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HINDU WOMAN AND HER FUTURE

By

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With a Foreword by

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Government of India.**

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Dedicated to
ANANDRAO

FOREWORD

Women's problems are not different from the problems of the whole country except in certain spheres. In those spheres the problems undoubtedly require careful handling. I am glad that Dr. Mrs. Hate has done remarkable service to Indian women by writing this book. An analysis of the elements that constitute the various problems which have been facing Indian womanhood and a thorough inquiry in certain difficult cases are the remarkable features of this book. It is evident that the amelioration of the lot of the Indian women is bound to be rapid when India has become free. Equality of status is now to be guaranteed by the Constitution and no office or position in public life will be denied to women only on the ground of sex. In fact whatever is possible to be achieved by legislation and constitution is bound to be done but all that will be enduring only if the social conscience implements it in day-to-day life. To enable that, I think nothing is better than education of the public and I think this book will go a long way in doing this. I congratulate Dr. Mrs. Chandrakala Hate.

*New Delhi,
20th July 1948.*

N. V. Gadgil

PREFACE

The original aim of the present thesis was to ascertain the social position of Hindu women through the medium of all available statistics. This incidentally led to the investigation of woman's problem in general for the enlightenment of interested readers. The details, therefore, of all the successfully collected information are given in the first two parts of this book, with a hope that my readers, by enduring a little patience and evincing some interest in my work, will not only gain an insight into the results of my investigations and suggestions offered, but may go a long way in serving some useful purpose, especially in this present transitional period, when India is seriously occupied in re-shaping her constitutional structure and endeavouring to enhance the political, economic and social status of her people and particularly that of the Indian woman.

In completing this book which I feel will be valuable at this time when India has gloriously triumphed over the shackles of foreign domination- I am greatly indebted to Prof. G. S. Ghurye, Head of the Department of Sociology, University of Bombay, for his parental guidance and encouragement, as well for his melifluous strictness and suave harshness, without which, I am afraid, I may not have been able to take upon myself the onus of successfully steering the ship of my voyage through storms and obstacles and to bring it safely to harbour.

My thanks are due to all those who helped me in various ways during the preparation and writing of this thesis. I am very grateful also to those of my sister

who rendered me their unstinted co-operation by answering my questionnaire and contributing their views on the many complex problems that confronted me, thus helping me immensely in beautifying and brightening the peculiar character of this treatise on Woman's problem based on personal investigation.

I am likewise grateful to the Hon'ble Mr. N. V. Gadgil, *Alias* Kakasaheb Gadgil, Minister for Works, Mines and Power, Government of India, who despite his attending to multifarious government duties, yet found time to write a Foreword.

The author acknowledges her indebtedness to the University of Bombay for the grant-in-aid received by her from the University towards the cost of publication of this work.

Last but not the least my thanks are due to the publishers of this book, Messers. New Book Co.. Ltd., who helped me greatly to present the book to its readers, and to Messers. Bombay Vaibhav Press for their promptness in rushing the book through the press.

(Mrs.) Chandrakala Anandrao Hate

Bombay

15th August 1948.

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Hindu Woman and Her Future

Part I

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"The time is come when women must do something more than the 'domestic hearth' which means nursing the infants, keeping a pretty house, having a good dinner and an entertaining a party."¹

Man and woman are biologically equally important factors in the evolution of the human race. In the early stages of this development both played an equal part in the struggle for existence. "To women belongs the credit of beginning the first civilization. They converted humanity from the wandering to the settled life."² As living became complex, division of labour became inevitable. In the natural work of perpetuating the race, more energy and time were demanded of the woman. Frequent pregnancies and the consequent post-natal care reduced her physical strength which was of immediate consequence in her share in the struggle for existence. This position was taken undue advantage of by man. He tried to confine her to the four walls of the house. In his enthusiasm to subjugate the woman he overlooked the fact that in addition to reproduction she still had the rest of her life and ambition, common with him. Frequently he rele-

1 Cause-Ray Strachey p. 415.

2 Women's Partnership in the New World—Maude Roydon p.79.

gated her to the level of a chattel, occasionally he extolled her as a deity. On the whole, her position has been far from enviable. This has been the case of all women, the Hindu woman being no exception.

Being a woman myself, I have also had experience of the troubles a woman has to undergo simply because of her sex. Only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches. I can therefore, realise vividly the sufferings my sisters are forced to undergo for no fault of theirs. Naturally the desire grew in me to get to the root of the problem and to discover ways and means of improving the position.

A generation ago, education—especially higher education—was looked upon as the panacea for all our woes. Boys and girls passed out of the Universities in increasing numbers. However the majority of them belonged to the rich and the middle class. To the latter education was merely a stepping stone to a better type of employment and an easy life. How far was this belief materialised especially where women were concerned? To find that out I took up investigations into the economic conditions of the educated women in Bombay City. This formed the theme of my thesis for M. A. degree. The conclusions then arrived at clearly indicated that the position of women had somewhat improved both socially and economically. Education undoubtedly widened their outlook and made them conscious of their rights and equality of status. But the number of educated women was and must necessarily remain a small one. The majority of women are still backward and suffer from the age-old handicaps. Their ignorance leads them into resignedly accepting their subordinate position.

Years of deliberations on our social and political conditions have convinced me that the problems affecting all classes, whether of men or of women, high or low, spring from the basic fact of our political subjection and economic exploitation. While engaged in social work amongst illiterate women I found confirmation of this view. The result was a book on "Starvation or Planning" written in 1937 in collaboration with my friend Miss K. Kolhatkar, lecturer in Women's College, Benares Hindu University.

Therein we treated social and economic planning with respect to the Indian population generally, incidentally touching on a few of women's problems as the context required. Since then I made a study of the social status of Hindu women particularly with the object of finding out the remedies wherever possible. The present work is the outcome of that effort,

In the last hundred years, much attention has been paid to the cause of women by our brothers. Agitations have been set afoot to impart education and promote laws to remove the legal disabilities and gross injustices imposed on women. Institutions have been opened to shelter women who were waylaid by man's lust and also to befriend the helpless. For this Indian woman will always remain grateful to these benefactors.

No move can be peacefully carried through without concerted action. Modern women have understood the importance of united endeavours. As a result of the general awakening of women and the efforts of the above reformers, many women's organisations have come into existence to further the interests of women in all spheres of activities. National Council of Women and All India

Women's Conference are examples of such organisations. It would be out of place to give their achievements here. The different resolutions passed by them and the Indian Social Reform Conference concerning women are given in appendices A. and B. Suffice it to say that their work is bearing ample fruit. The All India Women's Conference passed a resolution in 1945 to prepare a charter. The work of framing it was completed in 1946.

There is no wonder that the awakening of Indian women should come long after that of our Western sisters. It has been the deliberate policy of our foreign rulers to keep the masses ignorant and backward. That is why our country has been until lately lagging behind the world in progress. It was only after a hard and long fight, that even our Western sisters could succeed in securing their legitimate rights. Just before the first war and some time after it, women's equality and worth were generally accepted by men. But world economic depression and changes from democracy to dictatorship in some countries brought about a retardation in their progress. Once again they were asked to restrict themselves to home and the hearth. By this time the Second World War commenced. Women again got an opportunity to show their worth and utility by taking active part in waging the war for world freedom. Since the cessation of hostilities, however, there is a likelihood of history being repeated so far as woman is concerned. There is a section of people who accept her equality while not a few others question her sphere of work. In this tug of war what stand a woman should take?

The present thesis is my humble attempt to tackle this question. For that purpose an intensive study of

a woman's life and her various aspirations was necessary. Being impossible for a single individual to approach women drawn from all classes and communities, I restricted myself to the literate middle class Hindu society only, which in itself constitutes a separate cultural group.

To facilitate quick collection of information I prepared a detailed questionnaire, 5000 copies of which were printed in English, 1000 in Marathi and 200 in Gujarati. To begin with I tried to distribute my questionnaire amongst the Maharashtrian and Gujarati women of Bombay City and Suburbs. In the beginning I intended to approach my subjects through women's various organisations. With that idea I wrote to the Secretary and the President of the All India Women's Conference and to the office bearers of other institutions in Bombay, Thana, Poona, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Kolhapur and other cities. Most of the institutions were, however, unable to help me directly but asked me to approach the members individually. Accordingly, I approached many of the members separately and sometimes *en masse*. Likewise I visited schools to get information from teachers and met college students and women professors in various colleges. I also visited different offices, commercial and Government. Women following different professions such as doctors, nurses, advocates and others were also interviewed. In all I distributed 4,700 forms. I must note here with regret that in spite of all my earnest efforts the response I received fell considerably short of my expectations. I also wanted to get into contact with my sisters in Northern India and was seeking an opportunity to do it. While working as a Research Assistant in the Sociology Department of the School of Economics and Sociology of the University of Bombay I had to visit

some of the important cities of Upper India, I took that opportunity and distributed my questionnaire amongst women wherever I went. Unfortunately the response was not as much as I had anticipated. Side by side I visited Rescue Homes in those cities. The authorities most kindly allowed me to go through their records to collate information and also allowed me to have personal talks with the inmates. After my return, I visited two Rescue Homes in Bombay and one in Poona and collected the history of those women. I thought that the information I got from these Rescue Homes would form quite a distinct group in itself and hence I have separated it from the one which includes the history of women leading normal life. I have thus tried to gather data for my thesis from as many and varied types of women as possible.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The educational facilities made available to women and the general awakening which followed the 'Woman Movement' of Western Europe brought a wave of discontent amongst Indian women too. Howsoever submissive they might be to their male-lords, inwardly they became restive. Slowly they made their dissatisfaction felt in various ways, and through organisations. To find out the real position of Hindu women at present I drafted a questionnaire sufficiently exhaustive to elicit the necessary information for the purpose of my investigation.

The questionnaire consists of in all twenty-eight questions together with sub-questions. They are arranged in such a way that they come under different general heads. Questions from 1 to 5 are personal; those from 6 to 10 relate to the marital status; questions from 11 to 13 form a third group relating to woman and family. Questions 14 to 20 deal with the economic side of the problem. Some inquiries about their health are made in questions 21 and 22. Questions No. 23 to 26 are concerned with their daily routine and their view of life. Lastly I have attempted to elicit their opinion on changes in Hindu law.

The questionnaire starts with the birthdate. The exact date of birth of the person answering the questionnaire was expected. However, I was fully aware that a majority of women would not be in a position to give the date and month of their birth. In such cases, approximate present age was noted down. The questionnaire was confined to women above eighteen. Broadly person between eighteen to thirty may be supposed to consti-

tute the young generation in India where the average duration of life is 26 or 27. A woman above thirty may be supposed to belong to the older generation. It is necessary to make this distinction as social conditions change from generation to generation.

The question about caste and sub-caste has its own significance. In spite of the spread of education and the ever growing social intercourse among Hindus, the influence of caste system still greatly affects the people in Hindu society. Each caste and sub-caste has its own peculiarities of life which greatly differ from those of others. This caste-system has come down to us from ages past. The division into sub-castes has been going on increasingly, thus narrowing down the field of marriage to a very small circle. These divisions have limited the field of marriage especially because the general tendency is still to select a bridegroom from one's own sub-caste. In certain castes late marriages are still prevalent. Customs like dowry system differ in different castes. Many a time they affect adversely a woman's life. Thus the caste in which a woman takes her birth is to a large extent responsible in moulding her future life.

It is modern education which is responsible for loosening the shackles of caste to a certain extent. Woman's access to the Temple of Learning has enabled her to come out in the open and not be confined to home. Her contact with the outside world has revolutionised her ideas and mode of living in some respects. To fathom out how far education is responsible for the varied change in her life, the question about University education and passing of an examination is asked in No. 3 a. However, it was never meant to confine the

questionnaire to highly educated women. It is a well-known fact that percentage of literate women in India is very low (8%) and naturally the percentage of those who have taken University education is bound to be still lower. Hence being literate is the least educational qualification for answering the questionnaire.

When about seventy years ago men first advocated women's education, knowledge for the sake of knowledge was the primary motive in imparting education. Men who advocated women's education and women who were bold enough to take advantage of the same, had to bear the brunt of social criticism and sometime ostracism. Those days have happily passed and women's education is progressing though at a very slow rate. With the advance in education the utilitarian motive has come to prevail. In the case of boys, education is mostly imparted with the ulterior motive that they would be an economic asset to the family. To determine how far the same motive prevails in the case of women's education is the object of asking the question regarding the aim of education. How far they have been successful in attaining their aim in taking education is the next query.

As stated above questions from 6 to 9 relate to marital conditions of women. Howsoever much a woman's life may have changed under modern conditions marriage is still a great turning point in her career. In the case of Hindu women belonging to higher castes marriage is not only a life-long tie but on it also depends their social status, economic position and in fact the whole of their future. Hence I have framed a good number of questions to draw out the greatest possible information.

Question 6 refers only to unmarried girls. The answerer is asked whether she intends to enter into

matrimonial life or not. Certain unmarried women are for different reasons desirous of remaining spinsters. I have come across some who are after high ideals and for that purpose want to be free from the shackles of married life. While there are others who do not think married life to be an attractive one. There are however a number of women who are forced to remain unmarried because of circumstances. On some rests the responsibility of maintaining their aged elders. While not a few are deprived of the pleasures of married life for want of a suitor.

In case a girl is desirous of marriage the next question that follows is whether the choice of her mate is to be made by the parents or by herself. It is a matter of common knowledge that amongst the Hindus it is the parents or guardians who select boys for their girls. Usually the girl is simply a dummy in the show. However, as girls are getting more and more educated the tendency to choose their partner is distinctly noticeable. To know how far this tendency has gained ground I have put the question 6 a. I have also asked therein what basis would determine their choice. Sub-question b tries to find out whether there exist any institutions wherein they are likely to meet their future companions. Western ideas about love marriages coming through the English literature influence the educated girls of this country. In Indian literature too the novelists and dramatists are encouraging the ideas of love marriages. But so far as my knowledge goes, institutions like common clubs etc, wherein people of opposite sexes can freely meet each other have not yet developed. Even co-education has failed to bring about free mixing among boys and girls because of over-caution on the part of the authorities. Bearing these handicaps in mind, I have inquired how those

desirous of love marriages would make their choice in the absence of clubs or institutions facilitating social intercourse between young men and women.

Sub-question c is about the form of marriage. The Brahma marriage is no doubt generally prevalent amongst the Hindus. Latterly, however, marriage by registration is being advocated. Women who marry under the Special Marriage Act get better rights than those who prefer the orthodox form of marriage. Under the Special Marriage Act a husband cannot take up a second wife during the life-time of the first one unless he gets a divorce from her while under the orthodox form a husband is at liberty to have as many wives as he pleases. The alternative before the first wife is either to live in the same house along with other co-wives or stay away from the husband with whatever maintenance he may give, if at all he is pleased to give any. In the latter case she has in addition to bear the brunt of criticism of society. Again on the demise of the husband who was married under the Sp. M. Act, his widow succeeds to the one-third of his estate, while there was no such provision for a widow married under orthodox system till Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act was passed which conferred one-third estate of the deceased on the widow. With these obvious advantages under registration form of marriage, I wanted to know whether the Hindu unmarried girls preferred this form of marriage to the orthodox one. In case they adhered to the latter form, I desired to know their reasons.

Questions more or less of the same type were asked of married women. If the answerer's marriage is a love marriage, I have asked her how she met her mate and how long they were acquainted with each other before going

in for wedlock. Besides the exact bases on which the choice was made were also inquired of them. Further, if it was a marriage of arrangement, I wished to know whether any consideration other than the happiness of the parties concerned influenced the selection and the reasons for such consideration. It is but natural that the happiness of their daughter should be the foremost consideration of the parents. But when they are unable to pay a large dowry to secure a well-educated and wealthy son-in-law, they may be tempted to give her to anyone who comes within their easy reach and does not demand a large sum of money. The parents' selection in such a case may fall on a widower and a father of already grown up children. That is the reason why I have put this question over here. Where the girl happens to be an orphan at the time of her marriage her other guardians may not be as careful in making the selection as her parents.

Question 8-a inquires about the year of marriage. This gives me the average age of marriage of girls. Formerly when child marriages were prevalent, a girl was sent to her husband's house after she came of age. Latterly the middle-class people have largely given up child marriages. Hence a girl generally goes to live with her husband as soon as she is married. The question 8 b is inserted as it is necessary for the purpose of my investigation to know exactly when she commenced her marital life.

It is common knowledge that the dowry system has played considerable havoc amongst the Hindus. The number of victims of this nasty system is still very large. As education progressed, it was expected that the evil would be rooted out. But unfortunately experience has been quite the contrary. Instances are not lacking where

educated men have demanded large dowries on the ground that they have had to expend a lot on their education. Men from those castes in which dowry was not customary have now-a-days on the strength of their education started demanding it. Our literature, especially the present day one, sings high praises of love marriage. But in actual life we find even ordinary marriages, let alone love marriages, have been deferred to an unknown date because of the parents' inability to give dowry. This results in disappointment to the girls and untold sufferings to the parents. Similar to this dowry system prevailing in certain communities, we have the system of Palla in others. According to the Palla system the parents of the bridegroom have to give a certain sum to the bride's parents. Apparently this system appears to be better than the dowry system. However it has its own drawbacks. The girl in question at times becomes an object to be sold to the highest bidder irrespective of her future welfare.

Though knowing full well that a majority of women would be reluctant to answer question 9 and perhaps because of it many would be inclined to refuse to answer the whole questionnaire I have asked this question with some purpose. If every marriage had proved successful in the sense that husband and wife were living together amicably, the earth would become a veritable Eden! Estrangement due to differences between the couple is not a peculiarity of one society. It is the case everywhere and for all times. Hence I ventured to ask them directly whether satisfactory relations exist between the two or not. In the latter case I requested them to give the reasons leading to unfortunate circumstances.

So far the questions related to married women. Now follow questions regarding condition of widows. What

a life of martyrdom and hardship the widows, especially in olden days, had to lead is a well-known fact. From the ancient custom of Satee, to a certain extent still prevailing system of disfigurement of widows by tonsuring, there were and still are many customs which make the life of a widow one of torture and enslavement. So long as her husband is alive, a woman enjoys status and dignity in life. If by misfortune she loses him she is immediately deprived of all her emblems of married life and since then any kind of ornamentation is banned for her. She is required to pass her days in a secluded corner of the house. The underlying idea is to make her renounce all worldly pleasures. Moreover she is considered an unlucky person causing ill-omen to others by her presence. This miserable state of life has become the subject matter of the writings of many writers, poets and novelists. By their strenuous efforts reformers like late Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Agarkar and Dr. Karve tried to enlist the sympathy of people for widows. The Act prohibiting Satee and permitting Widow Remarriages and the latest Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act afford an evidence of the success our reformers have achieved in this direction. All these Acts have no doubt mitigated somewhat the sufferings of the widow, still her life is far from being happy. Bearing all this in mind I decided to gather information about widows' life by inserting question No. 10.

It is an undisputed fact that western mode of life is greatly influencing ours. It is customary amongst Westerners to leave the management of the household entirely in the hands of the wife. It is she who looks to the income and expenditure side of the family budget. In Hindu society joint family system was the

rule. Hence the management of family affairs was in the hands of the head of the family who was the patriarchal head. Though under modern conditions the joint family system is giving way to single families, the male head of the family is still having the final word in all family affairs, big or small. However, some may have adopted the western standard, treating the wife on equal footing with the husband so far as the family expenditure and management is concerned. To elicit information regarding the actual state of affairs is the object of question No. 11. The sub-question as to the amount expended will shed a sidelight on the economic standing of the family.

Having started to make a thorough enquiry of the conditions of women, it followed that I should ask questions regarding their status as mother. Question No. 12 relates to the number, age and sex of the children if any. In addition women are requested to state the year of death in the case of deceased children.

Next follow questions on joint family: whether the answerer is a member of the same, if so how many members are there and her relation to them. Lastly I desired to know if the woman preferred to stay in the joint family or not. The joint and undivided family is a distinctive feature of Hindu society, It has its advantages-spiritual as well as economic. Without them it could not have endured so long as it has done. But it also has its disadvantages particularly where the disharmony among the family becomes an irreconcilable fact. Besides woman's freedom is restricted and there are many handicaps in the development of her personality. Hence the importance of questions on joint family.

Having thus dealt with the social aspect of women's life, I proceeded to enquire about their economic conditions when the following points have to be borne in mind; whether the women are solely dependent on either their parents or their husbands if married; whether any of them have any property of their own to enable them to live independently if occasion arises and whether provision is made either by themselves or by their husbands in the form of insurance. Insurance is the safest investment a man can provide for his family. But the policy should be assigned to the wife and she must be able to understand her rights covered by the insurance. Otherwise it is a common place experience that any close designing relative takes the signature of the widow and appropriates the amount to himself with a never-to-be-kept promise to protect the widow.

As against this helpless condition of women, Hindu Law provides them with Stridhan. Whatever is given to the daughter from the father's side and from her husband's side at the time of marriage becomes her sole property and it is called "Stridhan". "The Law of Stridhan stands, therefore, in favourable contrast with the general spirit of the Hindu Law, which in other respects is not very equitable towards women".* In addition to what is given in marriage Stridhan also includes what the daughter inherits from her mother. Over this property she gets absolute ownership. This is how the woman stands in the eyes of Law; but sometimes the facts are quite different. Be it noted that women of the upper classes rarely exercise their legal rights by going to courts of law. If the Stridhan is given in the form of ornaments, as it is

usually done, it is very often appropriated by the husband for his personal use if necessity arises. The Hindu wife, being a meek and submissive creature does not, through fear, raise a word of protest against this kind of usurpation. A majority of women have, moreover, no idea that they are given any such absolute legal right over their ornaments. Hence the abuse of the institution to the prejudice and detriment of Hindu women.

Question No. 15 with its sub-questions deals with gainful employment of women. In by-gone days people considered it quite unnatural for women, at least of the upper and middle classes, to do any remunerative work outside their home. In self-sufficient and prosperous villages women of all classes except the few very rich were always accustomed to do some productive work within the shelter of the home. Besides helping men in their respective occupations women had to do all the immediate domestic work of washing, cleaning and cooking. All this work in addition to bearing and rearing up of children occupied their whole life. They are even now doing such work in the villages of India. But even there modern conditions have made some changes. The artisans and their wives have lost much of their productive employment. In contrast to the life led by women in the villages, the women in the cities are beginning to be relieved of their hard labour because of labour-saving appliances. Water-taps and mills for grinding corn have come into general use in cities. But the use of gas or electricity for cooking purposes has not yet become quite so general. Labour, and that of women particularly, seems so cheap and plentiful, that little or no attention is paid to labour-saving devices even in household work.

In an American home, domestic work is much simplified by such appliances and that saves a lot of woman's time while woman in India has still to devote much time to domestic drudgery even when she is educated enough to employ it otherwise and more profitably. On the other hand, the struggle for existence has been very keen in cities like Bombay because of the high cost of living and general poverty of the people. Women are forced to come out and seek remunerative work away from their home and traditional occupation to eke out the domestic budget or to provide for new needs. They are now accordingly found working as teachers, clerks in business offices, and doctors and nurses in hospitals. These questions, therefore, are asked so as to know why they had taken up occupations or undertaken professional work; salary given to them; whether they have had to suffer any disadvantages peculiar to their sex and whether cordial relations existed between the employee and the employer.

Besides the group of women engaged in gainful occupations, there is a good number of those who devote their leisure time to social service. This tendency to utilise one's energy in bettering the lot of other women or society in general, marks a great awakening amongst the women of our age. It is highly creditable to these women to spend their leisure time in this manner instead of wasting it in idle gossips. Question No. 16 has been put to find out how many women are doing work of this kind and how much time they spend after it.

Except the very few rich who can conveniently leave their household work to their servants, the majority of women have to look to it themselves even though they may be working outside. And in the absence of labour-

saving appliances, as stated above it must be a great problem for them to manage two things at a time. If they attempt to do both the things in addition to the rearing of children, it must prove a great strain on them in the long run. How they manage to solve this problem is the object of question No. 17.

Questions 18 and 19 relate to those who are self-earning. Out of the hard-earned money are they able to save anything every month or are they obliged to spend the whole amount? Perhaps some of these earning women may have to support dependants. Under modern influences, women feel that they should not only better their lot but also the lot of the people surrounding them by doing some paying work. Widows feel that they should work for their children. Similarly the daughters feel, that, like grown-up sons, they should provide for their aged parents. To find out the extent of this feeling and how far this sort of necessity has driven women to seek employment, these questions were asked.

Perhaps there may be some women who may have given up their employment for some reason or other. I wanted to know the number of such women and particularly if they felt any hardship because they were not employed in any gainful occupation.

