge of certain facts and laws of health to the people generally.

There are two types of workers who are found in all progressive countries and whom we greatly need in India at this stage:

The first we will call, the 'prophetic' worker, one who has a vision of things to come, and also an insight into the needs of the present. After seeing a need, efforts have to be made to meet it either by using social agencies that are already in existence or creating new machinery to deal with new problems. In short these workers have to be philosophers, friends and guides to the people amongst whom they live and work; such were, Josephine Butler and Octavia Hill among many other women in the West. In India there were Pandita Ramabai, Ramabai Ranade and Anandibai Joshi of Maharashtra. These bright beacon lights are few and illumine the untrodden new path to knowledge and service. They come with a special message to do a special work leaving it for others to carry it on. But the more humble worker, with her quiet steady labour of love, is just as much indispensable. It is she who keeps the light radiating in the most obscure corner of the world.

The Seva-Sadan is a splendid example of this. To begin with it was the creation of one personality in co-operation with a few other minds. Since then it has grown and is still spreading itself to various parts of India. It demands for its continuation the dedication of a life of service from scores of women.

Very recently organised work for children and young delinquents has been started in the Chief Presidency towns



of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. The Children's Home in Bombay was opened only two years ago. The Bombay Children's Act passed in the year 1924, was not put into operation until May 1927. For the working of this Act certain institutions such as a Remand Home and the Children's Court had to come into being. The Act makes provision for the custody and protection of children and young persons up to the age of sixteen and for the trial and punishment of youthful delinquents. The secretary remarked in the first annual report of the Children's Aid Society, "The subsequent and longer period covering the operation of the Children's Act and the running of the new Remand Home bear active witness to the volume of the work touched within a comparatively short space of time. Bold facts and figures point to the reality of the need for the operation of the Act, for the continued existence of the Children's Aid Society and for the wide expansion of its activities in order that its objective may be attained. Consideration must first be given to the following direct statements of facts:—428 children have already been admitted to the Remand Home within a period of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  months work; 139 children have been forcibly removed from brothels and the Umarkhadi Home, originally equipped on the understanding that the maximum number of children to be accommodated at any given time would not exceed 25, had during the past month a daily average number of 14 cases under orders of remand. Indirect effects of the working of the Act must also be noted. Some reduction in the number of child-beggars on the streets is manifest while the voluntary removal of many children from the brothels has occurred."



This then is the temporary home for those who are brought here and it gives them all possible care during their stay. The shifting character of the population of a Remand Home always makes it difficult to give the children satisfactory education. In spite of this serious drawback, every effort<sup>s</sup> is made to keep the children occupied with work that will be useful to them even after leaving the place. Some voluntary men and women workers help with games and recreation for the inmates who thoroughly enjoy themselves.

Side by side with the Remand Home, the Children's Court has been functioning. Something like 800 cases have been dealt with during the period of a year and half. As work increased, it became necessary to have two half-day sittings of the court, at each of which presides the Stipendiary Magistrate with whom is associated an Honorary Lady Magistrate. There are 16 honorary Lady magistrates in Bombay now and they are rendering very useful service in carrying on this work.

The court sits in a nice homely room; the only people in the room are the two magistrates, the secretary of the Children's Aid Society, the out-door worker and sometimes one or two voluntary workers who are doing the supervision work. A certain number of cases of children, restored to their parents or guardians after taking security, are put under the supervision of men and women who are expected to visit them in their homes regularly and help them in every possible way. Excellent results are achieved in Western countries by this kind of supervision or Probation work and there is no reason why similar results may not be obtained in India. The great difficulty at



this stage is the very limited number of voluntary workers who are doing the work. In its initial stage this work has to be chiefly voluntary and here is a chance for those who want to do their bit in keeping up this splendid work. The work of the Lady Hon. Magistrates is also very interesting and presents itself for special study at this stage. The Secretary of the Children's Aid Society remarks in her statement, "The work entailed in dealing with children of this type is far from easy. The right type of trained and educated worker is required. If the Children's Act be extended throughout the Presidency there will be a demand for similar workers elsewhere than in Bombay. A new field of social service is opening up, but the needs of India's destitute and delinquent children will remain unsatisfied until educated Indian men and women respond whole-heartedly to the appeal for efficient workers".

This leads us to speak about the new type of worker that is needed in these new fields of organised work among children and among industrial women workers. We will call this person simply a 'social worker'—a title perhaps indefinite, but all inclusive. She is not just a health visitor or a nurse or teacher or organiser but something of each and thus combines in her person manifold duties. We have today an increasing number of educated women who are ably carrying on the work of doctors, teachers, nurses etc. Theirs is a specialised work. The doctor gives medical help relieving pain and suffering, the teacher helps the child and the young towards self development and self expression when these are sought or provided by the state or associations. But what is to happen to those masses of India's women and children who are left without these reasonable human rights? What



is to be done about those who do not take advantage of the facilities which are already provided only because they are either ignorant or afraid of trying something new? Moreover the hands of women doctors and teachers are already full. They have not the time to go and see whether the prescribed treatment was taken and the lessons in cleanliness of body and mind taught in the school room were given a chance in the homes of the children.—Such is not their work. We need some one to do this 'following up' work and that is the *Trained* social worker. But it is not only the supplementing of a doctor's treatment or nurses' work that this person has to do. On her own initiative she has to do much in the way of organisation, such as running an infant welfare centre or a nursery school, a play centre or club for children. She has to get the average person to realize the value of certain things and to act up to a certain level in life. In order to do this effectively she has to know psychology and many other things. It is a kind of work that is too big to be defined but nothing in it is too small when it comes to the actual doing of it. So it demands all the love, intelligence and faith of any one who wants to do it. But, because it is a labour of love, it is invaluable.

So we want women who have had the privilege of a good education to come forward and venture into these new avenues of work.

Let us keep in mind the message of our poet:—

"Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense. What harm is there if thy clothes get tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow."

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