To enjoy perfect health is one of the blessings of life. Unfortunately it is the lot of a few women in this country. The average duration of life of an Indian is remarkably short, death-rate being one of the highest in the world. Besides the rate of mortality is higher amongst women than amongst men. Under these circumstances it is no wonder if I made particular enquiries about their weight, height, diet and exercise. Further I

wanted to know if they took part in games or any other kind of recreation. Question 23 inquired about their daily routine and if at all they got any leisure how they utilised it.

Along with other changes due to modern influences, there has taken place a new social awakening amongst women. They are having their own clubs and associations where many useful activities are being conducted. To gauge the extent of such activities is the object in asking Question No. 24.

Then follow two questions which though a bit personal, are general in their nature. The first one is intended to find out whether the person answering it is satisfied with her circumstances. If not, what is the cause of the trouble and what changes she would desire. Next question is about the aim or purpose in her life. Woman's stereotyped mode of living for ages past left no choice for her. When she attains marriageable age, which differed from time to time, she must leave her parents' protection and start a new life in an alien atmosphere. And there she is to end her life whether fortune or misfortune favoured her. This was the general rule for all Hindu women. It is only in this century that she is given some opportunity to have her own choice. Those fortunate ones who get such an opportunity and who have sufficient education to decide upon a certain career can keep a definite aim or ideal in life. This question was addressed to such women.

As remarked above, our women are not only thinking of improving their personal lot but at the same time, are trying hard to improve the lot of their sisters. I requested

such workers to make any concrete suggestion to improve the conditions of Hindu women in general.

Question 28 seeks the opinion of women in regard to the changes desired in Hindu Law. It is a notorious fact that Hindu Law does not prohibit polygamy. Polyandry is also prevalent in certain sections of Hindu society, but it is an exception rather than a rule. Even highly educated men are not wanting who take another wife within the lifetime of the first one. In majority of cases the latter is hardly to be held responsible for this. Hindu women in general are very submissive and would do anything that lies in their power, to please their husbands. In spite of this if the husbands forsake them in the middle of their life, their grief knows no bounds. On the one hand they are looked down upon by society and on the other they are rendered quite helpless as they are never taught to support themselves. The plight of these women has led to the demand from the women that Hindu Law should be so changed as to make monogamous marriage the normal rule. I am glad to state that this principle has been accepted by the Rao Committee in their recommendations. It is to our M. L. A.s that we look for necessary support to the bill.

Law of Monogamy would only be a half-measure of reform without some provision for the dissolution of marriage in the form of either judicial separation or divorce. Divorce is unknown only to the upper-caste Hindus. While all other communities provide for it. The Shudras amongst the Hindus also have customary divorce. Why the rest of the Hindus should have no recourse to it under grave circumstances is a moot point. It is not an unmixed blessing, it goes without saying.

Whether the Hindu Law should provide for the same or not will be discussed in later chapters. Suffice it to say that I have tried to elicit opinion on that point in the questionnaire.

Again whether the daughter should inherit property along with the sons is a question on which opinions greatly differ. I may state here that following the demand for the said reform from women's organisations the Rao Committee has recommended one half of the son's share to be given to the daughter from father's property. I have also tried to elicit the views of women on the same point.

Lastly I left some space in the questionnaire for the women to make remarks if it pleased them to do so. In it among other sundry suggestions I expected them to give vent to any special grievances they themselves or their sisters around them, may be experiencing simply because of their sex,

CHAPTER III

SUBJECTS OF THE INQUIRY-PERSONAL.

In the last Chapter I have given the analysis of the questionnaire and the purpose of asking the various questions. Now in this Chapter and the next three, I shall deal with the subjects of my inquiry in their different aspects, personal, educational, social, economic etc, to enable the readers to value properly their opinions on various questions. As already stated in the introduction, I approached a large number of individuals and visited as many institutions as possible in different places. However, the response I got was unfortunately not commensurate with my efforts. I had distributed not less than 4,700 forms to individuals either personally or through various institutions but received only 805 replies *i. e.* barely 17% cared to send in their replies. Nevertheless the material gathered is varied and interesting and I believe, sufficient to throw much light on the subject of my investigation. At least it will suffice to indicate in which direction the wind blows.

While inquiring into the personal aspect of the individual the first question that arises is about her age. The capacity to answer thoroughly my questionnaire and the value to be attached to the replies depend much on the stage in life of the answerer. I have in the following table divided the individuals into seven age groups.

| | | |
|---------------|-----|-----|
| A 18-25 | 344 | 43% |
| B 26-30 | 174 | 22% |
| C 31-35 | 105 | 13% |
| D 36-40 | 84 | 10% |
| E 41-45 | 53 | 7% |
| F 46-50 | 25 | 3% |
| G 51 and over | 19 | 2% |

The first group A is of 18 to 25, a period when a person is in the formative stage. By this time a person is fixing his ideas about what he would like his life to be. Out of 805, 344 or 43% fall in this group. Next comes group B of women between 26-30. It consists of 174 or 22%. By the time they attain this age, women are mostly settled in life and their life is supposed to have taken a definite turn. The third or C group relates to persons where age varies from 31 to 35. In this group there are 105 or 13% of the women inquired. In Western countries women of this age are supposed to be young and enjoying good health. In India where unfortunately the average duration of life is below 30, this period is supposed to be the advanced period in women's life. By this time their life having already been settled, their opinions will carry the weight of experience. D group of 36-40 consists of 84 or 10%. In the next group of 41-45 there are 53 or 7%. In F group of 46 to 50 there are 26 or 3% and in the last group of 51 and over there are 19 or 2%. The highest age noted is 70. Broadly speaking, women under 30 may be termed as belonging to the younger generation as against those above 30, who may represent the older generation with mature ideas. Accordingly 65% fall in the first category while 35% in the second.

Statement showing caste :

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Advanced | 690 |
| Intermediate | 74 |
| Backward | 5 |
| Depressed | 1 |
| Brahmo | 3 |
| No caste given. | 32 |
| | <hr/> 805 |

It is a matter of common knowledge that Hindu society is divided into numerous castes and sub-castes. Even in such a small inquiry as mine, I have come across not less than 38 sub-castes. Generally a Hindu woman likes to stick to her caste and sub-caste and her life is greatly influenced by the particular customs peculiar to her caste. The very fact that out of 542 married women only 4 or 1 % have married outside their caste, shows that the tendency of Hindu women is to confine themselves even to the sub-caste in which they are born. I have, however, come across 32 or 4% of the women who have kept silent over this question about caste. I know from personal information that these women have shown broad outlook and would not like to narrow down their vision. Again 10% of the women have purposely avoided giving their sub-caste, and they perhaps may have been influenced by the reformed ideas of unifying different sub-castes into one major caste at least. In the personal talk which I had with many of these women, I find that there is a section which would gladly profess itself Hindu first rather than belonging to a particular division. Three women have given their caste as Brahmo, a reformative sect which does not acknowledge the cast-system. The above statement and table 1 in Appendix C give the various castes and sub-castes of the women inquired of.

A mere glance at the above statement indicates that majority of women belong to the so called advanced castes such as Brahmins, Kshatriyas etc. In view of the fact that I had restricted my inquiry to middle and higher class of women, this was but natural. There are 74 women belonging to the intermediate castes. Castes such as Vanjari, Koli, Agari, Patel have been classed as

backward castes. Though this is generally the case these particular women and their families belonging to these castes are advanced people. Their mode of life has changed and their conditions of life are similar to those of middle class standard. Hence I have not excluded them from the scope of my inquiry.

As classified in the list, I found 770 women belonging to 38 divisions or sub-castes. Grouping them into major castes we get 503 or 62% as Brahmins, 168 or 21% style themselves as Kshatriyas, 61 or 8% though not Brahmins, are allied higher castes such as Bania, 41 or 5% belong to the castes which are named after various occupations, 32 or 4% have not given any caste as stated above. Again if the whole number were classified according to the mother tongue we find that 8% of the total number are Gujarati-speaking women while the rest or 92% are Marathi-speaking. Caste system not only influences a woman's or a man's life in respect of marriage and all the customs relating to marriage but it also has an influence in everyday life. If we analyse the diet of a certain number of castes, we find not only a great variety in their preparations, but certain castes take certain kind of food while other castes greatly differ in the same. Besides certain sub-castes are totally vegetarian, while many others are non-vegetarian. These facts will be considered under health section.

Having considered the age and caste of the subjects of our inquiry, we shall now turn to their educational attainments. As already stated in Chapter II the least standard for answering the questionnaire is that the woman must be able to read and write in her mother-tongue. Out of 805 women, 206 or 26% satisfy this standard. One-

hundred and sixteen of these women are above 30 and that is but natural because the last generation was not so keen on higher education. The next group of educated women consists of those who have received English education and have studied either upto the Matric or below it. Some of these will be found to have stopped taking education and others still continuing. 358 i. e. 44% fall in this group. Out of these 98 or 11% are continuing their studies in Primary Teachers' Training Colleges. In the third group are included all those who have passed out their Matric and are either continuing or have completed their college studies. Of course here too we shall find some women who had to terminate their studies for one reason or other. To particularize I found 74 women to have passed their matric examination, 70 to be undergraduates and 97 graduates. The percentages of these different groups are 26 literate, 44 under-matric and 30 who have entered the University.

Out of 260 women who have stopped their educational career in the High Schools, 16 married and 23 unmarried have thought it useful to join some sewing or embroidery classes. This deviation from school education to practical art may have been brought about in some cases by the shorter time required for the latter course. In other cases women joined these classes in order to utilise their time in some useful way.

Out of 220 women who have gone beyond the matric examination, 40% have completed their University education and taken up their respective degrees. The following list gives the number of women who have taken the degrees mentioned against it.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|----|------------|----|
| Foreign | Medical M. D. | 1 | Arts M. A. | 6 |
| Medical F.R.C.S. | M.B.B.S. | 8 | B.A. | 45 |
| L.R.C.P. | Science M. Sc. | 1 | P.A. | 2 |
| M.R.C.S. | B. Sc. | 1 | G.A. | 14 |
| Teachers, | | | | |
| Educational. T.D. | M.Ed. | 1 | | |
| | B.T. | 10 | | |
| M.A. | Ph. D. | 2 | | |
| B.A. | | | | |
| | | 6 | 24 | 67 |

Again this inquiry shows that majority of women prefer Arts course to any other—mostly with an idea of making use of their education as teachers and at the same time be independent.

Out of 97 graduates, 6 have obtained foreign degrees in medical and educational lines.

While inquiring about the education of women, I questioned them if they had secured any distinction in their examinations and I found 16 out of the above 97 graduates to have secured different distinctions as mentioned below.

| | | |
|----|----------|--|
| 1 | Graduate | F.R.C.S. Medalist and University Scholar |
| 1 | „ | L.R.C.P; M.R.C.S., „ „ |
| 1 | „ | M. Sc. University Scholar. |
| 1 | „ | M.A., II class. |
| 1 | „ | M.B.B.S. University Scholar & Medalist |
| 1 | „ | B.A., „ prize winner. |
| 10 | „ | B.A., Honours. |

The above particulars about women graduates give a fair idea about their inclinations and their achievements in the field of education. At the same time it is also a matter of importance to find out the period of preparations they had to put in to achieve a certain educational qualification. The average age at which women are Matric is 18, the lowest age being 15 and the highest 29. It is rather late to get matriculated at 29. But these are exceptions and I found only two such cases, one of them being that of a married lady. These cases indicate a desire on the part of women to qualify themselves though late in life. Since the average for getting matriculated is found to be 18 the average age for passing out B. A. examination will consequently be 22. The lowest age at which women have graduated is 19 while the highest is 34. After graduating some of them undertake training for qualifying themselves as teachers. The B.T. course covers a period of two years. However, my inquiry reveals average age of B. T.s to be 27. Thus trained ladies have taken 3 years more than normal period necessary for this training. The possible explanation of this delay may perhaps be found in the difficulty in getting admission to Secondary Teachers' Training College, though I am not sure about it. Economic conditions in a few cases may have forced one to take up service as soon as one has graduated. This may also be another reason, while in the case of others indecision may be the cause.

Medical course requires more years for training than the Arts. Hence it follows that the average age of a medical graduate is more than that of an Arts graduate. The average age for M. B. B. S. is 25, the lowest being 22 and the highest 27.

Besides the replies from Bombay University degree holders, I have also received some from graduates of the Indian Women's University. The degrees akin to B. A. and M. A. are G. A. and P. A. respectively. This University gives its students the facility of appearing for examinations even by studying at home, without keeping terms in the college. This concession helps women to take degrees at their convenience even after some break due to women's natural course of life. Some women have availed themselves of this opportunity. It shows the desire of women to take higher qualification even at late stage of life if it can be conveniently done.

The increasing number of students, boys as well as girls, appearing for the various examinations of the Universities, is a clear indication of the later generation going in for higher education. This fact will be clear from the following statement which works out the figures at different stages according to the age of women inquired about. It also gives the relation between age and education. Moreover it reveals that the number of educated women is on the increase in younger generation. The number of literates between 18 and 25 is 43 out of 344 women of that age as against 9 out of 9, only literate between 55 and 70.

Statement showing educational qualifications :—

| | A. | B. | C. | D. | E. | F. | G. | H. | Total. |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|--------|
| Lit. | 43 | 47 | 33 | 33 | 25 | 12 | 4 | 9 | 206 |
| Under Matric. | 182 | 72 | 44 | 32 | 18 | 6 | 4 | — | 358 |
| Matric and above | 119 | 55 | 28 | 19 | 10 | 8 | 2 | — | 241 |
| | 344 | 174 | 105 | 84 | 53 | 26 | 10 | 9 | 805 |

The above facts will be more clarified by the following figures.

| | Below 30 | Above 30 | Percentage. | |
|---------------|----------|----------|-------------|------|
| Literate. | 90 | 116 | 43 | : 57 |
| Under Matric. | 254 | 104 | 70 | : 30 |
| Above Matric. | 174 | 67 | 72 | : 28 |

No doubt the fact that more and more women pursue higher education is a matter of great satisfaction. But it is necessary at the same time to find out the aim which inspires them. For this purpose I have questioned subjects of my inquiry their aims and objects in taking education and how far they achieved them. Answers reveal many things and shed some light on the economic conditions of middle class people.

It is common knowledge that the struggle for existence has become stiffer than what it was two generations back. That may explain why economic independence has been shown as the aim of education in the case of 217 women, that is 37% out of those who have taken high school or university education. 111 or 19% have mentioned cultural attainment as their object. 63 women have stated that they had no particular end in view in taking education, 35 women have gone in for education simply out of liking for knowledge, as they have called it. 35 or 6% have educated themselves to qualify for social service and be of use to their needy brothers and sisters. It is interesting to note that 15 women have been taking education only to utilise their time in the best way possible. In other words they may be pursuing education with a cultural end. These women with the 63 mentioned above, who come in the same category throw light on the training of our girls.

Usually parents, especially mothers, impress on their daughters that marriage and marriage alone is the goal of woman's life.

Education is only a secondary object which may help either to qualify themselves for easily securing highly educated and rich husbands or to keep themselves engaged in some pursuit rather than sit idly at home. Perhaps the parents may be entertaining the idea that thereby they would be saving the troubles of searching a suitable partner for their daughters without having much to pay by way of dowry. Desire to help their family by being able to earn has been the laudable aim of 12 women in educating themselves. It shows the urgent necessity of they being equally helping hands like their brothers to maintain their family. There are 3 women who have stated that their aim in taking education is to serve literature, while 2 others desire to compose poems. Again 2 women want to educate their children by first educating themselves. Two women have expressed their own desire apart from their parents to secure educated husbands by being themselves educated.

One should certainly have high aims and ideals in life irrespective of failures. 'Not failure, but low aim is crime' as the saying goes. However in practical life it is the result which counts. Having ascertained various aims in taking education, it behoves us to see whether all of them have been achieved. Perhaps unfortunately some may have been compelled by circumstances to give up their ideals or others may not have sufficient inward strength to pursue the same. Out of 217 women who have given economic independence as their aim 66 or 30% have been so far successful in attaining it while 65 or equally the same number are not equally successful.

The next 86 are in a preparatory stage in as much as they are still prosecuting their studies. There is another side to this picture. Not less than 81 women, who in the beginning had no idea of economic independence or of using their education as a means to earn money to help their families, are forced to seek remunerative work for some reason or other. This fact is a clear indication of the hard lot middle class people have to bear in India. Coming to the group of women, who had either "culture" or "liking for knowledge" as their aim, it is not easy to know at what stage a particular individual can be called fully cultured. Hence it is difficult to find out whether women having this object in their mind have succeeded or not. Even they themselves are not able to answer this question with precision. Out of 33 women who had social work as their aim, 20 have succeeded fully and 13 partially. Out of 12 women who wanted to help their family 6 have been successful. Let us not, however, conclude that except these 6, others are not helping their family. That we shall know when we shall examine the question about dependants.

All that has been said above may be tabulated for ready reference as in Table No. 2 app. C.

Let us now consider the various accomplishments as given in the replies.

A glance at Table No. 3 of app. C will show that some women have more than one accomplishment to their credit. Many educated women have left the question unanswered. Perhaps, it may be, under the impression that they have not had sufficient education in this direction to make mention of their particular accomplishment. To say that these women have not even work-

able knowledge of sewing and mending would be an insult to them. It may also be that much of their energy and attention is concentrated on higher studies leaving hardly any time to devote to special side-accomplishments. Those women who are not taking higher education have definitely stated either sewing or embroidery or both as their accomplishments.

CHAPTER IV

SUBJECTS OF THE INQUIRY-SOCIAL.

Having dealt in the previous chapter with the personal aspect of the women inquired, we now come to a more important and perhaps a more interesting part of their life and that is marriage and family. Social stability to a great extent depends on such fundamental institutions as these. However, even these institutes have undergone changes. But man has been more conservative while dealing with laws and customs relating to marriage and family than with many other social institutions. The twentieth century is witnessing a great upheaval of a social character motived by economic and political forces. Woman is revolting against her traditional condition and is trying to achieve full self-realisation. Hindu woman, though conservative by nature, cannot remain unaffected by changes going all round the world. We shall try to fathom how far the world forces have altered woman's life so far as marriage and family are concerned.

In days gone by, marriage was compulsory for a Hindu girl; nay, the parents considered it their religious duty to get their daughters married and that too before puberty. If unfortunately they failed in that, they felt, they had committed a crime against God. Such were the prevailing notions of the family in which a Hindu girl was brought up. Modern conditions and especially woman's access to the temple of knowledge have changed the whole atmosphere. You will find her now-a-days evincing interest in the improvement of the social conditions around her and many a time choosing an independent career for herself. Marriage is not the be all and end all of life.

That is why we find many educated women remaining unmarried throughout their lives. How far it is true and what the effects of these changes are on her individuality as well as on society, we may judge from the cases I have been able to gather.

Out of 805 women inquired, 263 were unmarried, 427 married and 115 widows. Out of the unmarried 263, 36 women that is 13%, definitely stated that they were not going to marry at all. Though this declaration need not be taken at more than its face value, it is a sufficient indication of the present tendency. However, if we study some of the peculiar cases amongst these 36, we shall be in a better position to understand why so many as 13% of the women are determined to forego the happiness of married life.

There is a case of the eldest daughter who has to earn and support all her younger brothers and sisters. So she cannot afford to marry. This case illustrates on the one hand, the sacrifices on the part of the woman and on the other her helplessness in marriage. Under similar circumstances 90% of men would have married. This is stated by way of contrast. It goes very difficult, nay impossible for a woman to earn and support her father's family and lead a married life. The next case is of a spinster of 27. Being not very well placed in life and having only one brother as her near relative, no one has cared to find a suitable mate for her. That is why she prefers to say that she does not want to marry rather than express her desire and at the same time disclose her helplessness. The third case is one in which the lady was crossed in love. Her engagement was broken because of her illness. Once disappointed, she decided to lead a

single life. Another woman does not want to marry but she fears, she may be forced by her parents to do so. That also indicates the utterly helpless position in which our girls are placed. Parents usually insist on their daughters' marriage irrespective of the latter's wishes. The rest 32 women have not disclosed to me why they desire single life. We may surmise from the above four cases that a few may be compelled by circumstances to do so, while others may be desirous of pursuing independent careers. From amongst these 32 who have not disclosed their reasons, there are 12 graduate women and 7 under matric who are earning and settled in life, 11 are students, one is lame and the remaining one is neither earning nor educated. It may, therefore, be said that present conditions make it possible for women to lead an independent life and leave aside the question of marriage altogether if they so choose.

It is not always that these women do not repent afterwards for having remained unmarried. Some of them do marry though very late in life and sometimes marry such a man whose first wife is already living ! I have come across an unmarried woman well educated and absolutely independent who now at the age of 42 is desirous of having a partner in life.

Apart from the 36 cases referred to above, there were 43 women who were still indecisive at the time of the inquiry as to whether they would marry or not. Though all these women are about 20-21, they have not decided the course of their life. Although they have not expressed any definite objection to married life, it appears, they have other equally important objectives before their eyes. Perhaps in a few cases, circumstances

may be coming in the way of their getting married. I know a case amongst these 43, whose marriage is postponed indefinitely because her three elder sisters are still to be married. Their parents, not being very rich, are not in a position to offer large sums by way of dowry. Hence the delay in getting their daughters married.

Out of 263 unmarried women that remained, 184 expressed a desire to be united in wedlock. Since we know their inclination for marriage, it will be interesting to know how that is to be brought about. 168 women or 74% out of 227 who want to marry, (including those who are still undecided), would like to make their own choice, while 59 would prefer to leave the selection of their partners to the parents. One has even remarked that she has full faith in the judgment of her parents to make the right choice. But others feel their helplessness because they have no either freedom or scope to select their mate in life. Inquiring further into the details, I came to know about the bases of their selection which are varied and typical. Most of them desire more than one qualification in their future companion. The most desired qualification is good education and culture. 31 women have stated like that. Another qualification required is sufficient income and good position. This is the wish of 25 women. 15 women would seek good character, 12 others would give importance to good nature of their future partner. Health and handsome appearance are also the attributes desired. Three want a good companion while equal number would like to seek a sportsman.

Some have expressed that they would prefer a man with the same ideals as theirs. One woman would seek

a husband who is a traveller ; In addition to these, there is a woman, who herself being a social worker, will have a partner in the same field as hers. Birth in a good family is the main consideration of only one woman. I wish more than one had stressed this point, because family surroundings go to a large extent to determine a person's character. Broadly speaking one may say, that the above requirements in their life-long companions, indicate good taste on the part of women. It also proves that they have given due consideration to the matter. 52 women have not answered this query.

It is easy to aspire for many things but difficult to get all of them. This is especially true in the case of women who want to make their own choice of a partner. Though we have developed Western ideas, still we have very few institutions to facilitate the women to exercise their right to choose their husbands. That is a great social need indeed. Once women are able to make their selections, the dowry system will pass away. Realising their difficulty in the way of selection 63 women have answered in the negative to my question No. 6-b: 'Are there any clubs choice?' This absence of facility explains why 24 women have stated that they will have to depend on their parents to bring suitors to them. In very few castes, I believe, offers of marriage are made to girls. That is why only one has replied that she will make her choice from the offers of suitors. Ten women unable to find any means are going to leave this question to chance. Nine women have simply stated "yes". Only six women have given the names of six associations or clubs. They are the members of these institutions and expect to meet there a person of their taste. Four women expect to choose from amongst their acquaintances while

four others hope to be introduced through relatives or friends. One is a worker in a political field. It is no wonder if she is hoping to meet a man in the same field. Another considers it to be really a great problem! And in fact it is so.

Having considered the above mentioned important factors, we now come to equally important item, namely, the form of marriage. I have already explained in Chapter II the advantages from marriage by registration and disadvantages from marriage according to Hindu rites as far as women are concerned. In spite of the fact, it appears that religious aspect of marriage still wields a great influence on the minds of our women, because no less than 110 or 63% would like to have their marriage performed according to the customary Brahmo form. Only 49 or 28% would prefer new system of marriage by registration to the religious one. There are nine women who cannot give any opinion in the matter. Six, however, say that it will depend upon the other party and that is more or less true in all cases. In Hindu marriages, it is still the bridegroom and his party who have the upper hand in settling all the questions relating to both the parties. When the match is arranged by the girl herself, then only she can expect to have some say in the matter. The same cause appears to be the basic fact why 89 or 34% of the women are silent on this question.

All those women, who have expressed their choice of particular form of marriage, have not given the reasons for their choice. However, those few who have done so, have stated various reasons. Registration system, they say is better of the two, being less expensive, giving better rights to women, and more suited to the

modern conditions. Some have even added that in this system divorce is available and the husband is not able to marry a second time during the life-time of his first wife unless he gets divorce from her for specific reasons. Some have even pointed out that it is not *bourgeois*. The reasons advocated in favour of Hindu form of marriage are also equally weighty. They would prefer it because they feel that marriage is a sacred religious bond between the couple, and also because it is the customary form of marriage. To eight of the women divorce is so repulsive that they will never prefer to marry under registration system. All this shows that some of our women still consider marriage to be a sacred tie between the two parties and not a worldly contract. This view is no doubt admirable so long as the other party is equally willing to take it in the same light with all its moral and religious implications. But unfortunately it is not so as the other picture in the next part will show. If Hindu women are forced to demand a divorce and thus bring Hindu form of marriage on contractual basis, it is the other party which is forcing them to do so.

Before concluding this description about unmarried women, one thing remains to be said and that is their age. The average age of all unmarried women is 24 while that of educated women is 29. I have also tried to find out the average age of the women according to different castes. (*Vide* Table No. 4).

The figures indicate that the age of unmarried girls is rising and that is creating many tough problems for society. Late marriage has its own risks and disadvantages, just as child marriage had its own handicaps. In India, duration of life is very short and to marry so late in

life as 24 to 25 is not desirable. Children are born late and perhaps they may not get the sufficient protection of the parents, which they ought to. The average age of educated unmarried women is still greater. I may just point out here that it has risen within last fifteen years. In my inquiry conducted in 1929 about the economic conditions of educated women in Bombay City, I found that it was 22. Now it has gone upto 29. This tendency has got to be arrested somewhere.

We shall now consider the condition of married women. The first question that strikes about them is how their marriages have been brought about. It may either be a marriage of their choice or marriage arranged by their parents. If former is the case, a number of queries regarding the same come to our mind. In what way did they come to meet their chosen partner is just the likely question. Secondly, how long they were acquainted with each other before marriage, and thirdly, the basis of selection. If the marriages are of arrangement, it is worth while inquiring if any other consideration than that of their happiness affected the selection. There may be a few cases where other considerations than that of girl's happiness may have weighed with the parents or guardians.

From my inquiry I found out that out of 542 married cases, 82 or 15% were marriages of choice. While 460 or 85% were those of arrangement. It shows marriages of arrangement far exceed those of choice. However, in 71 cases from the latter group, the approval of the woman concerned was obtained. That is a fair indication in some quarters of giving consideration to the feelings of women.

Now let us see how women, who arranged their own match, happened to meet their chosen partners. 15 women were acquainted with the future husbands being already related to them one way or the other. Eleven women were acquainted with their husbands as neighbours; 10 were introduced through friends while an equal number met by chance; 8 through the intervention of a brother or a sister while 5 met them as contemporaries in colleges; 4 women came across them as co-workers and 3 as teachers; 2 women contracted friendship in schools, while one met him at the Victoria Gardens, and another was introduced as a member of the Prarthana Samaj. Seven women are silent on this point.

The question of duration of the period of their acquaintance is also worth considering. It gives an opportunity to either party to know the other's temperament and habits. The average period of such acquaintanceship I found to be $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. In one case the period extended over 20 years. These parties were related to each other as cousins and hence this lengthy period. However, the average period of $3\frac{1}{2}$ years shows that the parties gave due consideration to the selection before they finally united.

This is further confirmed by an analysis of the bases of their choice. Sixteen women selected their partners because they were educated; 15 cases were of love marriages. Thirteen women were influenced by the good nature of their would be husbands, while an equal number had the same ideals and views in common. Ten women looked to their character as an essential point; 10 others to good position and income, and the same number to the handsome appearance of the other party. Six

women admired the intellectual ability of their partners, while 5 gave their consent because of their healthy constitution. Four women found them as good companions while the same number were charmed by their ambitious nature. One woman consented to marry because he came from a good family, while another chose him for his manliness and still another because he was a reformer. Let me add here that these women were not satisfied with only one qualification, as one may be led to believe, but they tried to seek more than one attribute in their lovers. That speaks for their judgment. If we compare these bases of selection with those given by the unmarried women, we find a great similarity between the two.

In contrast to the above mentioned marriages of choice, there are 460 traditional marriages, I mean those arranged by parents. In these cases we have to look to the motive in forming the alliances. It is but natural that the parents should think of their daughters' happiness and nothing else. But unfortunately the girl may not have her parents living and in that case the match may be arranged by other relatives. Who knows what considerations other than those of her happiness may prevail with them? Twelve such cases are found in this inquiry. In some of them even the parents have somehow or other got rid of their daughters. Because of their poverty they arranged the match without at all considering the happiness of their daughters. The result was that all these women did not enjoy happy life. In one case the husband was an old man and the woman became widow a year after her marriage. In another, the whimsical husband married another woman. In the third case she was discarded for no fault of hers, and in the fourth, ill-treatment was her lot, the husband being an immoral

drunkard. In addition to these marriages arranged by the parents, there is one marriage arranged by the girl's uncle. She found to her great disappointment that her husband was always sickly. In the sixth case the husband was addicted to vices. In the seventh case, the eccentric and whimsical father married his daughter to a man that she could not put up with. She is now staying away from her husband. The husband of another girl who was married against her wish is treating her like a servant. This treatment she naturally resents. Another girl suffering from a physical defect was married to an old man. Naturally she was unhappy. Similar is the condition of another woman. Such is in short their history. And in the absence of any facility for divorce a Hindu woman once married has her fate sealed for ever.

Let us now look at the life of a married woman from another angle. The average age of the unmarried women was found to be 24. In contrast to this, married women's average age at marriage was found to be 18. This difference may be easily explained by the fact that the latter group is composed of women of older generation. As already stated the tendency to marry late is gradually on the increase. There are three cases out of 542, in which the girls were married at the age of 8 while there is a case at the other extreme where the marriage took place when the bride was 34. Amongst the Vaishwani, Kasar, Bhandari and Deshastha Brahmins the marriages are arranged earlier than in other castes. The average age of married women from these castes is 14 to 14.5. Next comes in order the caste of Chitpavan Brahmins where it is 16.5. Amongst the Saraswats it is 18 and in other castes it is still higher (*Vide* Table No. 5).

However, the time of actual consummation of marriage is of greater importance than the age at marriage. Generally married life begins after puberty. But it is delayed because of circumstances in certain cases. The minimum year of starting life is found to be 10. But, as has been said, since marriages are taking place after the adolescent period it is but natural that there should be very little time between the marriage and its consummation. The figures reveal that in certain-castes it is higher by six months or a year (*Vide* Table No. 5).

The dowry system is still prevalent in many castes. It is more so amongst Brahmins in general, and Deshastha Brahmins and Kshatriyas in particular. Amongst Daiwadnya, Somavanshiya and Maratha castes, it is rather an exception than a rule. Even the educated class is not exempt from this baneful system though the proportion is much less. However, if we take the total number of marriages, we find there are more cases where dowry was not given than otherwise (*Vide* Table No. 5). This is no doubt a matter of some consolation. But this system must go altogether. And there appears to be one solution and that is women must themselves choose their partners. Amongst 82 cases of marriages of choice as found in this inquiry, there are 3 cases only where dowry was taken. The maximum amount of dowry given is noted to be Rs. 1500/- while minimum is Rs. 200/-. This money is paid in cash and besides the girl's;specing father has to undergo all the expenses of marriage ceremony.

As against this dowry system, there is a custom of "Palla". Bridegroom's father pays a certain amount to the bride's father. Usually her father settles this amount in

her name, This custom is prevalent amongst the following Gujarati speaking castes. Brahmin, Bania, Vania, Nagar, Jain, Kapol, Porvad and Brahma Kshatriya.

So far we studied the social side of marriage. Now let us see how many individual women are happy in their married life. This happiness depends upon the cordial relations between husband and wife. However, when I ventured to ask this rather delicate question to my married sisters, I expected that few would confide in me a mere stranger. But it appears a suffering woman feels a sort of relief to give vent to her troubles especially before a stranger who has promised not to disclose her identity. To my surprise I found that in 54 cases cordial relations did not exist between the couples. That means 13% of the married couples were unhappy. All of them of course are not staying away from each other. This fact, however, does not in the least lessen their miserable condition. Sometimes it is better to be away from each other rather than live together in uncongenial atmosphere. Eleven women preferred this course and are staying away from their husbands. While five are discarded by their mates. There may be more cases in the latter group but it is difficult to find them all. I am rather glad to note that out of these 54 cases of incompatible unions, only 2, women are educated. The causes of this disharmony we shall now examine in detail.

The feelings of one woman were hurt by the husband marrying a second wife. While those of another were wounded at the probability of her husband soon bringing in a co-wife in the family. A third did not like her husband having immoral relations while still another thought of leaving the husband because he happened to be a drun-

kard and suffering from venereal diseases. The use of rod by the husband forced the sixth woman to run away from him, while ill-treatment from her husband's relations had gone to such a length that a woman could not put up with them. Old age and infirmity were the causes of the wife's leaving the husband in another case. Four women have stated that differences of opinion between themselves and their husbands and temperamental incompatibility were the reasons for their separation. Two other women have told me the causes in detail, which briefly stated, are as follows:—

One of them was married at 14. It was her husband's third marriage. Although she had not come of age, the aged husband much against her desire, had marital relations with her. For two years she put up with him but thereafter his ill-treatment became so revolting that she left him for ever. The other woman's case was still more pathetic. Her husband was addicted to all sorts of vices. She could hardly pull on with him for six months. In a pitiable tone she asked me if it would not be better to commit suicide rather than to lead such a miserable life.

Coming to the cases where husbands deserted their wives, I have one case in which the husband left her simply on mere suspicion about her bad character. In contrast to this case there is another in which the husband's bad character was suspected by the wife, The result was that he left her and his joint family three years after the marriage. Another had left his first wife during her serious illness and married a second one. The first wife thereafter did completely recover from her illness and is enjoying normal health at present. All the same she is forced to live away from her husband. Two other women did not disclose as to why their husbands deserted them.

For all these women, happiness in married life is out of question. Besides society looks down upon them. This is as it were adding insult to an injury. This curse at least does not affect those who stick to their husband's family under any circumstances. But their conditions of living are hard indeed. For instance, when the husbands indulge in vices such as racing, speculations, etc. what financial stability can there be for the family? How are the wives to make the two ends meet? This is exactly the case with five women, and in one case the husband moreover is unemployed! Again we can fairly imagine the mental torture of the three wives whose husbands are having immoral connections with other women. Two women complained that their husbands have been treating them badly. Sometimes even rod was not spared. There are three cases where the wives find this life a hard job because there is not sufficient income for the family. Mutual disagreement is the cause given by four women. Because their husbands are always sick, two women get no happiness. In one case the husband is insane and in the other case he is much aged. There is only a single case where the wife complains of too much sexual indulgence on the husband's part. In another case doctors declared that an operation was necessary if the woman was to bear a child. But the husband is not providing for the necessary expenses and is cursing her for her barrenness. In two cases the husbands have left the family to its fate. While in five cases ill-treatment led to frequent quarrels in the family. One woman is so unfortunate that her husband did not cohabit with her at all, while another is having an excess of sexual pleasure. She is worrying over the rapid increase in the number of children whose upbringing would suffer for want of adequate funds.

From the description of these cases in detail, we may say that in 45 cases out of 54, the fault appears to lie with the husbands. As it is, the account given here is by one of the suffering party, we do not know the other side. However, the causes seem to be genuine and hence indicate the miserable plight of these women. Thirteen women who are living away from their husbands and 5 who are discarded, get no maintenance, and are dependent on their parents or other relations.

These are the cases where man is responsible for spoiling marital happiness. Now we come to those unfortunate cases where fate is responsible. All our sympathies go to these unlucky sisters, I mean the widows. In addition to the bereavement they suffered, tonsuring in some cases was forced upon them. Though in recent years many attempts have been made to improve widows' lot their condition has not appreciably changed. Their helplessness and utter dependence—these are writ large on a widow's face. I met 111 widows in the course of my inquiry. That means 26 out of every hundred married women, come in this group. That is not a negligible percentage. Moreover, if the average age when they lost their husbands, is worked out, it comes to 22. The lowest age of a widow is found to be 8 while the highest is 54. However, if we deduce the average period of married life that these widows have enjoyed, it comes to seven years. This is too short a period as one can see. Coming to details, 18 widows out of 111 or 16% had the misfortune of having no married life at all. They lost their husbands within a couple of months after the marriage. Sixteen widows or 14% had the bare luck of enjoying one year's married life. The maximum period noted is 42, but that is an exception rather than the rule.

This lot of the widows would be less unhappy if remarriages were more general. There is at present no legal or customary objection against widow-remarriage. Still very few women remarry. Out of 111 widows that I inquired about, only two have remarried. When I ventured somehow or other to ask if the others at all desired to remarry, only two answered in the affirmative and nine showed some inclination in that direction. That means only one out of every hundred may think of securing that happiness which fate once snatched away from her.

Besides the loss of husband's company and all the sorrows resulting therefrom, Hindu widows have to face many other disadvantages. As soon as the husband passes away, the wife loses her status in the family. If it is a joint family, she becomes more or less a slave of all the members. She is considered inauspicious and usually elders taunt her as a woman bringing bad luck to the family. Such being the treatment received by these unfortunate sisters, it is no wonder if 54 or 48% of them left their husbands' family and have returned to their parents. Only 18 or 16% are putting up in the same family. The rest 39 widows are staying separately with their children. Some of these sisters have described in detail the woes they have been suffering.

Usually the lower middle class people lead hand-to-mouth existence. They are not able to provide either for sickness or old age. Again the women from this class are totally dependent on their husbands for maintenance. Under these circumstances if the supporter of the family dies, there is nothing for the widows to fall upon. This is the condition of 30 widows who are greatly worried on

account of monetary difficulties. Some of them are on the verge of poverty. In addition to such troubles eleven widows are being ill-treated by their relations even to the length of being tortured by them. Ten others feel very acutely the social restrictions and criticism of Hindu society.

Nine of these widows have described their troubles in details. I propose to reproduce them here briefly so as to give a better picture of their pitiable condition than any attempt on my part to describe them.

An old widow of 70 says, "My husband owned a piece of land worth Rs. 2000/- .I was entitled to its rent, but my brother-in-law deprived me of it. I was only 15 when I unfortunately lost my husband. Immediately I was tonsured. After one year I went to stay with my sister who was well off. According to the ideas of those days every year they used to tap my veins, so that I became weak. Thus I passed all my life working for others with prayer as my only consolation".

Another widow, "My step-sister arranged my marriage with an old man—37 years older than myself. No wonder I became a widow three years after the marriage. My father-in-law gave Rs. 1000/- as Palla, but I am entitled to its meagre interest only. Moreover my husband owned two shops which were taken by my nephew. He promised to give me Rs. 5/- every month but never kept his word. How am I to maintain myself?"

"I was only nine when the present misfortune fell to my lot. Though young, I was tonsured and had to beat my chest for the whole year. My mother-in-law and husband's sister did not even spare the rod and frequently

abused me. To add to my woes, my husband's sister took my thumb impression and pocketed my Palla which was settled on me by my father-in-law. If I had refused to give my consent, they would have even given me poison! After some months my parents brought me to their house. I trained myself and became a teacher. Now I am independent."

"I was driven out of the family by my husband's relations within few days after my husband's demise. With the kind help of my relations and friends I took up training and now I am working as a teacher."

"My husband's relations coerced me to hand over his estate to them. I became penniless. Still they continued to trouble me. So I left that family and came to stay with my parents."

"My husband left much debt behind him. So I had to sell my ornaments to save the house which belonged to our joint family."

"Within thirteen days of my husband's demise my brother-in-law took my signature and pocketed Rs. 7000/-. It was the claim awarded of my husband's policy assigned in my name. After a year my brother had to file a suit to recover the amount."

"My husband's brother was a Superintendent of Police. He would not allow me to go to school after I became widow. Other relations also troubled me in various ways. They wanted to tonsure me but they did not succeed. Somehow or other I stayed in that family for three years. Then I returned to my parents, I took education and qualified myself for a service. Now I may retire after a year or two with some provision for old age".

"The husband's relations showed such sympathy and concern at my miserable lot that I thought they were really sincere. But to my surprise they tried to take advantage of my helpless condition by leading me astray!"

These accounts speak for themselves. Comments are unnecessary. One thing however, becomes clear. Apart from those who succeed in taking education and becoming independent, the lot of our Hindu widows is veritably miserable. The only practical method to ameliorate the lot of widows appears to be to find out ways and means to make them independent.

So far we have seen the marital condition of women as can be made out from this inquiry. Before we deal with the institution of family, let us examine the status of a Hindu woman in the family circle. It is rather difficult to find out her exact position but we can have some indication of it, if we ascertain whether she holds the family purse or not. That is why I enquired if housekeeping was in their hands, and if so, how much they spent every month.

I found that 218 out of 805 women manage the house-keeping themselves. That gives 27 percent. But we know that out of 805, 263 women are unmarried. Leaving those unmarried but independent women the other unmarried girls are not likely to manage their father's household so far as the economic management is concerned. Excluding these we get 30% of the married women managing their household. This speaks much in favour of their good status in the family. The average amount of money they spend per month is Rs. 147.5. The maximum amount noted is Rs. 1000/- while the minimum is Rs. 20/. It is of course not possible to generalise from

these figures about the economic conditions of middle class people. Firstly, because they are not from one locality. Every one knows that the cost of living in cities is much higher than that in the mofussil. Secondly, the war conditions are daily adding to the cost of living. So the scales of living change rapidly. However on a rough calculation the expenses per head of the family work out at Rs. 37/- per month. This is rather a small amount for decent living and can very well indicate the struggle for existence amongst middle class people. So far as the woman's status in the family is concerned, we find that as many as 30% of the women control the household expenses but it must not be an easy task for them to adjust the family budget if we consider the amount they had at their disposal.

Now let us consider the family itself. Woman is held to be largely responsible for the management of the family and proper upbringing of children. As already stated the number of married women is 542. Out of these 386 are mothers. The remaining 156 are without any issue. If 18 widows who had no married life are excluded the percentage of those who are not mothers is 25. That means only three-fourths of the married women beget children. The number of children born to these 386 mothers is 1036 during average period of $14\frac{1}{2}$ years of married life. Out of these 1036 children, 802, were living at the time of the inquiry and 234 were dead. That means, out of every 5 children 4 survive. Amongst the deceased 234 children there were 20 still-births and 105 infants died within a year of their birth. Who will deny the appalling wastage of human energy when such a great number does not go beyond a year of their existence in this world? Besides, this has a double pernicious

effect on the woman's health. When the child dies soon after the birth, the mother does not take care of her health as much as she ought to. Besides there is every likelihood of her carrying again within a couple of months. Hence every effort should be made to stop this wastage of human life and energy.

Let us compare this rate of 227 per *mille* with the rate of infantile mortality rate as given in the census report of 1931 for Bombay Province. "In the decade the infantile death-rate has never been below 219 and has usually been 230 per *mille*. This means that out of every four or five children born, one is destined to die as an infant. The waste which is caused by such a phenomenon needs no emphasis. But it may be pointed out here if better care were taken of young children there would be no need to have so many children and the economic wealth of the country would be increased and would in its turn raise the standard of life, the lowness of which is one of the causes of a high birth-rate and still higher mortality of infants."¹

Coming to the question of sex of these children the figures reveal excess of boys. To every 1000 boys there are 877 girls. "Fewer females are actually born than males—this is a biological fact"²; so says the census report B. P. 1931. However, the proportion of deceased boys and girls is the same as found in this inquiry. The disproportion between the sexes, continues throughout and is a general condition in India. "Speaking generally the population appears to be on the basis of a little more than 9 women to 10 men."³ While reverse is the case in western countries.

1, 2 and 3—All India Census Report, Bombay Province 1931 p.s. 93 and 137 respectively.

India is one of those few countries where high birth-rate predominates. It follows therefore, that spacing between two children is bound to be as minimum as possible. However, the average spacing between two children as worked out from this inquiry, comes to $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, and that is I believe, not bad.

In India, the period of reproduction generally stops at woman's age of 45. Sometimes the menopause is even earlier. There are 19 women aged 45 or above 45 from the group of women I have enquired and I find that they ceased to bear children on the average at 37. If we work up the figures further, we arrive at some startling conclusions. We have already seen the tendency amongst unmarried women is to remain unmarried up to 24 and amongst the educated unmarried it is even upto 29. If a woman is married at 24, then with average spacing of children at $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, there is a possibility of having only two or three children out of whom two may survive! Thus the couple is able merely to replace itself. This arithmetical calculation only strengthens the conclusion that our women should be married at an earlier age than at present.

All the above figures relating to family are given in the following statement.

| No. of married women. | No. of mothers, | No. of children, | No. of living children, | No. of dead children. | No. of boys born. | No. of girls born. | No. of sex not given. |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 542 | 386 | 1036 | 802 | 234 | 483 | 427 | 126 |

| No. of dead boys. | No. of dead girls. | No. of sex not given. | Children deceased within one year | No. of married but not widows above 45. | Average year when they had their last child. |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| 94 | 81 | 59 | 125 | 19 | 37 |

So far we confined ourselves to "individual family". Let us consider woman as a member of the greater family, - I mean the joint family. We find that 179 out of 542 married women, that is 33% of the women are members of this institution. This small percentage denotes that this institution like all others in the traditional Hindu society, has also weakened under modern influences. However its inherent economic advantages, making it an excellent method of insurance against the common contingencies of life, have rendered it much strength and vitality and hence it is surviving to this extent at least. One hundred and sixteen women out of 179 women staying with the joint family, have stated that they would like to continue in it while 27 or 16% have shown their displeasure at it and are seeking an early opportunity of separating. One becomes rather curious to know the causes which are responsible for the dissatisfaction of these women. Generally it is the husband's sister who is at the bottom of all the trouble. It is proverbial that these sisters-in-law are at dagger's drawn with each other. Besides husband's sister, mothers-in-law also many times ill-treat their daughters-in-law. We shall find many cases of this type in part II. Here is the experience of a joint family given by a woman in her own words, "I am the only daughter of my parents. They spent lot of money

at the time of my marriage and even gave me ornaments worth Rs. 3000/-. Unfortunately I lost my father recently but my mother-in-law and her two wealthy sisters will not allow me to visit my mother. Moreover, as soon as my baby became one month old they took sole possession of her and will not allow me even to nurse her. My husband who is not earning much is thoroughly under their influence. I wish we were allowed to live separately even on a small income rather than forced to stay with such a mother-in-law and others in the joint family". Another woman gives somewhat different reason for her dislike of joint family. "My mother-in-law and elder brother-in-law are very orthodox. They do not allow me sufficient freedom." Third woman states that she does not like to put up in the same house as her father-in-law because he and her husband always quarrel. The case of another woman is really pathetic. She says, "when I was seriously ill, my husband married another woman. I have to put up with this co-wife. My mother-in-law, father-in-law and even husband treat her well while I am the slave of all".

Usually the joint family comprises the head of the family, his wife, daughters, sons and their wives. Sometimes two or more brothers with their family also stay together. The maximum number of people in a joint family I have found is 20. In such a big family, individually the woman occupies a minor place. Still I found that many prefer to stay jointly with others. This proves that there must be happy and congenial atmosphere in the family. Under such circumstances joint family with the division of labour and responsibility is to be preferred to individual family.

CHAPTER V

SUBJECTS OF THE INQUIRY :— ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND HEALTH.

The institutions of marriage and family, no doubt, decide to a large extent the life of a woman. However, her advancement in education and other fields for which modern age is offering her great facilities, have enabled her to enjoy rights over her property and income. Not only that but she is also given various opportunities to earn money and be independent as far as possible. This being the case, I have tried to gather from the subjects of my inquiry, information regarding their personal property and income. My further questions which arise incidently from this information, throw much light on the various vital problems of modern woman.

My very first question about economic conditions refers to the personal property, either self-acquired or inherited. As distinguished from this property we shall later on deal with Stridhan a special feature of property of a married Hindu woman. My inquiry reveals that only 58 women that is to say only 7% of the women inquired, have something to call as their own and on which they could fall back in case of necessity. Nine out of these 58 are engaged in remunerative work. Remaining 49 have inherited their property from one relation or the other. Again out of these 58 propertied women only 10 are unmarried. This means only 4% of the unmarried women may be called rich women. Six out of these 10 have definitely stated that they do not wish to marry at all. All of them are fairly old. It indicates

that if women possess sufficient property either inherited or self earned, they can safely remain unmarried and have independent life of their own.

Coming to the kind of property, I found ten women possessing landed property. One woman has provident fund after 25 years of service. The rest that is 47 women have property in cash ranging from Rs.55/- to Rs.10,000/-. Of course, such amount is not sufficient to support a person throughout one's life but she may keep it as a reserve fund and draw upon it in case of necessity.

I know of an incident where a husband had left Rs. 3000/- for his wife, which amount, however, was not given to her by her father-in-law. Though this is a single instance out of 28 propertied widows, later on we will find multiples of them where widows are deprived of the amount of their husband's insurance policy legally belonging to them. It clearly shows the helplessness of our widows on the one hand, and on the other the attitude of men towards women, especially widows.

Let us now see how many women out of the 805 that have replied to my questionnaire, hold some kind of personal income. My statistics show that 179 or 22% of those enquired into have independent income of their own either from employment or inherited property. Of course the percentage given above will necessarily be lowered if general statistics of middle class women is taken. Because most of the women from this class derive their income from remunerative work such as service or profession. And it is a matter of general knowledge that the tendency to seek employment is much less amongst the middle class than amongst the labour class women. Returning

to my inquiry I have found 27 out of 179 that is only 3% of all the subjects of my inquiry, derive their income from their property, while 152 do it from employment or profession. We have already seen that only 58 out of 805 have some kind of personal property. Out of these 58, 27 or less than even half, derive income from property, cash or landed. This income varies from Rs. 2/- to Rs. 125/- per month giving an average of Rs. 48/- per month. The fact that 3% of the women inquired have independent income of Rs. 48/- per month on an average, shows that there are very few women in the middle class who may be said to have leisurely life.

Regarding 152 women earning their income from remunerative occupations, we shall consider their question in detail later on. Suffice it to say that the highest income per month amongst them is Rs. 500/- while the lowest is Rs. 10/-.

Apart from the two sources of income dealt above, there is a third one from which a Hindu woman is likely to receive some help for herself. This source is peculiar to a Hindu married woman. The Hindu Law has tried to provide for a married woman by giving her full ownership over the property given by her relations to her at the time of her wedding by way of presents. This kind of property is technically known as Stridhan. Where dowry or Palla is not given the girl is presented with ornaments or money from both the parties. Where dowry is given by the bride's father, the husband's party is supposed to present her with ornaments to the extent of the dowry. But more often than not, the dowry exacted is much greater in value. In addition to it the bride's father is at times made to pay for all the pomp

and merriment of the ceremony. As differentiated from dowry, Palla usually consists of an amount settled on the bride. This custom is peculiar to the Gujaratis. Whether dowry or Palla, a Hindu bride is provided with some kind of property called her Stridhan, however poor her family may be. Although such is the general custom, in my inquiry I found not less than 208 or 39% of the married women have stated that they own no Stridhan at all at the time of my inquiry. Perhaps it may be that some women may not be willing to disclose their pecuniary affairs. Even assuming that, the fact remains that others have not got it at all. Let us see how this fact can be explained.

In some cases, the women were seen not to have any idea about their right over the Stridhan ornaments. This is especially the case where they live in a joint family. I have already stated that 179 or 33% of the married women are living jointly with the husband's relations. It was pointed out by many of such women that the ornaments which she had obtained as her Stridhan, were kept in possession of the eldest lady in the family, who gave them to other women to wear whenever occasion arose. Even the owner of the ornaments was to wear them with the eldest lady's permission; Perhaps this may be one of the reasons why some have stated that they possess no Stridhan, being totally ignorant of this form of personal property. I met with some cases amongst Chitpavan Brahmins where I was told that a set of ornaments according to the status of the family was prepared to be presented to the successive daughters-in-law as they came in the family. Of course according to this process one may expect the

youngest daughter-in-law to be the most fortunate to get the whole set to herself. But that is not so. The set remains only as a family property, none of the daughters-in-law having any right over it.

Some of the widows whom I accosted, had by the time of my inquiry, either given their ornaments to their daughters or daughters-in-law in their marriages or had to dispose them off to maintain themselves.

Hindu Law as we have seen gives absolute right of ownership to a woman over her Stridhan. In this respect we, Hindu women, enjoyed better rights than our married English sisters until 1882. Till then the latter enjoyed no personal right over any property or income. Since the passing of the Act, however, they are exercising their right of ownership with full knowledge of its power while we Hindu women, though given the privilege long before, are even now unable to exercise that right for want of sufficient freedom and education. The Hindu Shastras enjoin that not even the husband, who according to them is supposed to be the supreme lord over his wife, can touch his wife's Stridhan except in cases of dire family necessity. But when we come to actual realities what do we find? Many of our illiterate sisters have not got even the slightest thought of this special privilege of theirs. In innumerable cases we come across husbands using or rather misusing their power over their wives in forcing them to part with their Stridhan to satisfy their whim or vice. I will quote three or four cases where wives have complained that their Stridhan has been taken away by their husbands to satisfy their own wants. One protests that her husband relieved her of all her ornaments one by one, to be gambled away on the race

course. Two others do not know how their husbands managed to dispose of their Stridhan. A fourth one has given in detail how her husband lost in speculation the whole of the family property and her Stridhan which were more than a lakh of rupees. In addition he had incurred large debts. These instances as well as the customs given above as prevailing in some joint families will, in my opinion, explain why as many as 208 women are without Stridhan.

The remaining 334, who have stated themselves as possessing Stridhan have it either in cash or ornaments. (*vide* Table No 6) Generally speaking Stridhan of Gujarati women consists in cash while that of the Maharastrians in ornaments. One hundred and thirty seven or 41% are said to have cash amounting to Rs. 2500/- on an average. The highest cash, I have found a woman to possess is Rs. 20,000/- and the lowest is Rs. 125/-. Those who have golden ornaments as Stridhan, have them weighing between 150 tolas to 2 tolas, the average coming to 19 tolas per head. Sixty-nine women although admitting that they have Stridhan, have not cared to mention its value either in cash or gold. In the whole of my inquiry I have come across only one woman who is holding shares in limited companies. (*vide* Table No. 6)

We have considered upto now the provision of Stridhan which Hindu Law has made to render some economic help to women. We shall now come to the modern method of providing wife and children with some help in case of a mishap in the family—I mean life insurance. This new way of compulsory savings is a boon to middle class people. Were it not for the premiums in respect of their policies

the middle class men would have found it difficult to save any money to face contingencies in future. The law of insurance policy is that in case of an insured husband's demise, his wife is to get the benefit of it irrespective of the policy being assigned to her or not. (*vide* appen. D) This being the assurance of the law, it is a matter of great satisfaction to know that husbands of 236 women have insured their lives. There are 31 cases more where both the husband and wife are insured. This means 49% of the married women have some sort of saving in the form of insurance. It may be stated in passing that 6 women out of the above 31, are themselves an earning factor, other 6 have insured themselves out of their personal property while the lives of the remaining have been insured by their husbands along with their own.

Although the laws of the country have come to our help making these provisions of Stridhan and insurance, their benefits are not always reaped by our poor ignorant sisters. I shall mention a few cases by way of example. One widow did not get the assured amount of her husband's policy because her father-in-law misappropriated it. Another widow though fortunate in getting the money was forced to spend the whole amount within one year for the benefit of her husband's family. As against these two cases I shall mention one more of a widow only 25 years of age with two small children, who has now to work as a peon in some municipal school to maintain herself and her children, her husband having failed to keep alive his policy till death. The above instances really indicate that our unfortunate sisters are not able to exercise their rights under the existing laws due to ignorance or lack of freedom.

It is gratifying to note that besides 6 married women who have insured their lives out of their own earnings, there are not less than 20 unmarried women who have recognised the value of insurance as a provision for their future. Out of these 20, 18 are employed and are able to lay by some savings. Because of their education they have thought it preferable to invest these savings to insure their lives and thus make some provision for their old age and their children if need be. It must be mentioned that it costs more for a woman to insure her life than for a man as the premium she has to pay is comparatively heavier. It is said that a woman's life in India is exposed to more risk than a man's. The higher rate of mortality amongst females than that amongst males, justifies the higher rate of premium.

To sum up, 477 women that is 59% have some property or income or both. Fifty five women out of these have only some income and no property or insurance. While 273 women have nothing to call as their own. Amongst these there are many students who have not settled down in life as yet.

Returning to the question of personal income, I shall now consider all the incidental points arising out of their employment. My inquiry shows 152 or 19½% of the women enquired are found engaged in some kind of remunerative work or other. They are seen to follow different careers as would be evident from the following statement.

| Career, | No. | Average salary. | Maximum salary. | Minimum salary. |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Administrative. | 6 | 111 | 500 | 50 |
| 2. Medical. | 8 | 283 | 500 | 50 |
| 3. Teaching. | 104 | 64 | 300 | 20 |
| 4. Research. | 5 | 143 | 200 | 100 |
| 5. Clerical. | 10 | 84 | 160 | 50 |
| 6. Nurses. | 4 | 80 | 200 | 35 |
| 7. Requiring physical labour. | 10 | 21 | 30 | 8 |
| Miscellaneous. | 5 | | | |
| | <hr/> 152 | | | |

This statement shows that there are broadly speaking, eight different classes of employment which are open to women as I found them. Table No 7 details the various careers open to women. Within my limited inquiry I have found not less than 29 different jobs which women are following. Of course these are not exhaustive. Some 6 women are occupying administrative posts like Secretary of Schools Committee or Superintendents or Supervisors. There are also others who are working as Ayahs, cooks or even peons. It may be noted here that even middle class women are forced by circumstances to accept menial jobs like that of peons in schools simply because they are uneducated. Majority of educated women, however, take to teaching. I have come across not less than 104 teachers. Although the work of a full time teacher is strenuous, women take to it as there are very few careers open to educated women in other spheres. I have found only 3 women engaged as lecturers

in women's colleges. I have met 5 women research workers, working where men could have been employed. Unfortunately, the general experience is that in cases of equal merits and abilities men are given preference to women. I may quote one Government high official, who with reference to recent war jobs, said that though some of the women had shown striking aptitude for responsible work he was not sure however, whether the Public Service Commission would recruit women in Government Service.

It may be questioned why women should at all seek employment. Forestalling this question I had purposely put that query in my questionnaire to which 123 out of 152 employed have given replies. 102 or 67% of them are forced by circumstances to seek remunerative work. To go into further details 80 had to eke out their own maintenance while 22 were obliged to do so for maintaining their family. As against this big number I have found only 5 serving simply because they disliked being idle at home. Five others are working to utilise their time in the best possible manner, and 2 to make some use of their education. There are 4 more who are working just to be able to qualify themselves for some career. Two are following their profession, while 2 others are engaged because they are able to do some social work thereby. Only one woman wants to be economically independent. The above analysis shows that most of the middle class women step out of their homes for work simply because they are forced to support either themselves or their families.

Now let us see whether their desire to earn yields any economic return. A reference to the foregoing statement

discloses that the average income of a teacher is Rs. 64/- per month. The average salary of those engaged in clerical work is Rs. 84/- and that of nurses is Rs. 80/-. The average salary of those who are forced to leave their homes to take up the work as domestic servants or as peons in schools which may in other words be termed unskilled labourers, is Rs. 21/-. Of course the handful of those who are engaged in administrative work whose average is Rs. 111/- per month and about 8 who are following the medical profession whose average monthly income is Rs. 283/- may not be compared with the majority who are hard hit. These figures clearly show that the teachers are the least paid of all the intellectual workers. Though ayahs and cooks get low salary, they usually get their boarding and lodging free. The highest paid job for a woman is that of a cinema actress as I found in my last inquiry in 1929. But I have not included actresses in this inquiry.

We shall now try to find out how many hours of work, these employed women have to put in to earn their above-stated income. Besides teaching six hours in schools, at least two more hours are required of them at home in connection with the school work. The clerks are more fortunate in this respect. They have not to worry themselves after putting in 7 hours work in office. Medical profession may be said to be more exacting. There is no knowing how many hours its members will have to work. The greater the popularity the harder the work; which in turn yields still greater remuneration. The most hard hit are the manual labourers who have to work for longer spells and receive the lowest remuneration.

As to the conditions of work, very few women have cared to answer this question. Amongst those who have done it, 8 are in permanent service, while 6 are temporary workers. Two have found the conditions of work good, while 5 satisfactory. One matron of a Rescue Home however, complains that the work is too exacting because she has to handle varied types of inmates of the home.

The relations between the employers and the employees (a demonstrator excepted) are cordial. (*vide* Table No. 7.).

It is generally believed by people that women, by virtue of their sex, are not capable of acquitting themselves equally well with men of their duties and responsibilities attached to high posts. A woman in high administrative post has confirmed the above prejudice saying that men hesitate to appoint women to higher posts as they are afraid of the work being not properly and efficiently carried out. A few others have expressed their opinion that it is difficult for a married woman to do justice to any outside full time job. A similar remark was made by a lady doctor who told me that women choosing the doctor's profession as a career should as far as possible remain single. According to her medical work is too strenuous to render her fit for motherhood. Of course this is onesided opinion and I have come across women who have with equal emphasis stated the contrary view. So far as the teaching profession is concerned its members meet with more disadvantages than advantages because of their sex. Some of them complain that boys' school are banned to them while men get easy entrance in girls' schools as teachers. I have, however, come across

a few mixed schools wherein some lady teachers are found working together with men.

We shall now try to find out whether for all their hard work, these women are able to make any savings. Of course, as I have stated above 102 women were forced to seek remunerative work because of their strained circumstances. Naturally earnings of these women would be just sufficient to make both ends meet. However there are some who are able to lay by whatever they can. From my inquiry I have found 75 out of 152 working women who are able to save from Rs. 5/- to Rs 25/- per month. There are 54 women who are complaining that they are unable to save anything.

There is another aspect of these working women which merits careful consideration. Are they all doing work with a view to selfish gain? My inquiry shows that 66 out of 152 earning women are capable of supporting one or more relatives besides themselves. 60 women have no dependants to support. Twenty-six women did not reply at all. Out of the said 66, 17 or 11% of earning women are maintaining their children. 21 or 14% maintain their parents and 30 or 19% support their sisters and or brothers including 3 who are also maintaining sisters' children. Two try to help strangers needing support. It is really creditable for these women to help the needy by exerting themselves. In the face of these facts can it be said that women seek employment with the only motive of becoming economically independent of men?

As already previously stated out of the total number of women who have cared to reply to my queries 263 are unmarried, 427 married and 115 widows. Leaving

aside 89 students out of 263 unmarried, we have still got 60 women that is 34% of the unmarried, doing some kind of remunerative work. Sixty married women and 32 widows are also found working for their livelihood. In other words $\frac{1}{3}$ of the women out of those who have left studies, are found working.

These women however, unlike men, are not exempt from household duties. Even where there are elderly persons and servants in the family, management of household is considered to be the duty of a woman and she has to share the work to some extent. The strugglings of a woman who has to fight single handed in the family can well be imagined especially where there are children who demand her personal attention. With this personal experience in view, I purposely inquired of the working women as to how they managed their household work and children. To this query, 63 women or 44% of the employed women replied that they are not at all handicapped because of work outside home. Sixteen of them managed their household with the help of servants, while 11 do it themselves. Other two also have engaged servants to look after their children, while 4 look after them personally. Fourteen women get the help of either mother or mother-in-law or some other relatives for this purpose. There are three women who are fortunate enough in having husbands who help them in their work at home. One woman has simplified her life at home in such a way that out-door work does not cause any inconvenience to her. Twenty-five however, are experiencing some trouble to manage both the jobs, I mean at home and outside. Two of them lunch outside for the sake of

convenience. To state in other words, out of 66 working women 45 have children, 23 of whom are able to look after their own children quite well, 9 have admitted some difficulty, while 14 have not replied at all.

We have upto now dealt with the circumstances of working women. Of course, excepting 2, I have not been able to get any information from women working in offices which have come into existence owing to war conditions. I tried my best to come in contact with them but unfortunately there was no response. Now that the war is over, the services of these women will after some time be not required and naturally most of them will have to revert to their home life. Their conditions in case of unemployment can very well be imagined from the experience of women who have been good enough to give me their replies. Fifty-one women, were doing some kind of remunerative work prior to this inquiry, but were unemployed when I approached them. Thirty-six of them did not feel any inconvenience because of their unemployment while 15 complained of great uneasiness and hardships on account of their being without any job. One of them has stated that if she had any job she would have maintained and educated her younger brothers. She is sorry she is not able to do this because of her unemployment. Although this number of 15 appears to be a small one, it serves the purpose of giving us a picture of the helpless condition resulting from unemployment experienced by men and women alike.

Whether a woman should go in for remunerative work or not is a question on which there may be two opinions. But there can be no objection from any one so far as I can see, to a woman utilising her spare time in

social service. Let us see how many out of 653 non-working women I have met, are actually doing social work. 83 women or 13% are engaged in some form of social work or other without taking any remuneration. Out of 83, 46 are doing teaching work in some school or classes, two being fellows in colleges, two being headmistresses and three doing work of spreading literacy. Thirty-four are conducting social work under the auspices of some institutions or other, one being a research worker and another a corporator. Three are congress workers. One lady doctor and one nurse also are doing honorary work in hospitals. One is an editor of a magazine. Two are helping husbands in their social activities. Thus those 83 women are spending two to six hours daily in the service of society which is really creditable to them.

HEALTH SECTION.

Perfect health is indeed a blessing. A healthy person rarely realises the benefit of such a boon. Its necessity and importance will however be understood by those unfortunate ones who do not possess it. "The healthy know not they are healthy".—(Carlyle) A man who does not usually keep good health is not able to achieve much which otherwise he would have easily accomplished. Bearing this importance of good health in mind, I have endeavoured to throw light on this aspect of middle class women by collecting information from them.

The students of economics and public health will bear with me when I say that the health of an Indian, in general, is far from satisfactory, and that of an Indian woman in particular, is most unsatisfactory. Middle

class women generally live in cities and their movements are restricted to their homes. These factors work all the more adversely on their health. In spite of this knowledge I was shocked to find that 170 women out of 805 that is 21% are suffering from some ailment or other. The following figures will detail their complaints.

Out of 170 women who have replied to this particular query of mine, not less than 98 women have admitted general weakness. Twelve suffer from women's complaints, 11 from chronic fever, 10 others have got lung trouble, 8 intestinal trouble and 5 neurasthenic trouble, while 26 have miscellaneous ailments. The fact that 98 out of 270, that is about 57% of the ailing women are suffering from general weakness is an important pointer. General causes of such weakness are either frequent deliveries or the after effects of some past serious illness. Even overwork at home may bring about such kind of exhaustion. As against these 98 I have found only 2 women who have complained about fatness. From this we can safely infer that majority of our women are underfed and require some rest at least once a year. It is also necessary that there should be proper spacing of children according to the individual condition of health. The above inference will be corroborated by the figures obtained by considering weight and height of these women.

While distributing my questionnaire I did not expect that so many as 645 women out of 805, would care to find out their weight and height. It shows that present day women are particular about their weight and height. It is a general experience that full development of an individual is reached at the age of 25. I have, therefore

divided my replies into two groups, one below 25 and the other above. The following sketch will give an idea at a glance.

Weight and Height of 287 women between 18 and 25.

| | |
|--|--|
| $97\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. : 5 ft. | |
| <hr style="width: 50%; margin: auto;"/> | |
| of 79 educated women, 99 lbs. : 5 ft. | of 208 partially educated women, 97 lbs. : 5 ft. |
| of 12 gainfully employed women, 99 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. : 5'6" in. | of 6 gainfully employed women, 91 lbs. : 4'11" |

Weight and Height of 362 women above 25.

| | |
|--|---|
| 107 lbs. : 5 ft. | |
| of 145 educated women, 110 lbs. : 5 ft. | of 217 partially educated women, 104 lbs. : 5 ft. |
| of 45 gainfully employed women, 111 lbs. : 5 ft. | of 18 gainfully employed women, 101 lbs. : 5 ft. |

The average weight of women between 18 and 25 who number 287 comes to $97\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. while the average height is found to be 5 ft. Comparing this with the average height and weight of British girls at the age of 18, we find

difference of 4 inches in height and $25\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. in weight. Making allowance for racial and climatic conditions in the case of British women the difference appears to be considerable. Coming to the group of above 25 consisting of 362 women, there does not seem to be any increase in the height while the weight is added by $9\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. only. This clearly shows that there is no full development of our women due to insufficient nourishment and overwork.

Before discussing the question of diet we shall first try to see how far truth lies in the oft-repeated statement that higher education and outside employment put a great strain on the health of women. We have just seen above that the average weight of 287 women under 25 is $97\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. Dividing these 287 into two groups educated and partially educated we find that the average weight of the former exceeds the general average weight of 287 by $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. This group of educated consists of the matriculated and above. As against this I find the average weight of those who have not been able to take education even upto matric, I mean partially educated, is less by $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., than the general average weight of 237. Perhaps economic conditions may be at the root of this. It is a matter of general knowledge that most of the girls who go in for higher education come from well-to-do families. A man with limited means would naturally think twice before spending money on higher education for his daughter who is in the long run to go to another family and from whom he cannot expect any monetary return. It can therefore be surmised that the economically easy life plays a great factor in showing greater average weight of the educated than that of the partially educated ones. Similar deduction can be arrived at from the other group of women above 25 wherein 145 educated show 3 lbs. more

while partially educated $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. less than the general average of 362 which is 107 lbs. Both these groups below and above 25 clearly show that the average weight of educated women is greater than that of uneducated women. From this it can definitely be said that higher education has no adverse effect on the health of women as will be seen from the above sketch.

While studying the group of women who are gainfully employed, we shall first take up women who have received higher education. Amongst them we find an increase of 2 lbs over the general average weight plus $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. over the average of educated below 25, and 4 lbs. over the general average and 1 lb. over the average of educated amongst those who are above 25. Now we come to those who have received education only partially. Here the general average amongst them is 91 lbs of those below 25 while 107 lbs is the general average weight of those above 25 and 101 lbs. of 18 gainfully employed amongst them as given in the above sketch. It is apparent from what is stated above that employment in the case of educated women has resulted in the betterment of their health but just the contrary in the case of partially educated. Generally amongst the latter we find women who are not economically well placed and therefore are forced early in their life to seek work outside home in addition to the duties at home. Naturally this double strain reacts on them. Even their height has been found to be less by an inch than the general average height.

Having thus dealt with factors which adversely affect health, I shall now turn to those which help to improve it, I mean diet and exercise. While discussing

the question of diet, I have again resorted to the old division of those below 25 and those above 25. It may be tabulated as follows :—

Table showing weight of women 18 and 25 according to diet.

| Average weight. | |
|--|---|
| 97 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. | |
| <hr/> | |
| of 178 women taking vegetarian diet. 97 $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. | of 66 women taking non-vegetarian diet. 97 lbs. |

Table showing weight of women above 25 according to diet.

| Average weight. | |
|---|---|
| 107 lbs. | |
| <hr/> | |
| of 221 women taking vegetarian diet. 108 lbs. | of 87 women taking non-vegetarian diet 105 lbs. |

I shall confine myself in the beginning to the first group of 18 to 25. Diet is of two kinds vegetarian and non-vegetarian. In Hindu society there are certain castes the members of which subsist on purely vegetarian diet. The vegetarian castes I have been able to include in my inquiry are Deshastha, Chitpavan, Karhade Brahmins and the Gujarati speaking Baniyas etc. Such castes as the Daiwadnyas, Saraswats, and Prabhus etc. take a mixed diet. It is a generally accepted principle that non-vegetarian diet is more conducive to health

and energy than the vegetarian. But in the present inquiry my figures show the average weight of 178 vegetarian women below 25 is $97\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. while that of non-vegetarian women is 97 lbs. only. Similarly in the other group i. e. those above 25, the average weight of 221 vegetarian women is 108 lbs. as against 105 lbs. of 87 non-vegetarian. This contradiction to the above generally accepted principle can well be explained if we care to scan the actual diet of the subjects of my inquiry. The daily diet of vegetarians includes milk in some form or other and their staple food consists of rice and wheat. The staple food of the non-vegetarians, as I have found, is mainly rice. Besides they usually cannot afford to include meat, eggs or fish in their daily menu in the necessary quantity required to build up their physique. Again it has got to be noted that if at all they are included the greater portion falls to the lot of men while women have to be satisfied with the remainder. Non-inclusion of meat and fish in their daily diet may perhaps be rightly due to shortness of funds. The present inquiry reveals the weight of the propertied persons in both vegetarian and non-vegetarian groups outdoes that of the non-propertied.

Lastly, we come to the question of exercise. In this connection most of the women have replied that except performance of household duties they do not take any other form of exercise. Most of the middle class women are so much exhausted by their daily routine work that they have no desire or energy left for taking any additional exercise. Of course leisurely walk in the open air would do them some good. But even this is not possible for them because of scarcity of such open places

in a city. Of course the weight of those women who take regular exercise such as walk, playing badminton or offering Surya Namaskars show an increase of 2 lbs. over those who do not take any such kind of exercise.

In this section I have dealt with the question of health of women and looking to their complaints and considering the average weight of women it must be admitted that the general health of our women is very poor.

CHAPTER VI

SUBJECTS OF THE INQUIRY-GENERAL

In the previous pages I have tried to examine my record of information with regard to various aspects of the subjects of my inquiry-such as personal, educational, social, economic and physical. I shall now review their cases from a general stand point. For this purpose the present chapter will be divided into two parts. The first part will *inter alia*, deal with their daily routine, their manner of spending leisure hours, their social activities. The second part will concern itself with their opinions in general.

Out of 805 women, 655 have given their daily routine in brief. The performance of household duties constitutes the main feature of women's routine. Not less than 541 out of 655 that is 83% have mentioned it as the chief item. By household duties they mean management of the kitchen and nursery, worshipping of family gods, and service of the elders. Of course they do not stop with this alone. Whatever spare time they find is devoted to other activities also. For example 73 have got themselves employed in remunerative work, 30 have engaged themselves in social service. I have come across 3 women who manage all these three things simultaneously. One hundred and twenty-two women continue their education, scholastic or in different arts like sewing, embroidery, music etc. Forty-three women have given outdoor work, while 68 have stated education, as the main part of their daily routine. Three women have dedicated their life to social service.

Having thus ascertained how women spend their day, my next inquiry naturally referred to their leisure hours and the manner in which they enjoy them. After a day's labour, it is but meet that one should have some relaxation to be able to turn to their other duties with fresh and renewed energy. Unfortunately there are some women who are so hard worked that they do not have a minute's rest during the course of the day! Time spent in sleep is their only recreative period. Even that too is not without its disturbing factors. In the course of my inquiry I found 102 such unfortunate women that is 13% of 805 replies. Barring these 102, the rest are said to be enjoying leisure from $\frac{1}{2}$ hour to six hours per day. On an average we can say each woman gets 3 hours every day entirely free from her work. This free time is spent by 230 women in reading light literature such as newspapers, magazines and novels; by 186 women in doing needle work or attending classes of some such kind of work. There are 94 women who have stated that they spend some of this free period in taking complete rest while 65 pass their time in idle talks. Twenty women regularly take evening walks while 16 spend their leisure in playing with children and 24 take part in outdoor games. 16 learn singing while 12 pay social calls. Seven utilise their leisure in trying to do some writing work, while 3 try to do some kind of social work. Three are fond of gardening, 3 others find solace in visiting temples and 3 go a-shopping. There is only one woman who complains that she is not free to use her leisure time in the way she would like.

We have seen above how women spend their leisure according to their individual liking. Amongst them we find 24 who take part in outdoor games. To

my next question whether they are interested in games, 347 have replied in the affirmative. Although such a great number would like to spend some time in games, one regrets to find only 30 women that is 3% actually find time or opportunity to play. Although playing games is one of the best and innocent kind of pleasure one may have, we find that very few women actually indulge in it. It may be due to two reasons, want of time and want of facilities such as playing ground and materials. Amongst those who take part in games 22 prefer badminton, 5 like playing at cards. Tennis, chess and carom are the hobbies of one woman each.

Apart from games, is there any other way in which women try to divert themselves? This was the subject of my next question. Reading, sewing, embroidery painting, singing etc. have already been stated as different forms of utilizing one's leisure. Moreover many have stated that listening to radio broadcasts and going out for picnics are the things to their liking. A few like to measure their swords in debates while few others visit evening clubs. It is interesting to note that some like to spend time in preparing various dishes. Some 7 or 8 prefer dancing while 2 take delight in motor driving. In all the above description, only the peculiar liking of each individual is stated. In many cases they are also supplemented by other varieties of pastimes.

Different associations and clubs are the present day means for people to come together for enjoying the pleasure of company and for devising means for upliftment. To get an idea of how many women avail themselves of these opportunities I put them a question to the point and I found 271 women that is 33% make use

of these clubs and associations. This shows the awakening amongst our sisters. These women are members of not less than 69 institutions. The 69 institutions may be classified as follows : The first kind includes political and social bodies such as the Indian National Congress, Hindu Maha Sabha, Swastik League, Young Men's Hindu Association and others. They are all twelve in number. Music circles, Literary circles and such other eight institutions which are devoted solely to art and literature form the second group. Third division comprises four associations such as All India Medical Association, Secondary teachers' Association, Royal Society of Teachers, London Obstetric Association. The very names of these institutions show that they include members of particular professions. There are about twelve clubs where women could recreate themselves if they so chose. Some women are members of ladies' co-operative societies. I also found four scouting institutions. There are 29 bodies devoted solely to the cause of women. It is a matter for pride that the present day women do not rest satisfied with looking after the interest of their class. They also engage themselves in achieving the welfare of the whole of the community. It is desirable that this outlook should be more widespread.

From the previous pages it will be clear that I have tried to collect material giving detailed information of woman's life. Now I come to the most important part of my inquiry. Whatever may be the educational qualifications, economic conditions, and other facilities in life, much depends on whether the individual is satisfied with her existing lot or desires any changes either way. Question No. 25 asks whether the individual is satisfied with her life or not. It is gratifying to note

that not less than 692 out of 805 replies have understood the importance of the question and given their opinion. Scanning their replies I get 520 women completely satisfied with their conditions. The rest 172 have indicated dissatisfaction in different directions. This gives a proportion of 75 to 25 between the satisfied and dissatisfied, i. e., 3:1, which demands careful consideration. Out of the 172 dissatisfied women, 140 have given causes of their dissatisfaction. Amongst other causes 48 find financial difficulties as the chief cause of their trouble. Thirty-four complain of absence of opportunity to develop their personality, while others, to do social work. Husbands are at the bottom of dissatisfaction in 16 cases. Some are drunkards, some are gamblers. One of them demands divorce from husband on the ground of his inability to earn. Only one woman has admitted that her husband has failed to satisfy her sexually. On this particular aspect, Hindu woman with all her education and progress is rather reluctant to express her frank opinion. While dealing with marriage and family, I have shown 54 women having stated the existence of unhappy relations between their husbands and themselves. It should be noted that not all of them have replied to this general question. Seventeen experience hardships resulting from dependence on relations other than husband. Nine unmarried women are yearning for marriage, while 8 others are unhappy on account of physical or similar ailments. Seven women speak of overwork. Only one woman is not able to pay sufficient attention to her children because of her office work. Twenty-five women are submitting to their lot simply because there is no other course open to them. Out of sheer helplessness they utter the words "cannot

help." Only 15 are happy to some extent. Such is the analysis of replies to this important question. In short 34% consider economic conditions, 33% social conditions, 6% physical while 27% family conditions responsible for their dissatisfaction with life.

Now we shall look at the woman's life from a different angle. Let us see what aims they have in their life as distinguished from aim in taking education already discussed in Chapter III. Every individual wishes to achieve something in his life. Very few have no particular goal to reach. When questioned about this, 523 women have given definite aims of their life. Out of the rest some have got no aim while others had not decided about it, till the time I approached them. There is also a small number who because of circumstances beyond their control, have placed no particular ideal before them.

Out of those who have given definite aims, 159 that is 30% are desirous of doing social work and social service. One-hundred and sixty-six or 32% have their scope limited to their family only; 101 of these have happiness of their family at heart while 65 wish to be ideal wives and mothers. 123 have their ideal centred round themselves. Out of these 38 are keen on self-development and independence in life. Twenty-four desire economic independence. Twenty-one wish to go in for employment either with the idea of self independence or with a view to ameliorating the condition of their family. Only 48 women have stated that their aim in life is to lead a Hedonistic life. "Eat, drink and be merry". Of course their ideas of merriment may be different, as they have not apprised me of them. Fourteen are after various arts while 2 wish to be proficient doctors; 3 seek

salvation while 2 love peaceful life. Six have marriage as their definite aim, out of whom one, already a widow, has a strong desire to remarry.

Opinions

My inquiry synchronised with the workings of the Hindu Law Committee appointed by the Government of India. This committee is intended to codify different Schools of Hindu Law existing in different provinces of India into one act to be known as Hindu Law with the reforms necessary in the present Law. With the idea of gauging opinion of Hindu women on most important points of monogamy, divorce, and the question of inheritance for daughters and wives, I specifically put questions at the end of my questionnaire and I am glad to say that with few exceptions I have been able to elicit opinions on these points.

Those who have studied Hindu Law know how it is partial towards men at the cost of women. I have explained this partiality in chapter II. Whether the first wife is guilty or not, a man can marry a second wife even during the life time of the first one. The wife is left without any remedy even if the husband is guilty of gross misconduct. To remove this anomaly, whether women would like monogamy to be established by law was my query-to which 623 women have replied in the affirmative. Only 46 opposed this measure. I further scanned the above replies according to age and find women below 30 have voted in favour of the change in larger numbers than those above 30. Let me quote in this connection educated woman's remark: "If a woman is expected to remain monogamous, pray, why should not man remain so? It is silly to contend that man is polygamous by

nature and so should be allowed to keep a Zanana like Jehangir's or that woman is dead or indifferent to all the cravings of the flesh and can remain celibate during an indifferent husband's life or after his death." Another woman is strongly of opinion that monogamous law will improve the conditions of the lower classes.

To advocate for monogamy alone would cause some hardship in cases where either party may go insane or become unfit for marital relations. To get out of this tangle, it is necessary that the aggrieved party should be free to marry another suitable partner. And for that purpose divorce is the only remedy. Having sought opinion on this point, I received 498 ayes and 160 noes. Here again as stated above I find the younger generation to be more favourably disposed to the innovation than the older one. With regard to the same point the woman quoted above adds, "If man can't remain monogamous why should woman be refused divorce? It is silly to argue that with the right to divorce, there would be a collapse of the institution of marriage. That means, it is evident the collapse is only prevented by the restrictions on women. Divorce should only be meant as a release for ill-assorted pairs." Another woman demands, "In case of legislative reforms, first preference should be given to provide for divorce." A third one, "Divorce should be provided on mutual consent.", While fourth one suggests, "They should try to adjust themselves rather than seek divorce." A fifth one expresses the fear, "A divorced woman will not be well treated by the society. Her life will be fully ruined." A sixth-one lays down the condition that the divorced wife should be given maintenance till she remarries."

My third general question was with regard to the right of daughter to inherit her father's property. Here too the change in the law of inheritance is desired by 571 as against 71. Some of them have also stated the proportionate share the daughter should inherit along with her brother. Majority want equal share while a few are satisfied with half the brother's share. Only one woman is for giving limited estate over the property inherited by the daughter. In this connection I would like to quote below few remarks of educated women.

One says, "Till the present position continues and on principle of equal rights I would like a daughter to inherit some part of her father's property. As for me I am not at all keen on inheritance since I do not believe in private property and moreover the question of inheritance does not arise in 90 cases out of hundred because of absence of property of the father."

"Women's problems are the creation of a peculiar type of economic structure and I think unless the whole of it is changed, it will be of no use to get a change in her position by legislation. It will be merely a patch work."

As against the above remarks in favour of inheritance a third woman says, "The daughter should not inherit any money from her father. A certain gentleman had left much cash for his daughter. Her husband squandered the whole amount. What is the use of it to the daughter, pray?"

In the eyes of another woman, "If share is given to the married daughter it may lead to more fragmentation and division of land."

Here is a particular instance of a daughter suffering because she was left no inheritance. She was the daughter

of a wealthy father who died suddenly. Her mother followed him. The estate is in the brother's hands. She desires to qualify herself further but he will not pay the necessary expenses. She, therefore, emphatically demands share for the daughter.

Coming to the question of inheritance by the wife to her husband's estate I have 640 opinions in favour as against only 16. These 16 have not given their grounds for their refusal. I have one reply from a woman coming from Goa, wherein she says that in their province a wife is entitled to half the share of her husband's property which she can take and live separately from her sons.

Having thus elicited opinions on specific reforms vitally concerning the life of a woman in Hindu society I asked a general question whether they are satisfied with present conditions of Hindu women's life. If not what changes they would advocate and the way in which they would bring them about. It is really creditable to note that 507 women out of 805, furnished replies embodying their considered opinion. They seem to have thought over this problem from different stand points. Seventy-three have pleaded for equal status with men. Fifty-four have strongly demanded freedom in thought and action. They do not want any interference from the opposite sex in moulding their life and developing their personality. Fourteen women feel that the desired changes will be brought about by legal enactments, while 4 expect to bring about the required effect by proper infusion of eastern and western culture. One hundred and fifty-eight have suggested all round compulsory education with economic bias which will stand them in times of difficulties. I think it would be more proper to give

their opinions in their own words. "I think every girl should have a liberal education which may stand her in good stead, in case she has to earn her livelihood, or in case she is deserted, divorced, or widowed." "Education must spread especially in villages. Men keep women in total ignorance of world affairs hence they are easily deceived." "Such training should be given as would make middle class women able to earn something at home." "Her intellectual capacities ought to be developed first and foremost and she should be given a definite idea of her status and about her role in serving the country. To achieve this, general knowledge classes, literary classes, news clubs etc., must be started." "Separate arrangement should be made for training adult women." "Training for housewife and child welfare should be made compulsory otherwise women's married life would not be happy."

To improve the present lot of women 109 women have suggested economic independence for them. By it they mean freedom and opportunity for women to earn and have a complete hold over their earnings. For this purpose they, including married women, too, wish to have some part time work or other. "Either the husband should give part of his income to his wife or she should have an opportunity to earn and be independent." But another woman fears that if married woman is employed she will miss her more important duty as wife and mother. She should get herself employed only if the income of the family is insufficient.

Here I would like to note that the above-stated different views on the necessity of education and economic independence are the reactions of difficulties and handicaps experienced by them personally.

Fifty-eight women think that the present status of Hindu women is far from satisfactory. But according to them education or economic independence for women alone will not improve their lot. They are of firm opinion that unless and until India becomes free and has its social order established on socialistic basis, women's problems will not be solved satisfactorily. Here are some opinions in their own words. "Women's problems will be solved when India becomes independent." "India's freedom will solve many of women's problems." "Economic independence for women is quite necessary. This is possible only under socialistic or communistic state."

Some give precedence to social reforms and would like stricter enforcement of the Sarada Act to prevent child marriages. They would also like customs such as dowry and Palla to be totally abolished. They further suggest, if at all any cash or estate by way of dowry is given, it should be settled on the bride alone. Custom of Palla tempts parents or guardians to sell their daughters to the highest bidder irrespective of his suitability. Because of such customs and modern tendencies to contract late marriages, the age at marriage of girls has increased considerably. Thinking this to be undesirable, four women have opined that girls should marry at an earlier age. Twenty women, however, want freedom to be given to the girls to choose their own mates and would like to have clubs or such other associations where young members of both sexes can come together and know each other. "Girls should be married at twenty and with their consent." "Girls between 17 and 20, and boys between 22 and 28 should be married. If they do not marry till that age they may perhaps lose the charm in life or may go astray."

Coming to married women, even their condition, according to some women, is not at all satisfactory. There is a suggestion from some quarters for the establishment of advisory centres to help them to get out of family difficulties. "Women become quite helpless in case any misfortune overtakes them. So there should be institutions to help and advise them." A few more women feel the necessity of birth-control clinics wherein sound guidance in the matter would be given.

With regard to widows too, various suggestions have been made. Some say that widows should use the vermilion mark on their forehead as they did before widowhood, for the absence of it easily marks them out for miscreants to harass them. Others think that widows under 25 should be persuaded by the relations to go in for remarriage. Unfortunately the present institutions which arrange for widow remarriages are according to one or two, not working satisfactorily. "Widows have to suffer a lot. The institutions which arrange their remarriages are not doing satisfactory work." There is a third suggestion which demands legislation calling upon widowers to marry widows only if at all they go in for a second marriage.

Some serious minded women criticise the tendency amongst their educated sisters in showing themselves off in such a way as to attract the opposite sex. They also feel that the sense of family responsibility is lacking to some extent amongst the educated women in as much as they run after employment ingoring their home duties. "Woman's real sphere is her home. With sufficient income, a good-natured husband and limited pregnancies a woman is happier than if she takes up a career."

Upto now I have endeavoured to give in concise form the various remarks as I found them in the replies. There are some more important remarks which I shall quote *ad verbatim* as that would reveal their mind better than my paraphrase thereof.

"There should be more clubs and associations for middle class women." "Married women whether educated or uneducated have no idea of present changes in the world situation. They should be free to face the realities of life, specially the change in economic and social conditions which will come to us after this II World War." "Women of the middle class suffer more than the lower class women. The latter can earn money and also can dissolve marriage and thus escape ill treatment at the hands of their husbands. The former have neither robust health nor capacity to earn and hence they have to depend on men and be at their mercy, This state of affairs needs immediate attention and remedy." "In our society women are not treated on equal footing with men. They are supposed to be inferior to men physically and intellectually. It is not so. It is high time for us to agitate for equal status. This will be through education, agitation, and marriage of choice." "Mere social reform will not be enough. There must be a big force to change everything. That force can be created by educated women who think and have the courage to break useless customs." "Marriage should not be the ultimate goal for a girl, and all her energies should not be exhausted within the limits of the family only." "Educated women should lead a movement to attain equal status for women." "The condition of Hindu society is such that it is difficult for a woman to live without being married. Hence the social conditions

must be improved." "The tendency of educated women to indulge in tall talks from platforms should be discouraged. They should take up the problems of literacy of women in villages and the education of their children in schools. Westernization of families and society should be stopped." "There should be compulsory physical training for women." "When men will give up the attitude of considering women as slaves, then alone women will be happy." "Different type of education for women is essential. Present education creates in them a longing for higher standard of life which is not usually possible. This causes a clash between husband and wife." "Women should have freedom to decide their own life." "Please try to improve our conditions as early as possible."

In the course of their remarks a few women have given typical cases of which they are personally aware, inquiring at the same time how to prevent such injustice to womanhood.

As these cases bring very poignantly to our notice the kind of difficulties a woman has to face, I propose to quote in *extenso* ;

"A daughter of a poor widow was married to an old man of 50. Owing to the husband's financial difficulties the wife returned to her mother. Even there he used to visit her. She got four children. When the number of children began to increase and her husband was not even caring to share their responsibility, she was faced with the problem of feeding them. She was in a miserable plight. At last she left her native place to complete a course of nursing and is now earning. But she is still afraid that her husband might trouble her."

"A graduate married the daughter of a wealthy man. The father-in law sent him abroad for higher education. He would not return even after eight years. Then his uncle sent a wire about his mother's serious illness whereupon he came back to India but would not even talk with his wife. However, all the combined efforts of his relatives brought about the union of the husband and wife who was by now a refined college girl." The answerer to my questionnaire wants to know what would have been her fate if he had not returned to India ?

"My sister was married to a man who treated her very cruelly and went even to the extent of beating and locking her up in a room. Once at midnight he wanted her to accompany him somewhere though she was in her menses. On her refusal he began to beat her so much so that the neighbours had to telephone to our father. Of course there was no alternative but to bring her back to our house. Now she is with us. Out of the saris and ornaments given by my father valuing Rs. 2000/- not a single thing has been returned. The man has married another woman and is treating her in the same way."

"I am working as a teacher. I am much troubled by the opposite sex. I cannot leave my job as I have to support myself. Can a way be found out of this ?"

"My Brahmin friend is married to an educated person of her community. Now and then he used to beat her and brand her. At present she is staying with her parents. What salvation is there for her ?"

"My mother, who was a second wife, died in my childhood. Father, though well-off, did not marry third time. He used to treat me very badly. Not only I had

to satisfy all his whims but also I was asked to call my friends to our place to satisfy his lust. He did not want me to marry but to seek employment to keep me engaged. When I came of age my maternal uncle tried to seduce me. In disgust I left my father's place and went to my step-sister, who kindly arranged for my marriage. Now I am well settled. But I would like to know what protection a daughter can have against such a father?"

"A beautiful woman was married to a wealthy man. The mother-in-law and the husband both ill-treated her. She had seven children but all died. In the meantime her husband squandered all his wealth. She tried to take education but he came in her way. At last she gave a notice to him through court and is now able to maintain herself."

"A certain gentleman disinherited his eldest son who is uneducated and whimsical. But all the same he got him married. Now the son has many children. How is the wife to maintain herself and her children within Rs. 25/- which her brother-in law gives her? Her husband is not working. What is the solution, pray?"

PART II

CHAPTER VII

SUBJECTS OF THE INQUIRY-*UNMARRIED*

So far I have tried to analyse the replies to my questionnaire received from my sisters leading a normal life. Irrespective of their individual difficulties and handicaps, these women can safely be said to form the normal section of society. But unfortunately there is also a group of women who are considered to have deviated from the regular path. The doings and the difficulties of these women, I think, are likely to throw significant light on the present day social position of Hindu women. Many times the life of these women indicates reaction to some of the existing undesirable customs.

For a long time my attention was drawn to this class of women and I was anxious to place their grievances and the causes which dragged them to their present condition before society at large. Of course to get first hand information of these unfortunate women was very difficult. I have, therefore, taken the next best course viz, visiting Rescue Homes meant for such women. These institutions are doing laudable work of rescuing fallen women and restoring them, as far as possible, to normal life. To achieve my purpose it was necessary for me to familiarise with the history of each individual recorded by these Homes. With the kind permission of the authorities in charge I was able to study about 543 cases from Rescue Homes working in Bombay, Poona, Patna, and Lahore. I could not get any helpful

information from Allahabad and Benares Rescue Homes for want of necessary records. It may not be out of place to state here that the record kept by the Shradhanand Anath Mahila-shram Bombay, is the most elaborate and comprehensive one, credit for which goes to the Lady Superintendent, Mrs. Laxmibai Kolhatkar. I also received much valuable information through Mrs. Anasuyabai Gyanchand, the President of Patna Rescue Home Committee. I have tabulated the cases collected from these institutions into three parts relating to unmarried girls, married women, and widows. I intend devoting one chapter each to these parts.

In the present chapter, I shall take up the cases of unmarried girls who have had to take shelter in one of the above mentioned Rescue Homes. In all I have collected 98 such cases, namely 6 from Patna, 9 from Lahore, 22 from Poona and 61 from Bombay. The number of these girls forms 18% of the total number of cases collected from these Homes. Of all these Homes I have found the Bombay Home sheltering individuals coming from Nepal in the North, from Mysore in the South, Bengal in the East and Gujarat in the West. Such was not the case in Patna or Lahore. They usually restrict themselves to local cases.

Judging by the age of the girls, who had to take shelter of these Homes, I find the general average is seventeen and half. In Bombay and Patna Homes it comes to 18, in Poona 17 and Lahore 16. The youngest girl, so far as I have been able to find out, was aged 9 hailing from the Punjab. She was kidnapped and raped. This shows at what tender age girls run the risk from men with perverse mentality. Generally 12 to 18 is the time when

girls are liable to be led astray. This is their adolescent period when the development of their physique is much more rapid than the development of their sense of judgment. "Under the happiest conditions, however, adolescence must of necessity be a time of conflict for the girl. In her uncertainty about being able to satisfy the demands which are being presented to her and that require a new type of reaction, she is obliged to find new standards for herself which she frequently thinks is a difficult task."* Besides this is the age when their mind becomes sentimental and highly susceptible to the influence of the opposite sex. In such a mental state they require the greatest care and guidance, the absence of which has led many a girl astray. "Yes, certainly a great many of them grew up to be most excellent women, but how many fell by the wayside and never grew up at all? How many were hindered in their development so that they never achieved anything worth while not even their own health and happiness, nor those of others around them who became warped because of their overwhelming difficulties, warping others in their turn, just because something that might have been done was considered unnecessary fuss or was never thought of at all?"†

Let me now classify the cases of these unmarried girls according to their castes. I was not able to trace the castes of 22 girls. In the case of the remaining 76, Lahore Home shows 2 Brahmins and 3 Khatris; Patna shows 2 Rajputs, 1 Kahar, 1 Kurmi, 1 Sonar and 1 Gwala. The Bombay and Poona Homes together include 19 Brah-

* *Adolescent Girlhood*-Mary Chadwick. p. 145.

† *Ibid* p. 281.

mins, 12 Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhus, 6 Marathas, 5 Saraswat Brahmins, 5 Goa Marathas, 3 Daiwadnya Brahmins, 3 Untouchables, 3 Bhandaris, and one each from Sutar, Dhangar, Pathare Prabhu, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Agri, Koli, Mali, and Lingayat castes. Nine girls have not given their castes but only the place to which they belong : 5 Gujarati, 1 Madrasi, 1 Bengali, 1 U.P. and 1 Nepali.

I shall now turn my attention to the causes which made them take shelter in Rescue Homes. Of course the circumstances in each case are so varied that it is difficult to generalize them. Still, I find, there are some causes which are common.

To begin with cases of seduction, they are 44 in number, forming 45% of the total number of unmarried girls found in these Rescue Homes. Of these, in 14 cases the seducers were near relations, like a cousin, a step-brother or a sister's husband. In one case strange to say even the brother was suspected. Twelve were seduced by their neighbours, 4 by Muhamedans, 3 by their fellow workers in the same place of employment. One girl who was employed in a certain office came in contact with a male clerk. Their intimacy resulted in her being forced to seek the help of a Rescue Home. School friends were the cause in 2 cases while other friends were the cause in 3 cases. Only in 6 cases I could not trace the seducer.

In all the above 44 cases it is difficult to find out how far the girls themselves were responsible for their misfortune. In the course of my investigation, however, I have come across only 3 girls who felt no compunction

for their misbehaviour. Even the Superintendents of the respective Homes have noted them as incorrigible girls. Regarding the remaining 41 it can at the most be said that they have fallen a prey to momentary infatuation for which they have been suffering very severe punishment while the real culprits are moving with impunity in society. No doubt institutions like Rescue Homes bring about social resurrection of these unfortunates still they will never be able to restore mental damage done to them.

Some girls have left at the instigation of others. Their homes in many cases, girls who were not expecting to be married at proper time owing to poverty at home, were tempted to accompany their instigators. Some preferred to be led astray by the sweet talk of their so called well-wishers rather than lead a life of drudgery and want, in the house of their poor parents. I have got 12 such cases on my record. They are about 12% of the total. In one instance the father himself drove away his daughter from his house as she was on friendly terms with a Muhamedan. To impress upon them their mistake and to show them the right path, such girls are kept in the Rescue Homes for some time. The authorities, thereafter, try to bring about their marriages whenever possible.

There were 9 cases of kidnapping out of which 4 were kidnapped by Muhamedans, and two by their neighbours. Besides these, there were 3 cases where girls fled away from their homes because of ill-treatment at the hands of their parents or guardians, who in two cases branded the unfortunate girls.

Upto now I have considered 68 cases out of the total number of 98. It may be argued that some of these 68 may have been partly responsible for their own misfortune and I have already stated that it is difficult to apportion the responsibility between the two parties. In the five cases which I am going to deal with now, the girls had no voice at all and were sold and resold as mere chattels. In Patna, a Kahar father sold his daughter to a man, who in his turn tried to resell her to a third party. In the meantime she escaped and with the help of some of the Arya Samajists reached the Patna Rescue Home. I may be permitted to say here that the volunteers of the Arya Samaj all over India are doing creditable service in helping many a helpless woman in difficulties to find some shelter and I am proud to say that because of their timely help many of my sisters have been saved from utter ruin. There is another case from Bombay where a Dhangar girl of 13 was kidnapped by her neighbour who sold her twice over. A Muhamedan has also sold a girl whom he had carried away from her house. A twenty years orphan Bania girl was sold to an old man by her guardian. In Lahore one orphan Brahmin girl was sold for Rs. 300/- to a certain man whose mother ill-treated her so much that she had to run away from him. The above cases form 5% of the total number of girls.

There is another danger to which some of these girls are exposed and that is prostitution. One sixteen year old U.P. girl was kidnapped for this purpose. She was brought to one of these Ashrams where all efforts to bring her round to normal path proved fruitless. On the contrary she committed theft in the Ashram and ran away. A certain Chandrasenia Kayastha Prabhu

widower had kept a mistress in his house. After his death, this woman tried to induce his three daughters aged 18, 16 and 12 to lead a life of shame. Fortunately these girls were saved from that ignominious life by the help of a Rescue Home. Even some of the girls of prostitutes themselves have been rescued from their mothers. I have got three cases of this type. While schooling, a daughter of a prostitute fell in love with a certain boy. Her mother would not consent to their marriage as the boy happened to be poor. On the contrary she forced her daughter to continue the family profession by becoming a mistress of a Bania. The girl resented this and fled to a Rescue Home. Another girl of a prostitute lived for 12 years with a certain man who kept her in comfort and bestowed on her whatever was possible. The girl in the meantime however came to know a rich man with whom she cultivated friendship. The first man did not like the friendship and began to scold and beat her. The girl thereupon was introduced into the Ashram. There is a third case of a similar type. The mother of a girl was a prostitute in Goa. After her mother's death while living with her sister in Bombay she ran away with a person, when she found out that she was pregnant. The seducer was prepared to marry her, but the natural instinct of the girl predominated and she fled away with another person with whom she lived for 3 days only. The police on getting information about her pregnancy removed her to the Vigilance Association Rescue Home where in due course she gave birth to a child. The authorities were arranging her marriage with a man of her caste.

In four cases girls were found roaming about in streets. Three of them had no relations while one came from a good family. The police brought these girls into the Ashrams

for shelter. These three girls ran away from the Rescue Home and the fourth one was handed over to her guardians. Three girls had no help from anybody; somehow or other they managed to get into the Ashrams. Another girl became mad after her seduction. She was being cared for by the Rescue Home. One of these benevolent institutions foiled an attempt to convert a poor girl to Christianity.

Let us now see how these Rescue Homes deal with cases entrusted to them. Out of 98, 28 girls were restored to their parents or guardians as the case may be. Twenty-one were married and it is said they are leading a happy life. They visit the Homes off and on which they consider as their parental home. I intended to visit them in their own homes, to get a closer insight into their life, but at their own instance the Superintendents of Homes would not give me their new addresses. One of the Ashramites has secured a decent employment. In the case of 15 girls I could not know how the Homes dealt with them. The rest were in charge of the Ashrams at the time of my visit.

No definite information is available about the duration of stay of these girls in the Ashrams. Only in Patna, I gathered, the average period of stay was 3 months.

I shall now narrate in detail some of the peculiar cases of unmarried girls from these Ashrams. Of course all of them have been discussed above.

Some typical cases of unmarried girls.

1. An orphan Brahmin girl aged 18 was brought to Lahore by a woman of her acquaintance and handed over to a man on some payment. That man sold her to another

for Rs. 300/-. She was with him for some days but his mother began to ill-treat her even to the extent of beating. She could not bear this treatment and hence left his house. Luckily she was brought to the Lahore Rescue Home. She was restored to the man who bought her with the understanding that his mother should not ill-treat her in future.

2. A girl of 15 ran away from her parents because they were poor. She was found by the police. They took her to the Lahore Rescue Home. She was found to be suffering from syphilis. After proper treatment she was sent back to her father.

3. A Rajput girl aged 19 became friendly with a Mohomedan. When her father and brother came to know of their friendship, they drove her out of the house. She went to her uncle's place but he too refused to give her shelter in such circumstances. She wandered about till she met the Secretary of the Arya Samaj who took her to the Patna Rescue Home. Within two months the Ashram authorities arranged for her marriage.

4. In Poona, there lived a poor Brahmin family. Their neighbour was a man of 40 whose wife was ailing. He took advantage of the poverty of the Brahmin neighbour and became intimate with their daughter. When he observed signs of pregnancy he got himself transferred to another place leaving the girl to her own fate.

5. A poor Brahmin widow was trying to earn an honest living after the death of her husband by selling milk. She used to send her 16 year old daughter to her customers for milk delivery. One of the customers took

advantage of her tender age and poverty. When the poor girl became pregnant her position became precarious and but for the timely help of the Rescue Home one cannot say what would have been her fate.

6. A Madrasi orphan was brought to Bombay by a Christian woman who used to treat her very badly even to the extent of branding. Another woman took pity on her and freed her from the clutches of the Christian woman. But in company of other servants she fell a victim to their lures. Some one took her to the Bombay Ashram where after her delivery she was married and is now leading an honourable life.

7. An untouchable girl was seduced by a clerk in the same workshop where she was working as a labourer. To hide her shame she sought shelter in the Ashram. After delivery the authorities sent her to her uncle.

8. Due to poverty, the marriage of a Saraswat girl could not be brought about for a long time. Nature got the upper hand and she became pregnant. She resorted to an Ashram where she gave birth to a child. The parents took her back to their home.

9. A good-natured simple Kayastha girl was sent to her sister in Bombay for education. Her brother-in-law was a rich man and had three children. The innocent girl became his victim. The mother of the girl to save her son-in-law took her to the Ashram. Thence she was taken home.

10. A resident of Poona District lost her parents when she was very young. She ran away from her uncle's house because of ill-treatment by his wife. For some time she worked as a household servant at

Yeravda. Her uncle came to know of this and tried to take her back with the help of the Police. She managed to run away from the place with only Rs. 2/- leaving all other things behind. She came over to Bombay, took food at a hotel and slept at night on a footpath at Worli. The police took her to the Ashram.

11. Here is a story of a Brahmin girl of 17 from the United Provinces. A distant relative of her prevailed upon her to accompany him to Bombay. With a desire to get a handsome amount from the other party, the relative arranged her marriage, of course, against her will. At the time of the marriage, the girl refused to submit, protested and shouted for help. The attention of the neighbours was drawn and through the help of some Arya Samajists the girl was rescued and brought to the Ashram. On receiving information from the Ashram Authorities, her mother hurried to the Ashram from the U. P. and took her daughter away with much gratitude. The police were informed of this case.

12. Miss A. Caste "Untouchable". Age 18, District Poona.

Miss A lived with her mother and her step-father. Her mother has four children by her second husband. Miss A had to work very hard and her step-father was treating her very harshly. A relative of her step-father persuaded her to accompany him to Bombay. He brought her to Bombay but could get no work to maintain her. In a couple of days he took her to Matunga station and left her there. The Secretary of the Mahim Hindu Sabha happened to meet her and sent her to the Ashram as she was found helpless on the station platform. She was in the Ashram for nearly 10 months. Her parents refused

to have anything to do with her. She is now happy being married to an educated gentleman earning a decent income.

13. Miss R. Caste Daivadnya Sonar, age 20, resident of Bombay.

A good looking educated girl, she was in the Ashram in 1929 for a few months. She was pregnant and her mother took her away after delivery. After about 3 years, she sought admission to the Ashram of her own accord. She said, "My mother, who is very poor, is unable to settle my marriage to my satisfaction. I can't remain unmarried. Please try to get me married." She had to wait only for a few days. She was soon married to a rich young man of her own caste. Her mother and other relatives were present at the time of the ceremony.

14. One day at about 4 in the morning, the Ashram bell rang vigorously. It was unusual. On opening the door the Lady Superintendent saw two good looking young girls aged 22 and 19 with a young man of about 25. The girls wanted admission. They were taken inside and the youth was directed to go to the house of the Secretary.

The father of the girls, a dealer in silver pots at Surat, sustained heavy loss in business and came to stay in Bombay. The ailing mother was confined to bed. The daughters had gone through primary education. They knew knitting and embroidery work very well. The girls being young were not allowed to go out of the house. Their father perhaps owing to financial worry and the difficulties in settling their marriages was often out of temper and scolded them.

In a chawl just behind the rooms of these girls, there lived two strong handsome Brahmin youths aged 25 and

22 respectively. The elder was doing business as a hawker and the younger earned about Rs. 25/- a month.

The younger sister happened to see the younger brother through a window. A friendship grew between them which gradually developed into love. Soon they began to exchange letters. One night the boy jumped over the wall and met this girl. The elder sister also found herself gradually drawn towards the elder brother.

After a few days the sisters decided to run away with the Brahmin youths. They had no idea about the status or financial position of the young men. The younger brother became nervous and wanted to drop the idea. But the elder brother was bold enough to carry out the plan. They went on foot to a railway station but the man had no money to purchase tickets. It was here that the girls came to know that he was a pauper. They realised the danger in accompanying him. But now it was not possible for them to return home. The elder sister wanted to jump into the sea and die. But the younger had no courage to do so. At this moment the elder remembered the name of the Shradhanand Ashram about which she had read in papers. A taxi was hired and all the three drove to the Ashram.

The police were informed by the Secretaries. The father was also sent for. After a few weeks' stay in the Ashram, the girls were persuaded to go to their father.

16. A young Jew brought to the Ashram one day at about 10 p.m. a young handsome girl of 15. He said that the girl was found surrounded by *mawalis* at a street corner near the K. E. M. Hospital, Parel. The girl was admitted at once.

The girl, when questioned, said that she had neither father nor mother. Both had died of consumption. She was admitted in the hospital a couple of months back. Having been discharged from the hospital she tried to find out her relatives but could not trace them as the building in which they were residing was demolished.

Next day the Secretary took her statement orally and cross-examined her. He suspected that the girl was concealing some facts. Inquiries were, therefore, instituted in Dadar area and one intelligent inmate of the Ashram was asked to find out her guardians. By chance the relatives of the girl and our Ashram woman met in one school, both making inquiries about the girl. The relatives who were searching for the girl throughout over night rushed to the Ashram and were extremely glad to find her safe there.

The truth was that the girl came from a respectable family. She was in the habit of telling lies. Her grandmother had scolded her the previous day on that account. The girl took it to heart and left the house without informing anybody.

16 A Saraswat girl of 15 was serving as a domestic servant in a family in Karwar District. She then became the subject of a Sessions Case in which the accused was convicted. But the girl became ostracised by her family and caste. The Sessions Judge, therefore, recommended that she should be kept in a public institution. The girl had to seek shelter in the Shradhanand Ashram. She was fair, strongly built and hardworking. She was illiterate when she came, but afterwards learned to read and write. After a few months she was married to a well-placed gentleman from the Central Provinces.*

Cases from Nos. 10 to 16 are taken from The Hindu Women's Rescue Home Society's Reports.

CHAPTER VIII

SUBJECTS OF THE INQUIRY—*MARRIED*.

From unmarried girls we shall now come to cases of married women who unfortunately have to be the inmates of these Rescue Homes. While discussing the circumstances about the former I had only to take into account the circumstances of their parents, their own nature and the person or persons who brought about their downfall. But the question of married women is not so simple. Herein we are faced with many factors which make individual cases complicated in their own way. From the sweet home of her parents where she has spent her happy childhood, woman is transferred after marriage to a new home which does not necessarily provide happier or even as happy an environment. If she has sufficient adaptability, well and good. Otherwise it becomes in many cases an uphill task to adjust herself to the nature of her husband, parents-in-law, brothers and sisters-in-law and other inmates. Where no adjustment takes place, her life becomes nothing short of a mess. In some cases, as we have seen in the previous part, marriage has proved to be a total failure. But in the cases which will be discussed presently, we shall find her life to be totally ruined. We shall now try to understand how this maladjustment is brought about.

Considering the inmates of the Rescue Homes, the number of married women predominates on the whole as well as in each of the four Rescue Homes separately. This will be clear from the following statement.

| | Unmar. ried. | Marri- ed. | Widow- ed. | Total | Percentage of | | |
|---------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-------|---------------|--------|----|
| | | | | | Un. Mar. | Widow- | |
| | | | | | ried. | ed. | |
| Patna. | 6 | 24 | 18 | 48 | 12 | 49 | 39 |
| Lahore. | 9 | 35 | 11 | 55 | 16 | 66 | 18 |
| Poona. | 22 | 33 | 32 | 87 | 25 | 38 | 37 |
| Bombay. | 61 | 165 | 127 | 353 | 17 | 48 | 35 |
| Total. | 98 | 257 | 188 | 543 | 18 | 48 | 34 |

Why the number of married women exceeds the number of unmarried as well as widows has been partly hinted at in the beginning. Other causes will be apparent from the discussion later on.

Considering the ages of these 257 women the general average comes to 22.5. In the Patna Home it is 20.5, in Poona 21, and in Lahore and Bombay 23. The minimum age is 14. From Lahore Home there is a case of 14 years old married woman whose mother-in-law wanted to sell her. From these figures it is obvious that in the very prime of youth many of my sisters have been driven to desperation. On the other hand there are also cases wherein disruption has come in after the birth of one or two children and at times even so late as at 40, when the relations between the couples are supposed to have steadied. However, the latter type of instances are rare. Out of the 257 married women found in Rescue Homes, there are 21 cases where even the birth of 1 to 5 children has not prevented disharmony. This comes to 8%. Since the records of these Homes do not mention

existence of any children in the cases of women other than the said 21, their absence can safely be presumed. From this it can be inferred that cordial and intimate relations between the couples must not have come to exist at all.

Before trying to investigate into the causes of such mishaps a glance at the castes and the native places of these women would not be out of place. The 25% of married women under consideration belong to 50 different castes ranging from Brahmins to untouchables. The detailed classification is as follows :—

Brahmin 61, (including 6 from Patna and 5 from Lahore), Maratha 45, untouchables 13, Punjabi Khatri 7, Vaishya 6, Sikh, Saraswat, Rajput 5 each, Kosti, Sonar, Kshatriya 4 each, Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu, Lingayat, Shimpi, Kunbi, Teli 3 each; God (Bihar), Kayastha (Bihar), Arora (Punjab), Jat (Punjab), Dhobi, Gosavi, Sutar, 2 each; Dusad, Bauri, Parwali Malhori, Hawar Ahir (all from Bihar), Mali, Mone, Kumbhar, Bania, Kapoor (all from Punjab) and Sali Gurav, Jain, Patidar, Bohri, Koli, Jangam, Bhoi, Kharvi, Daiwadnaya, Purbhaya, Chimgai, Missir, Kasar, Kirat, Thakur 1 each.

The above details clearly show that the help of the Ashrams is sought after by women coming not from any particular caste or class only but from various castes or classes, high and low.

Just as in the case of unmarried girls, married women found in Bombay Rescue Home, have come from

different places and provinces. Their classification is as under :—

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Bombay City and suburbs. | 68 |
| Poona District. | 15 |
| U. P. | 7 |
| Baroda. | 4 |
| Kathiawad. | 4 |
| Central India. | 4 |
| Central Provinces. | 3 |
| Hyderabad (Deccan) | 3 |
| Malbar. | 3 |
| Delhi. | 1 |
| Rawalpindi. | 1 |
| | <hr/> 113 |

In the case of the other three Rescue Homes of Patna, Lahore and Poona, no mention about the native places of the inmates is made.

As already stated in the beginning, it is not easy to single out any particular condition or circumstance as the cause responsible for women taking shelter in these Homes. More often than not various circumstances combine themselves to force women to go to Ashrams. At the outset we shall try to find how many of the women have been driven out by their husbands. They number 68, in 34 cases the fault lies with the women themselves. In other 34 cases women were quite innocent. The first group of 34 consists of 3 insane, 4 eccentric, 2 deformed, 1 invalid, 1 defective in one of the limbs, 1 quite unfit for marital relations and 1 woman who disliked work. The remaining 21 were either themselves of bad character or were led astray. Coming

to the innocent, there are 6 instances of the husbands marrying a second time and invariably driving away the first wife. There are one or two cases where the second wife was driven away. Husbands of 4 women were addicted to vices. The mother-in-law in one case forced her son to desert his wife. One such deserted woman was sold by her aunt to a stranger. Many times mere suspicion has led to married women being forsaken by their husbands.

As against the above 68 cases of husbands deserting their wives, we now come to instances where women have themselves left their husbands. Wonderful as it would appear this number by far exceeds the number of the first group. But careful scanning of the causes will make us more sympathetic towards them. Out of 151 women of this latter group, only in 32 cases the husbands are not at all to be blamed. But in the remaining 119 cases, the husbands were contributory factors. For instance, 8 persons married when they were too old to give marital happiness to their wives. Five men actually wanted to sell their wives. Three most glaring instances were found in the Lahore Rescue Home where the wives were used as stakes in gambling. In the case of two of them husbands lost the game and the poor wives like chattels were taken possession of by the winner. The third one made good her escape rather than submit to the gamblers. Ultimately all these three found shelter in the Ashram. This reminded me of the old Pauranic solitary instance of Draupadi. Her case was supposed by me to be a bygone thing. But evidently I was mistaken.

Impotency of the husbands was the reason advanced by 3 women for leaving them. Three men became

Sanyasis and renounced worldly life. Three women have come to the Rescue Home as the last resource. Their husbands were convicted of some offences and these women were therefore ostracised by their other relations. Fourteen per cent of 151 women deserters that is about 21 could not put up with their adultrous husbands, nine of whom went to the extent of bringing their mistresses to stay along with their wives. One of them murdered his mistress and wanted to kill his wife too. Instead of keeping mistresses, 14 men married a second time even during the life time of the first one. Being unable to bear ill-treatment at the hands of these co-wives 14 women left their homes. These 14 include a peculiar case of 20 year old woman from Maratha caste. Tired of the agonies inflicted on her by her husband and co-wife, she jumped into a well along with her two children. As luck would have it the children were drowned while she survived. The law sentenced her for committing murder and attempting to commit suicide and directed her to an Ashram as a special case. When we come across such cases, we are forced to admit the failure of polygamous marriages. This statement is confirmed by the reports of the Shradhanand Rescue Home, which repeatedly requisitioned overdue legislation to prevent bigamous marriages. "It will save many women from the neglect or ill-treatment by their husbands who marry again."

There are 11 cases of ill-treatment by mothers-in law sometimes jointly with the victim's husband, and sometimes with his connivance. There is one instance of a woman who not being able to bear the treatment meted out to her by the mother-in-law threw herself and her child into a well. The child died and the mother survived to find herself being lodged in Bombay Ashram by an

order of the Court. Four women left their husbands because of their unemployment. In one more case the unemployed husband kept a boarding house and asked his wife to be cheap with the customers. The idea being distasteful to her she left the husband. Insanity of the husband was a cause advanced by a woman for leaving him. Earnings of two women were squandered away by their husbands who were steeped in vice. These women had no other course open to them but to leave their husbands. Forty-one women did not like to stay with their husbands because they suffered ill-treatment.

There is a still larger number of women who have suffered physically at the hands of their husbands. Twenty-four have stated that they were treated very cruelly while 15 more have made bitter complaints about the beating they got and 3 have admitted that they were branded. The ear of one, a lip of another and the nose of a third, were cut off. Two showed scars on their body, two were on the point of being done to death. It is worth noting here that out of these seven culprits, only three were brought to book, the other four went Scot-free. Why should Hindu Law not come to the rescue of such innocent victims of the wrath of their husbands?

Fifty women were seduced. Some of them were themselves of loose character. Others allowed themselves to be seduced because of unkindly treatment of the husbands. As many as 17 of these 50 were exploited by unscrupulous Muhamedans for their nefarious ends. Of course, it is difficult to apportion blame or fix the responsibility of the crime between the two committing parties. Whoever may be the guilty party, these Rescue Homes must be given credit for lending a helping hand

to these misguided women and bringing about their social regeneration.

Generally speaking, out of the total number of 257 married women, 129 were found to be innocent while 128 will have to be held responsible for their own action. The remarks passed against these 128 women by the Superintendents of the Rescue Homes, who are directly in touch with them, mark them out as of questionable character.

Having seen how these unfortunate persons have made their entrance into the Homes, we shall now see how they made their exit. Really speaking there is no full information about this point in respect of all women. The records show 63 or 28% women were restored to their husbands, 14 or 6% were restored to their relatives such as parents, sisters, etc., and one to her lover; 28 or 11% were remarried after due formalities; 27 i. e. only 10% thought fit to run away from the Ashrams. Four women who were married under the Special Marriage Act obtained divorce from court. Two are prosecuting their studies and three were got employed. It will be seen from the above figures that the number of women restored to their husbands, is the highest. Next to it comes the number of the remarried. In 16 cases, out of 24 total married women from Patna Home, remarriages were arranged. They included cases of women belonging to the upper classes of society in which divorce is not legally allowed. When I questioned Mrs. Anusuyabai Gyanchand, the President of the Rescue Home Committee, how this could be managed, she replied, "Letters are written to the husbands to take their wives home and every means is tried to send them home. When they refuse to

do so and allow the wives to remarry, then only they are married again." To my next question whether these second marriages have proved successful she replied, "A Committee of members had gone on a tour to visit the women who married from the Ashram. Their report is not available as yet."

The question about married women who are deserted by or who have themselves deserted their husbands cannot easily be solved so long as Hindu Law is what it is. The Shradhanand Ashram in Bombay has been complaining of this, year in and year out, in their reports. "The real and insurmountable difficulty lies in cases in which one party refuses to have anything to do with the other party. The woman being anxious to live a married life would not pursue quietly any course of education. She would get tired of sitting idle in the Ashram. She insists upon getting herself married to any other person. This the Ashram authorities are unable to do under the existing Hindu Law and then the woman becomes a source of mischief and nuisance."

In these circumstances the Ashrams try to restore these women as early as they can by bringing about reconciliation with their husbands as far as possible. Where they fail-and unfortunately it is in 62% cases that they fail-either the woman leaves the Ashram herself or is remarried. The average duration of their stay in the Ashram is about two to three months. Very few have become permanent residents of these Homes.

TYPICAL CASES.

Patna.

1. Date of admission 17-6-42. Caste: Maithil Brahmin. Age 19.

She is a married woman from Darbhanga. Her husband is a simpleton and her elder brother-in-law wants to seduce her. Because she resented his advances, he beat her and sent her out of the house. He also beat her husband. She went to "The Paropkarini Samiti at Dalsing Sarai twice but the Secretary called her husband and sent her home with him. Her brother-in-law still troubles her in the old way and when she could not stand it any more she again ran away to the same Samiti; the Secretary, this time brought her to this Ashram at Patna. Her husband came; the Ashram people explained everything to him and he took her back home with him once more.

2. Date of admission, 13-12-41. Caste : Brahmin. Age 20.

As she had constant tiffs with her husband, she was driven out of her house. She lived with her father, where she fell in love with a man. She subsequently became pregnant. She was then asked to leave his home also. Her uncle brought her to the Ashram, where she married a man from Badan on 16-6-42.

3. Date of admission 24-6-42. Caste: Brahmin, Age 28.

She lost her mother in early childhood. The step-mother ill-treated and starved her and the father did not care either, so she ran away from the house and wandered about till she reached Dhanbad. Here, with the aid of the Arya Samaj, she married a man whom they knew. But after some time the husband left her, so through the Arya Samaj, at Asansol, she was sent to this Ashram. Here she married on 14-7-42. and left the Ashram.

4. Date of admission 14-1-42. Caste : :Gawar. Age 25.

Her husband married again and drove her out of the house. For a year she wandered about and earned some money by doing labour, when a gentleman brought her to the Ashram. She married again and left the Ashram on 11-3-1942.

Lahore.

5. Age : 14. Caste : Mali.

She was married by her parents to a man of 45. The old man brought her to Lahore where he tried to sell her. On receiving information, the Police appeared on the scene and removed her to the Rescue Home.

6. Age : 35. Caste : Naniya.

Finding that her husband had become impotent after two years of marriage, she still put up with him for two years more. Not being able to get on any longer, she left him and came to Lahore. Seeing her wandering alone, two well-minded persons took her to the Police who sent her to the Rescue Home. She is now remarried and is happy.

7. Age : 23. Caste : Sikh.

In this case she was married at the early age of 14 to an old man of 70, by whom she had three children. Her husband's younger brother wanted her to submit to his wishes, which she stoutly resented. Thereupon the brother-in-law represented to her husband that she was of bad character. She was given a sound beating by the husband on mere suspicion. She sought aid of the

Police who helped her into the Ashram. The management succeeded in removing the suspicion and the husband received her back. She is now spending her days peacefully with her husband.

8. Age 22.

Caste: Kapoor.

Here is a case of a decent girl hailing from a good family. She was married to a gentleman belonging to another sub-caste. Her mother-in-law was against this marriage and became hostile to her from the very beginning. When the woman in question gave birth to a child she was not allowed even to suckle the babe with the result that the child died shortly. Thereafter she was sent back to her brother who kept her in Rescue Home for education

9. Age: 22.

Caste: Khatri.

Here is an instance of polygamy. This woman was married to a man who had already two wives living. After marriage this poor woman was ill-treated by the husband and one of the co-wives. After some days she was driven away by the husband. She found her way to Arya Samaj and thence to the Rescue Home. The management sent notice to the husband either to accept her or consent to her remarriage. Subsequently she was remarried.

10. Age 26.

Caste: Sikh.

Her husband was fond of gambling. As he had no money he offered his wife as a stake. According to the rules of gambling the poor wife was asked by the husband to be present at the game. She refused and went straight

to the Sikh temple. The husband tried to take her back forcibly but she would not budge an inch. With the help of some friends she came to the Rescue Home. Her only anxiety was to be united with her two children who were with the husband.

Bombay & Poona.

11. Age, 20.

Caste : Brahmin.

In this case, the woman was married at the age of eleven. Her husband was receiving education in a distant town. In the absence of the husband, his maternal uncle tried to seduce her. As she would not consent to this, he tried to poison her husband's mind. The husband brought her to Bombay where he was cheated by some bad characters who managed to carry away the wife. The police rescued her and brought her to the Vigilance Association Rescue Home. After delivery she was removed to the Shradhanand Ashram as her relations could not be traced. She showed no aptitude for any training hence she was engaged as an Ayah to look after children.

12. Age; 22.

Caste; Kosti.

This woman was forced to leave her house because of ill-treatment by her husband and mother-in-law. With the help of another woman she came to Bombay to earn her living. The benign helper used to take away all earnings from her. When the woman in question asked for some money from her helper she drove her out of the house. While helplessly roaming about on the streets she was picked up by the Police and sent to the Ashram.

13. Age: 20.

Caste- Maratha.

A man married this woman because his first wife was too young. Three years after when the first wife came of age, she was brought home by the husband. As ill-luck of the second wife would have it, the discarded wife became the pet and this unfortunate woman was sent back to her mother's place. Being forced to earn her living she took up work in the field. Soon after she became pregnant. Subsequently she came to the Shradhanand Ashram from where she gave birth to a child and was then sent back to her mother. This woman was by nature meek and mild but simply because of the husband's whims all this disgrace had fallen upon her.

14. Age 40.

Caste: Gujarati Brahmin.

The husband became heavily indebted and thought fit to run away to save his skin from the creditors leaving his wife and a small daughter to their fate. The poor woman struggled for her existence by working. Her cousin brother called her to attend on his wife during her confinement. The temporary employer took advantage of her dependent condition and seduced her. As a result she had to seek the help of a Rescue Home to save herself from shame. She returned home after giving birth to a child.

15. Age 22.

Caste: Naidu.

Here is an example of efficacy of freedom to get divorce. A girl from Naidu caste married a Brahmin under Special Marriage Act. The husband had already a mistress in his house. The wife could not tolerate this. Hence frequent altercations followed. Her caste people would not come to her help because of her inter-caste

marriage. Ultimately she had to obtain a divorce. Along with four year old daughter she had recourse to an Ashram where she educated herself so as to be just able to support herself.

16. Age: 35

Caste: Maratha.

Similar to the foregoing case here is one of a Hindu woman belonging to the Maratha caste. The girl was married at the age of 5 and lived peacefully till she had two children. Thereafter her husband brought a mistress in the house. The wife did not approve of this and commenced living separately. After some days she became acquainted with a Muhamedan. When she found that she was pregnant she came to the Rescue Home. The authorities succeeded in getting the Muhamedan converted to Hinduism. She was married to him according to Hindu rites.

17. A little Maratha girl "X" was married when she was eight years of age. Her husband was a grown up man and as he did not like to wait till she came of age, he married another young woman when his first child-wife was at her father's house. Six or seven years went by and the girl grew up at her father's house. When the father died she went to live with her elder sister and ultimately with her own mother-in-law. But her jealous co-wife would not brook her presence even in the neighbourhood and she got her husband to assault both the mother-in-law and the first wife. Helpless X again sought shelter with another elder sister on whose farm she worked. Another young farm-worker tried long and persistently to seduce her and in the end succeeded. X told her sister what had happened. The young farmer got frightened, and left for Bombay. He promised to

send for "X" and gave her his address. "X" followed her lover to Bombay. He was living in a small room with his mother. The mother got furious and refused to admit X into her house. Destitute and without a friend in this wide world X was taken to a Police Station. The Police sent her to our Rescue Home. She at long last found a home and friends.

18. "X" was married at the age of 10. She was rather lazy and her husband who was addicted to *ganja* used to maltreat her. Even after she became the mother of 3 or 4 children he used to beat her and abuse her. She was disgusted with life and ran away with her children to Bombay. She had to beg due to her desparate condition. Some one directed her to the Ashram where she got shelter.

19. A young Maratha married girl aged 15 from Ahmednagar District was brought from her father's house during his temporary absence from home, by a Muhamedan neighbour. She was dressed as a boy before she was taken away from her father's house. The girl was kept in Bombay for about a fortnight. When riots broke out in the month of February 1929, she was taken in a man's dress to Kurla. On the way they were accosted by a respectable gentleman near Matunga. The Muhomedan escaped but the girl was taken to the Ashram. A complaint was lodged at the King's Circle Police station. The father of the girl who had given up his daughter as lost was sent for. The girl was restored to her father.

20. "X" was a married Brahmin woman of 16. She was staying with her parents at Bilaspur in C. P. when one of her close relatives persuaded her to come over with

him to Kurla for a few days. At Kurla he arranged to get her married by taking some money from the intending bridegroom. Being apprised of the relative's plot she protested at the time of the actual marriage. Some kind neighbour having come to know of her helpless condition informed a worker of the Ashram. The mother of the girl was sent for. The girl was saved and brought to the Ashram with her mother. The matter was reported to the Court at Kurla.

21. "X" aged 20 was living with her husband at Delhi. One day she received a letter from some relative in Bombay. The husband wanted to see the letter. But the wife at once destroyed it and expressed a desire to go to Bombay. He refused to send her. She ran away and came to Bombay to the writer of the letter. The latter kept her at his place for some time and then for reasons best known to himself got her admitted in the Ashram. The Secretaries informed the husband who immediately came to Bombay and took her back. The wife was glad to go back. The husband seemed to be a rich man and he was not suspicious of the fidelity of his wife.

22. "X" aged 20 was a married woman from U. P. She was staying with her husband, who being a policeman had to go out often on duty. The wife used to visit a female neighbour who, it seems, was a wicked woman. There she met a bad character who told her that her husband had gone to Bombay on official duty and would not return for over a month. He further asked her to go to Bombay. Believing the story, the woman left for Bombay with her ornaments. The man who accompanied her took possession of the ornaments and forced her to go to a brothel in Kamatipura where he himself stayed for the

night, took some money from the brothel-keeper and absconded. She was forced to lead an immoral life for about a month. She got disgusted and taking advantage of the absence of the brothel-keeper she asked the help of a policeman. She was brought to the Ashram. The husband was informed and being an Arya Samajist, he took her back to his home without any hesitancy.

23. Mrs. "X" from Ahmednagar District, Age 22, Caste Mahar, was married at the age of 7 to a grown up man. Her husband married another grown up girl and Mrs. "X" was sent to her father's house. After her father's death, her uncle got her divorced and married her again. The second husband had another wife but married Mrs. X because he had no issue from the first. The co-wife got jealous and began to trouble her. An old woman in the neighbourhood encouraged the quarrels and ultimately instigated her to leave her husband. A neighbour of the old woman influenced her and had access to Mrs. "X". The husband informed the Police. The woman was found with the other man. Pending the decision of the case, Mrs. X was sent to our Home. The influence of the man upon her was so much that even in court she declared her intention to stay with him. By persuasion and kind treatment however, after a stay of about 8 months at the Ashram, she expressed her willingness to return to her husband. In the meanwhile the co-wife also changed a great deal.

24. The husband of a girl of 18 and belonging to Sonar or Daivadnya caste was a great drunkard. Being disgusted with his habits, the wife returned to her father at Bassein (Dist. Thana) but to her misfortune the father himself proved to be a worse drunkard. She could not

live happily there and hence had to return again to her husband, in Bombay. Unfortunately she could not find her husband's residence at Null Bazar. Some *mavalis* surrounded her immediately on a footpath. A respectable officer in the Bombay municipality happened to be there. He suspected foul play, and brought her to the Home. The husband was traced. He was persuaded to leave off his habits. He was shown the consequences. He repented in a few weeks, took away his wife and is at present living happily with her.

25. A Brahmin girl of 18 was tortured much by her licentious husband and his sisters. Getting disgusted with life, she one day threw herself out of a window from the fourth floor of a building. She was removed to a hospital. She was charged with attempt to commit suicide but was fortunately acquitted through the efforts of the Hindu Deen Daya Sangh. The magistrate ordered the husband to pay her Rs. 15 per month as maintenance. The girl is staying at the Ashram and is taking instructions in tailoring and cutting.

26. Mrs. "X" Age 20. Dist. Ratnagiri. Caste Brahmin.

Married at the age of 12 she was rightly or wrongly accused of stealing food practically from the first day of her married life. Husband was unsympathetic and was serving in Bombay. She was ill-treated. Being of an irritable and non-accommodating nature the treatment became worse day by day. Ultimately Mrs. X was driven out of the house. She had no parents. She left home with five rupees given by the helpless but sympathetic father-in-law. She came to Bombay and served as a cook at a married man's house. His wife died and he forced Mrs. X to submit to his passions. She caught a disease

from him. The neighbours also began to give much trouble. After suffering for a long time she was brought to the Ashram through the Purity League, Bombay. She was treated and declared completely cured by the doctor in charge of the hospital. Her husband was not willing to do anything for her, Her relatives did not want her. Her nature was very passionate. She had neither the heart nor the desire to learn anything. To set her free was dangerous. She wanted to marry again and start life afresh. Obviously this was impossible. She is still in the Ashram. What can she do? How is any one to help her?

Mrs. "M" Age 25. Caste Kayastha.

27. Mrs. "M" a thin emaciated lady with her five delicate children was sent by the Police to the Ashram saying that she had no home. The father of Mrs. "M" was a high Government Officer and she was married to a person belonging to an equally respectable family. Her husband, who was a graduate, as well as her mother-in-law treated her very badly. Her husband would neither allow her to remain at any place with the children nor would he settle himself anywhere and maintain her and the children. They came to Bombay and stayed in a hotel. They had to leave the hotel because they had no money. He went somewhere with her, was charged for trespass, and convicted. Mrs. "M" has numerous respectable relatives in Bombay but none was willing to take her and her children for fear of the troubles with her husband. The Police therefore sent her to the Ashram at about midnight. Correspondence was carried on with her near relatives and ultimately she was persuaded to leave Bombay and stay somewhere else with her near relatives to facilitate the bringing up of her children. It

is hard to think what would have happened to her if she had not been admitted to the Ashram. She was in the Ashram for over three months.

Mrs. "M" Caste Koli. Age 19. District Thana.

28. Mrs. "M's" father and step-mother are living. She was married at the age of 14 and was very happy with her husband. She came to her father's house once only. She used to go to the market as it was usual with her family. One day she met a friend of her childhood. This friend was a convert and was staying with a non-Hindu. Her friend persuaded her to accompany her to her house, which she did. After a few minutes the non-Hindu came to his house and at once kept Mrs. "M" under lock and key. Within a couple of days she was rescued. However neither her husband nor her step-mother would take her back. The husband luckily gave her divorce in the presence of his Caste Panch. One of her uncles took her to his house but he could not keep her for a long time. She was sent to the Ashram where she stayed for about 6 months. "I did not touch even water in that house and how have I lost my religion and chastity?" asked Mrs. "M" to the Lady Superintendent. Mrs. "M" is now happily married to a man who has his own independent business.

29. Mrs. "S" Caste Kayastha. Age 22. Bombay
Mrs. "S" came from a poor family. She was staying with her sister's husband. Her brother-in-law never tried to get her married though she was nearing 20. She became pregnant. He was responsible for this. He tried to get her married and found a needy widower of his caste, who had an old mother and some children at home. The marriage was settled one evening so that the real

condition of Mrs. "S" could not be noticed. Her husband came to know of this after the marriage. He was needy and afraid of the censure of society for his folly. Mrs. "S" delivered in a hospital and was then brought to the Ashram. After a couple of months the child was sent to an orphanage. Mrs. "S" is staying now with her husband and both of them have decided to forget the past.

30. This incident occurred during the last Bombay riots. A Gujarati family went from Jambhali Mohalla to Bandra for safety. The father-in-law asked his daughter-in-law to put all the jewellery in a small box which he placed with an acquaintance for safe keeping. The daughter-in-law was only twenty-one. She was not on good terms with her mother-in-law and hence she desired to go to Jamnagar to her father's house. But her father-in-law and husband would not allow her to do so. She, therefore, absconded one day and came to Dadar Station at about 9 P.M. The local Arya Samaj had posted volunteers at important stations to give warning to the passengers about the grave situation in the city. They saw this woman alone and naturally made inquiries. The woman was reticent. She wanted to conceal her identity. A good ticket-collector suspected some foul play, but he succeeded in persuading the woman to proceed to our Ashram where he thought, she might remain safe for the night. The woman when admitted in the Ashram seemed to have nothing with her except the saree on her person. The Lady Superintendent next day tried her best to find out the real story. But the woman would not disclose it. She asked them to send a telegram to a certain address at Jamnagar. They did accordingly. They immediately received a reply from

her uncle. He sent another telegram to her father-in-law at Bandra informing him of the whereabouts of his missing daughter-in-law. He came to the Ashram with the husband of the girl and was glad to see her safe. In the meanwhile they came to know that some of the ornaments put in the box were missing. They suspected the girl who was asked to put all the jewellery in the box. The girl denied this. But a search of her person by the Lady Superintendent revealed the fact that ornaments worth about two thousand rupees were concealed under her saree. With great efforts the girl was reconciled to her husband and father-in-law who subsequently took her home. Thus the institution was instrumental in saving the young girl, her chastity, and the jewellery.

31. Mrs. "X" Caste Brahmin, Age 18, Dist : Thana.

Mrs. "X" a timid good looking young woman, was standing near the Booking Office of a Railway Station, not knowing how to get a ticket as she had no money with her. Even if she had any, she did not know where to go. A Parsi Lady asked her where she was going. Kind sympathetic words brought tears to her eyes. "I don't know where to go and how to go" was the reply. The Parsi Lady got a ticket for her and both started for Bombay.

Mrs. "X" daughter of a well-to-do gentleman, was married with pomp and ceremony. Her husband had received a handsom dowry. A child was born. The mother-in-law was very cruel and was actually torturing Mrs. "X" from the day she came to her husband's house. The husband did not protest. One morning she was accused of not having prepared the food properly. She was beaten, slapped and deprived of all the ornaments and was asked to leave the house before the husband

returned from his office in the evening. She was not allowed to take the child. She therefore left the house and reached the nearest station where she was accosted by the Parsi Lady.

Ultimately, Mrs. "X" was brought to the Ashram and later on was sent to her father. Had it not been for the Parsi Lady, where would Mrs. "X" have gone?

32. Mrs. "X" Caste Hindu Kshatriya, Age 22, Dist : Pratapgarh—A strong, well-built young woman was sent to the Ashram by the Arya Samaj, Matunga. Mrs. 'X' was seen staying with a man for a couple of months. This man was one day overheard by a member of the Matunga Samaj while making arrangements for the sale of Mrs. "X". This gentleman shadowed the couple for some days. The companion of Mrs. "X" had brought her from her native place and from the protection of her husband who was comparatively aged. For a couple of months they lived by selling the ornaments brought by her. When her companion suspected detection, he left her and ran away. She was sent to the Ashram. Her husband was informed. He came to Bombay and took his wife home. The Police of her district had announced a prize for her information. This prize was shared by the Samaj and the Ashram.

33. Mrs. "X" Age 17, Caste Gujarati Brahmin. Mrs. "X" is the second wife of a school teacher. Her husband is a well-to-do gentleman. He is of an impatient and extremely irritable nature. Even small mistakes highly inflamed him. Bad cooking was sufficient to upset him. He would abuse and even go to the extent of beating his young wife whose father was paid Rs. 500/-. Mrs. X got tired of this treatment. There was plenty to eat but

civility was lacking. One day after a trifling quarrel, she left the house and went to a neighbour. She was advised to go to the Police Station and file a complaint. She was asked to go again after 2 days. Afraid of the consequences, the neighbour directed her to the Ashram. She came alone for protection and was sent to the Police Station for recording her statement and thereafter was admitted.

She said that she would have nothing to do with her husband. She stayed in the Ashram for about eight days. The husband realised his mistake. She was reconciled to her husband and both became happy as the incident was sufficient to bring about a change in the husband.

34. Mrs. X. Caste Mahar, Age 19. Bombay Suburban Dist.

Mrs. "X" was staying with her husband and his mother. Mrs. "X" was working in a mill but few months before admission had no regular work. She was going off and on to prepare cowdung cakes in the vicinity of her house. One day an acquaintance of hers asked her to go inside a broken and dilapidated house as there was more space for work. She went inside and to her horror found a non-Hindu hiding there. He caught her. She tried to free herself from his embrace. In the meanwhile her mother-in-law was informed and she found Mrs. "X" in the company of the non-Hindu. She was asked to leave the house. Her husband told the Caste Panch that he did not want to take her home. The Caste Panch sent her to the Ashram. The mother and brother of Mrs. "X" wanted to take her home. They were not allowed by the Panch to do so. The Panch did not give a definite decision in

her case. Mrs. "X" was neither in the caste nor outside it. The Ashram authorities wrote several letters to the Panch but no reply was received. Ultimately the brother of Mrs. X was bold enough to take her to his house in spite of the traditional respect others had for the Panch.

35. Mrs. "X" Caste Hindi Bania, Dist : Sultanpur U. P ; age 25 years, admitted through the Presidency Magistrate's Court, Dadar.

Mrs. "X" ran a Pan shop while her husband worked in the G. I. P. Rly. He was addicted to satta and gambling. Many visited her shop, Hindus as well as non-Hindus. A neighbour told her husband that she was very often found speaking with a non-Hindu. This enraged her husband and he began to abuse her, saying : "Go to the non-Hindu friend." She got disgusted and left for her native place for a few months' stay. The husband spent all his earnings, incurred debt, went home and somehow brought her back to run the shop again. She paid up all the debt. He began to demand more money. This she refused. They quarrelled. He always tormented her by saying "Go to the non-Hindu friend." She became extremely irritated and left the house. A non-Hindu neighbour offered help. She left home. Somehow she was brought back. She refused to go to her native place as her husband was likely to incur fresh debt and ruin the business. Even now he was taunting her and saying, "Go to the non-Hindu friend." She said she would really find a non-Hindu friend. Next day she straight drove to a mosque and got herself converted and went to stay at Mahim. Her husband traced her. She was found and sent to the Ashram by the Court. It was with great difficulty that she could be persuaded to leave her new

life. She left this place with her husband for her native place.

36. A short, good-looking Maratha girl; Age 18. Colaba District. She was married when she was only 12 years of age. Her husband was serving in a liquor shop where his cousin also was working. After a few months he lost the job. His cousin helped him to get some work in a hotel in a neighbouring town. He shifted to that place with his wife. After some days the cousin succeeded in seducing the girl. Her husband one day saw them together. He belaboured his wife and sent her to her mother. The poor mother got angry and sent her back. The husband took her directly to a railway station, gave her a ticket for Bombay and sent her away. The girl had never left her village before this. She did not know what to do and where to go when she got down one evening at Dadar. She remembered one of her distant relatives near Kalyan and wanted to try her luck there. At about mid-night she took a local train and sat in the female compartment. She was alone. Soon after the train left Dadar, a man entered the compartment and assaulted her. A struggle ensued. The train reached Matunga station. The screaming of the girl brought help and the culprit was 'arrested and handed over to the Police. The victim was sent to the Ashram by the Dadar Court pending the decision of the case. Both her mother and husband refused to take her back.

37. An Ahir woman from U.P. was married when she was four. She stayed with her husband for some years. Her husband having secured an employment in Calcutta left for the place and the wife was left with his parents.

A neighbour one day forcibly abducted her and brought her to Bombay. Here one night he robbed her of all her ornaments and disappeared. Some of her castemen saw her and persuaded her to stay, with one of them till funds were procured for her return. Some one informed the police who arrested the man and sent the girl to the Ashram.

Next day an elderly man appeared before the Court as the father of the girl and applied for permission to take her home. The Court gave the permission but advised the Ashram Secretaries to make themselves sure that he was the father. The girl at once admitted that he was her father but from their faces a suspicion grew in the mind of the Lady Superintendent. When a statement of each of them was separately taken it was found that the man was an imposter. The Police were at once sent for and he was arrested.

38. Mrs. "S" a Maratha woman, aged 25, and her husband came from the Ratnagiri District. Both of them had employment in Bombay. They maintained a small family at their native place. The husband became sick and after some time went home on a long leave to recoup his health. He returned to find himself dismissed from the service. The wife gave birth to a son. They sold whatever they had and somehow maintained themselves for about eight months. Their newly born son became ill and they took him to a hospital. The rent was in arrears and they had to leave the room. The mother was with the child in the hospital for over a month. She thereafter did work as a cook, thanks to the kindness of one of the servants of the hospital. Her husband was still in search of a job. One day the

employer of the woman tried to seduce her. She kicked him and left his house. She did not know the whereabouts of her husband and had no place to go to. A Christian neighbour took her to his house. She would neither eat nor take even water there. He gave milk to the child. Finally the Christian gentleman brought her to the Ashram. The husband was traced after sometime. He came and requested the authorities to keep his wife and child till he secured a job and a place for his wife and child. He soon got work and then took them away.

39. A young Gujarati married girl once came to stay with her husband's sister in Bombay for a few days. A shrewd woman developed friendship with them and managed one afternoon to persuade both of them in the absence of the sister-in-law's husband to visit her residence. Nobody could have suspected any foul play from the appearance and demeanour of the woman. The two ladies were taken to a well-furnished and decorated room. The woman soon disappeared leaving the two ladies there. A man was sitting inside. The ladies became afraid and wanted to return, but they were prevented from doing so by the man. After a very short time, a Parsi woman came there followed by four other men. The ladies heard that some bargain was being made in the adjoining room. They were convinced that they were in moral danger. They screamed and called for help but found themselves helpless.

Fortunately at this time the door was knocked from outside. It was opened and to the surprise of all, a Police Officer entered and arrested all the persons there. The police were convinced that the girl was innocent. They, however, sent her to the Ashram till the husband

was traced. After a few days' stay in the Ashram she was restored to her husband with the permission of the Court,

40. One afternoon, an old hawker brought two girls aged about 20 to the Ashram. He found them sitting under a tree at Bandra, with a parrot in a cage. People began to collect round them. On being questioned, the girls said that they were stranded and required shelter. The hawker readily took them to his house in Kamatipura. But when the girls saw that the hawker did not belong to their religion, they expressed a desire to go to some Sarai. The hawker seemed to be a good man. He thought that residing in a Sarai was not safe for these two young girls. He therefore brought them to the Ashram,

The girls were very clever. They gave their names but would not disclose their history. They simply said that they were sisters and that their native place was near Nagpur. They had lost their husbands. We asked them whether they wanted to marry again to which they replied in the negative,

We never believed their story. After a few weeks a clue was obtained from an intercepted letter written by one of the girls. We immediately wrote a letter ourselves to the same address as was written on that letter. On the third day a gentleman arrived. He was the brother of the husband of one of the girls. He said that the girl was very obstinate and assertive. One day she quarrelled with her husband and left the house in his absence. The other girl was not her sister but a neighbour's wife. Reconciliation was then brought about by persuasion. The girls admitted their mistake and

agreed to return. They presented the parrot to the Ashram as their donation !

41. A sweeper woman from Nasik district was very ill-treated by her parents-in-law and other relations. Even her husband who was paralytic since his birth, showed very little sympathy for her. He constantly threatened her that he would marry again. The woman earned Rs. 12/- per month and handed over all her income to her mother-in-law but she and her three children did not receive good treatment at her hands. In order to put an end to her troubles the woman one day took her three children to a well and jumped into it with all of them. Two of the children died but the mother with her 7 year old son was rescued. The woman was arrested under Sections 302, 307 and 309 of the Indian Penal Code. She pleaded guilty and was sentenced to transportation for life. Since her arrest none of the relations took interest in her. On the recommendation of the High Court, Government were subsequently pleased to commute the sentence of transportation for life to one of 3 years R. I. on condition that the prisoner resides at the Shradhanand Anath Mahilashram for that period. The woman is at present residing at the Ashram. We have nothing to complain against her.

42. The husband of a Maratha woman was serving in the Army at Belgaum. The parents of the woman with whom she was staying in Ratnagiri district, noticed that she was pregnant. They naturally suspected that she had illicit connection with some person other than her husband and being afraid of ostracism by the caste people secretly arranged to send the woman to Shradhanand Ashram for delivery. The woman was

completely ignorant of the cause of her sudden separation from all her relatives. In a few days the parents-in-law of the woman were surprised to know that their daughter-in-law was in a public institution in Bombay. Her husband was immediately informed of the fact. He inquired of her parents the cause of her being sent to Bombay. They told him that she was pregnant in his absence and was therefore driven from the house. The husband refused to be suspicious about the faithfulness of his wife. He at once realised the cause of the misunderstanding. He knew that his wife was pregnant from him when he was on a few days' leave at his parents' home. But the parents of the woman were not aware of the fact. Being anxious to keep her illegitimate pregnancy secret, they never cared to find out the truth either from her parents-in-law, or husband. The husband hurried to Bombay and was overwhelmed with feelings of joy on meeting his wife in the Ashram. He took her away.

43. A married Maratha woman aged 20 was staying in a small village in the Ahmednagar District with her parents as her husband did not like her. Her mother sent her to Ahmedabad with her aunt to get some employment. The aunt arranged to keep her with a man as his domestic servant, but the woman suspected some foul play. On her refusal to live with the man, she was asked to leave the house of her aunt. The woman had no money. She was seen stranded by an Arya Samaj worker who managed to send her to the Abala Ashram Baroda, conducted by the Arya Samaj. The woman being illiterate could not give the correct address of her relatives. The Secretary of the Abala Ashram thought that we would be able to trace her relatives and therefore

transferred her to our Shradhanand Ashram. The woman was anxious to return to her parents but all our efforts to trace them failed. There were many villages of the same name in Maharastra and therefore all the letters addressed to her brother returned unclaimed. We then advertised her story in all the Marathi papers, and happily succeeded in restoring the woman to her mother who, it was found out, was staying in a very small village on the border of the Nizam State where only one bi-weekly was subscribed to by a money lender.

44. A Nepali girl aged about 16, fair looking and well-built, was persuaded by her neighbour to run away to Bombay with him in the absence of her husband, whose whereabouts were not known for three years. They lived in Bombay as husband and wife. The man sold all her jewellery and she lodged a complaint with the Police. The man was arrested but was released on bail. The case had to be postponed *sine die* as both the accused and his surety had absconded. The girl was sent first to the Children's Home, Umarkhadi, and then to the Shradhanand Ashram. She was unwilling to return to her parents who, she said, would not allow her to stay in the family. We however, tried our best to be in touch with her relatives. But there was no reply to our letters and telegrams. Even the Police could not trace the relatives. The girl expressed her desire more than once to marry again but this we could not do under the existing law. She waited and waited and one day absconded! Surely the law must be suitably amended to meet these increasing hard cases of deserted wives. (Cases from No. 17 onwards are taken from the Hindu Women's Rescue Home Society's Reports.)

CHAPTER IX.

Subjects of the Inquiry - Widowed.

So far I have considered the problems of unmarried girls and married women out of 543 inmates of different Rescue Homes, whose account of life has come to my hands. There remains now the third division comprising unfortunate widows who have had, for one reason or another, to seek shelter of Rescue Homes. In the previous part we have seen how a woman who during the life time of her husband may be enjoying howsoever little status, loses even that immediately on his passing away. The religious beliefs and the prevalent social customs enjoin a widow to lead a secluded life and make her feel quite helpless in this world. In addition to these handicaps a widow in many cases is robbed of whatever little money she may have, thus leaving her to the mercy of others. But her miseries do not stop there. Very often her mental condition is taken advantage of by some one and she becomes morally degraded. I shall deal with such women in this chapter.

The number of such widows found in different Ashrams is 188 i. e. 34% of their inmates. From Patna the number is eighteen, from Lahore it is eleven, from Poona it is thirty-two, while in Bombay it is one hundred and twenty-seven. As compared with the married inmates of these Homes, we find widows rank next. The average age of these 188 widows at which they entered the Ashrams is 26, and going into details the average age of Bombay women is 27, Patna 26, Lahore and Poona 25. It is really pitiable to see these women being deprived of all happiness in life very shortly after their marriage.

Classifying these widows according to castes we get 71 Brahmins, (including 2 from Patna and 2 from Lahore) Marathas 21, Baniyas 8, Saraswat and untouchables each 6, Rajput, Sonar and Bhandari 4 each; Jain, Kurmi and Kayastha (Bihar), C. K. P. 3 each; Halwai (Bihar), Khatri (Punjab), Vaishwani, Shimpi and Sutar 2 each; Brahmakshatriya, Bhatia, Lingayat, Kshatriya, Koli, Dhobi, Dusad, Mullah and Nania (all these three from Bihar), 1 each. The caste of 27 women was not traceable in the records. Like unmarried and married women, widows also appear to have come under the roof of these Ashrams from advanced as well as backward castes.

Only the records, of the Bombay Ashram give some clues as to the regions from where a few of these widows hailed.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Bombay and Suburbs. | 34 |
| Konkan. | 19 |
| Poona. | 13 |
| Gujarat. | 7 |
| Rajputana and Satara each | 4 |
| U. P. | 3 |
| Ahamednagar. | 2 |
| C. P. Karwar, Mysore, Nasik each. | 1 |

We have found above, 26 as the average age of these 188 widows at which they had to enter the Ashrams. This age does not necessarily coincide with the average age of their widowhood. Hence an attempt to search for their age at marriage and the age at which they became widows, was made. The records give this information of only 115 widows. Their average age of marriage comes

to 11.5 while average age of widowhood turns out to be 20. Generally woman's matrimonial life commences not earlier than 13. If this figure is accepted the duration of actual married life of these 115, works out to be 7 years. These 115 widows include 14 who had the misfortune of losing their husbands in their childhood. This shows that child marriages are still to be found here and there. Thirty-eight widows had only 2 children, on an average, born to them. The fact that these 115 women were widowed at 20, in the very prime of their youth, is itself shocking. And to expect these widows having no prospects of any happiness to lead a life of celibacy and seclusion, would be adding insult to injury. If promptings for pleasure natural to the young were to get upper hand, these women can not be blamed.

The criterion of a hardened criminal or offender is that he or she does not feel any compunction for his or her misconduct. If on the contrary he or she repents for his or her mistake that is a sure sign of his or her improvement.

Forty-nine out of 188 i. e. 26% fall in the former group. According to the superintendents of these Ashrams, these 49 showed a tendency to repeat their misdeeds. In spite of all attempts these women could not be brought round to the normal path. Out of these 49, 16 cases were of seduction. Ten other women were living as mistresses. They resorted to Ashrams when forced on account of pregnancy. Nine were driven out of their house by their relations because of their persistent misbehaviour. Five had turned prostitutes. Three were directed to the Ashrams by criminal courts. Four were kidnapped by Muhamedans but were rescued and sent to the Ashrams.

One who had become a Christian was restored to her original faith. In another case the woman was sold by mother. Her peculiar life is given below in typical cases. (*Vide* case no 3.)

We will now come to those widows who showed a better moral character. The number of such women is 139 i. e. 74%. These women were brought into difficulties because of unhappy circumstances or because of their subordinate position. We may classify these cases as follows :— In 96 cases women were allured from the right path. These included 28 who were self-supporting at the time of seduction. The subordinate position of 4 of these was taken advantage of by their very employers. Nine others were not only seduced but robbed of all their belongings by their seducers. In 26 cases, their near relations were responsible for their downfall. Two widows had joined the following of popular saints with an innocent desire to obtain salvation. These very saints who were expected to lead them to God, dragged them down and hypnotised them to submit to their passions. All these 96 women repented.

Four widows out of 96 mentioned above, continuously suffered ill-health all their life, and 2 actually died in the Ashrams due to the after effects of abortion. Illicit intimacy is condemned by society-judged in the light of its accepted legal canons. Man, by virtue of his peculiar biological constitution is absolved from all blame, while woman has to bear all the shame and censure of society. Naturally, she reluctantly has recourse to some methods or devices recommended by some quacks. A few succeed but in the majority of cases, these methods do not only permanently impair the health of the woman

personally but also cause the death of the new born child. The report of Hindu Women's Rescue Home Society Bombay (1935) says 'Efforts to cause abortion in early pregnancy with a view to hide the shame, unwillingness of the unmarried mothers and the widows to nurse their own babies, the absence of a properly equipped foundling home attached to the Ashram, are some of the causes of the high death-rate amongst the infants.'

There is yet another group of 14 who had to come under the roof of the Ashrams for the following reasons. Unbearable ill-treatment by persons on whose mercy they were thrown by circumstances caused six widows to run for safety to the Rescue Homes. Three widows, who were driven out of their homes, found quarters in the Ashram. While 3 more, who were first deprived of all their belongings and then driven out were offered shelter by the Rescue Homes. One old woman wanted to earn money by selling a young widow to an old man. Her attempt, however, was frustrated and the young widow was sent to an Ashram. The record shows only one widow who had come to the Ashram with a view to matrimony.

Twenty-five women had nobody to look to for any kind of help after the death of their husbands. They found no other better place to go to, than these Ashrams. Yet 4 other widows came to the Ashram simply to take education whereby to make themselves self-supporting.

As in the case of unmarried girls and married women, we shall now see how many of the widows left the Ashrams of their own accord and how others were helped to their ordinary life. In this respect the records

give me information of 146 widows. With regard to the rest 42, no note has been made. Out of the former 146, 37 were, through the mediation of the authorities, restored to their relatives. It is pertinent to note that only one of these was taken home by her father-in-law. In the case of others only the relations from the mother's side, received them back. Five left the Ashram of their own accord while 6 ran away without the knowledge of the authorities. Remarriages of 35 were brought about by the management of the Rescue Homes. This group forms only 18% of the total number of widows. This small percentage proves that remarriages of widows is not such an easy thing as it may appear to be. Considering that remarriage would tarnish the fair name of their families, widows display considerable hesitation and reluctance to be remarried. Twenty-three quitted the Ashrams because they were able to find suitable occupation. Two died as a result of negligence during pregnancy. Only 36 were still the inmates of the Ashram at the time of my inquiry, 11 of whom were there for the purpose of education, 6 were serving the sentences of different courts while 3 were forced to stay in the Ashram on account of illness.

Typical Cases.

Patna.

1. Age 22.

Caste: Sonar.

This woman was carrying when her husband died eight months ago. Although no guilt attached to the fact, her husband's relations and others drove her out of the house alleging that she was loose in morals. She went to the Arya Samaj at Arrah and its secretary brought her to the Ashram at Patna. The authorities got her remarried.

2. Age 30

Caste: Dusad.

The husband of this woman died leaving behind him his widow and two children. She had to work hard just to maintain herself and her children. But even while following this honest way of living, she was pursued by some Muhamedans who enticed her away from her locality. The local Arya Samajists brought her to the Ashram. Eventually she was remarried.

Lahore.

3. Age 17.

This is an instance of child marriage. She was married at the age of 12 but soon became a widow. Thereafter she was sold for Rs. 150/- by her mother. Even with this purchaser she was not safe. Two strangers kidnapped her and sold her for Rs. 100/- to a third party. These circumstances made her so perverse that she fled from the second purchaser and was seen begging in the streets along with another man. Some well-minded people took her to the Rescue Home. But she ran away from there.

Poona.

4. Age 40.

Caste: Kanari Brahmin.

She comes from a rich family and is educated. She was married to a professor. She herself was also earning and both of them lived a happy life for 28 years. Unfortunately, they had no issue. The husband's younger brother was brought up by them and they also got him married. As ill-luck would have it, the husband died of heart failure. The younger brother took possession of all the property and money leaving the widow

penniless. She became tired of life and went on a pilgrimage. Ultimately she found peace in the Ashram where she still is.

5. Age 20.

Caste: Maratha.

The mother of this woman was in straightened circumstances. The daughter lost her husband in her childhood and had to come back to stay with her mother. A certain Marwari offered to give her some monthly help provided the daughter came to live with him. After some time he stopped monthly payment whereupon the mother arranged to take her away from him, with the help of a servant. The Marwari instituted criminal proceedings against her. He failed. The widow was restored to her mother.

6. Age 26.

Caste: Brahmin.

This child widow was living with her father who died while she was only 23. As she could not agree with her brother, she went to stay with her sister who had four children. Somehow or other the brother-in-law succeeded in seducing her, with the result that she became pregnant. Naturally quarrels ensued between two sisters and she was sent to the Ashram. She desired to get remarried to him.

7. Age 20.

Caste: Brahmin.

She became a widow having enjoyed conjugal happiness for only 4 months. No one cared for her at her mother's place. Her father wanted to bring about her remarriage with a doctor. The doctor took advantage of the father's idea and took liberty with her before the marriage but did not marry her. This resulted in her downfall.

8. Age 25.

Caste: Brahmin.

She was hardly five years old when she was married to a man aged 25. Within six months of her marriage she became a widow. Her father brought her home but she lost both her parents soon after. Even the step-brother, who treated her kindly expired shortly. She was thus forced to go to her father-in-law's house. But as she could not consent to the advances of her father-in-law she went to the Ashram for help.

Bombay.

9. Age 28.

Caste ; Gujarati Brahmin.

She became a widow at the age of 17 after 3 or 4 years of married life. Being in the prime of life she became attached to her neighbour who was considerate to her. During four years stay with him, twice she caused abortion. He kept her in the Ashram at the time of the third pregnancy and himself left for his native place.

10. Age 18.

Caste : Brahmin

This daughter from a poor family was married at the age of fourteen to a rich zamindar. She enjoyed married life for three years whereafter she became a widow. Although the deceased husband had left a large estate she was given a mere pittance for her maintenance. She was therefore, forced to serve as a cook. While thus serving she was nearly misled by some person. Thanks to Providence, somebody saved her and brought her to a Rescue Home. She is now remarried and is happy.

11. Age 22.

Caste: Nepali Brahmin.

This is a case of a Nepali woman. She is the daughter of a rich father who educated her upto the

vernacular final and got her married at the age of 15. As ill-luck would have it she soon became a widow. Being of an independent nature, she did not like to be dependent on her father. She, therefore, came down to Bombay and became a teacher in some school. While serving she could not lead a chaste life. The result was that she became pregnant. With the help of the Rescue Home she gave birth to a child and took the service again.

12. Age 28.

Caste: Brahmin.

This woman hails from Kalyan, being married at the age of 14, she became widow only after 3 years. While staying with her parents, her neighbour who had already two wives living, succeeded in winning her over. Her brother had to take her to a Rescue Home for delivery where she died of T.B.

13 Age 28.

Caste : Brahmin .

She was widowed at the age of 15, only 3 years after marriage. She was rendered utterly helpless. Being spiritually minded she became a disciple of a certain well known "Maharaj" a religious preceptor, having a large following. The "worthy" Maharaj had his peculiar ways of leading his disciples to salvation which brought the subject of this case in an awkward situation, to extricate herself from which she had to seek the help of Rescue Home. Full of repentance, she still had an ardent desire to be in communion with God. Having lost her husband at a tender age she had no opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of married life and remarriage was out of question because of her orthodox ideas.

14. Age 23.

Caste: Saraswat.

This woman was married at the age of 10 only to be widowed immediately after. She was passing her time either with the husband's family or with her parents. Being totally ignorant of the ways of the world she was easily led astray by one of her brothers-in-law. Fortunately he was considerate enough to get her out of the delicate situation. She was once again duped by the second brother-in-law. She gave birth to a son in a Rescue Home. She behaved very nicely in the Ashram and was much fond of the child. In spite of her love for the child, she had to leave it in the Ashram.

15. Age 35.

Caste : Brahmin.

This is a typical case of child marriage and its evil effects. The woman was married at the tender age of six. As God willed it she lost her husband the very next year while she was only 7. This child widow lived under the protection of her parents till she became 25. After the death of her parents she became quite helpless, and was seduced by her brother-in-law with the result that an abortion had to be resorted to. She was again duped by her master with whom she had taken up service as a cook. This time abortion was not successful and the master had to take her to an Ashram. As the result of this unsuccessful attempt at abortion the child and mother are constantly ill. By nature this woman is very kind hearted and obliging. At the time of marriage and also on her becoming a widow she was yet only a child not knowing what marriage meant. Had society allowed and the parents brought about her remarriage when she came of age, she would have been saved from all future ignominy.

16. Age 25.

Caste: Maratha.

This is another case of child marriage. Here the marriage took place still earlier. She was married at 5 and was widowed at six since when she resided with her parents. Nature had its course and as she came of age a certain selfish man tempted her to go along with him. He brought her to Bombay and got her employed in a mill. Although a married man himself and having his wife living, he kept this woman with him. In addition he took all her earnings from her to make her dependent on him. In spite of repeated requests he would not marry her. When she became pregnant she was taken to an Ashram. She sincerely repented for her misdeed and after delivery went back to her mother.

17. Age. 19

Caste ; Brahmin,

The brother of this woman accepted Rs. 400/- to get her married to an aged man. The husband died soon after the marriage. The deceased's property which legally belonged to the widow was taken by the brother who managed to keep her in an Ashram as a penniless and helpless woman.

18. "X" is a child widow from U. P. Her husband's relatives are well-to-do but orthodox old fashioned people. "X" contracted the habit of chewing pan which was objected by them as they considered it highly improper for a widow to do so. They made her life miserable and she left them to commit suicide. Her courage failed her at the last moment. The local Arya Samaj people came to know about it and she was brought to the Ashram.

19. A Brahmin woman from Ratnagiri District was admitted to the Ashram at the age of 23. She was

married when she was only 11. Her husband died four years after the marriage. She went to live with father but when he also died she had to return to her husband's brother. The brother took advantage of her dependent position. She became pregnant. No arrangements could be made to send her out. She gave birth to a child. The village people began to trouble her. The husband's brother therefore, took her to some institution. But the woman refused to part with her child. Nor did she wish to change her faith. A gentleman brought her to Shradhanand Ashram. She is now remarried to a graduate.

20. A Kayastha woman of 28 lost her husband when she was 20. Her brother squandered the little money left by her husband and reduced her to dire poverty. The woman chanced to see a member of our Society and asked for some kind of service to enable her to maintain herself. The gentleman directed her to our Ashram. After a few days, she expressed a desire to remarry and the Society made arrangements to that effect. The woman is at present staying with her prosperous young husband.

21. Mrs. A. Age 20, Caste : Brahmin. Hydrabad (Deccan). Mrs. A was married at the age of 11. Her husband died after two years. Her mother who is very poor took her back. Both did domestic work and maintained themselves for some years. Mrs. A wanted to remarry and did not know why she was prevented. Her mother would not allow her to remarry and "to spoil the good name of the family." At the age of 18 her mother kept her as a cook. She began to attend a school also. After sometime she found it difficult to protect herself from the attention of her employer and others. One obliging gentleman brought her to the Ashram. She

was willing to remarry but was afraid of her mother. She could not learn anything. She left the Ashram for a week or so but came back again finding it difficult to stay unprotected. She became eager to remarry. Her marriage is fixed with a man of her choice having a big landed property.

22. Mrs. "S" Brahmin. Age 28, from Poona District. Married at the age of 12. Husband died after 3 years. After a couple of years the parents also died. Mrs. 'S' stayed with her aunt. Her aunt being a disciple of some Maharaj, Mrs. 'S' also was initiated. Being a good looking young widow, Mrs. 'S' soon became the chief disciple of the 'Maharaj,' who ultimately seduced her. She became pregnant and was sent to the Ashram by some gentleman.

23. Mrs. 'S'. Caste Brahmin: Age 50. Dist. Bombay. Married at the age of 6 when few years later her husband died. She lost her parents at the age of 17. She began her life as a cook in Poona. Her master, an unmarried young man, first seduced her. After a few years he died and she had to find service once again. She worked as a cook in an inn in Poona. A young boarder of the inn-keeper persuaded this strong good-looking widow to stay with him. He took her home and ultimately made her agree to obey him. He took her to Surat where he was serving. They lived as husband and wife for about 25 years. Mrs. "S" had an attack of paralysis and was physically unfit to do any domestic work. Her eye-sight also was failing. The man, who kept good health, got furious and one day drove her out of the house. She came to Dadar station hunger-stricken, trembling and unable to talk or walk. She found no Brahmin family which could keep her. Three days she had no food, still she went on wandering

from house to house and ultimately fainted on the road. A policeman nearby took her to the Mahim Police station on foot and thence to the Ashram. She collapsed at the door of the Ashram. A few hours' rest and stimulating drugs brought her to her senses. Her so-called husband was sent for. He showed repentance and agreed to take her back. She went with him to Surat.

24. Mrs. "X", caste Maratha. Age 22 years.

Mrs. "X" became a widow when she was 12 years of age. She had no parents and her parents-in-law died after two years. She came to Bombay with a distant relative and went to a school. After a couple of years her relative left Bombay and she had to go with her. She maintained herself by doing Bidi-making business. At her native-place she became acquainted with one unmarried teacher. She did not abort but became very weak. He later on did nothing for her. Mrs. "X" became nervous, got afraid of her condition and of society. She spoke to one of her old school friends and requested her to give her help through her husband which she promised. She came to her friend's place in Bombay and within a couple of days delivered. Her friend or friend's husband did not think of giving her any medical help or of calling a midwife even. She was lying all exhausted, unable to utter a word with the child by her side. Her friend's husband saw a member of our Committee and got a letter for admission. Twelve hours after delivery, without even a change of clothes or bath, Mrs. "X" was brought in a taxi to the Ashram. Even the cord of the child was cut in the Ashram. First aid was given by the doctor and luckily both mother and child were saved.

25. Mrs. "X" age 30, caste Brahmin. Residence Bombay:— Mrs. "X" hailed from a very respectable family. Mrs. "X" was a widow for the last six years. She was well behaved. Being good natured she was useful to her relatives. Her husband's brother-in-law who is a teacher was ill and she was requested by his wife to go to her place to help her. She went and the brother-in-law improved. Later he seduced her. "I don't know how I lost my head. This had never occurred to my mind. I must have been temporarily mad" she said. Mrs. X was sent to the Ashram. She took lessons in tailoring and cutting. She was sent out to attend sewing classes regularly. She has been behaving extremely well. She is now able to earn some money by conducting a sewing class.

26. Mrs. 'K' a widow, caste Brahmin, age 26, District : Thana.

Mrs. "K" lost her parents before her marriage. Her uncle got her married and she had three children. Her husband was doing some business in which he earned good money but prior to his sudden death, he incurred some loss in his business. After his death, his partners paid nothing to the widow. Mrs. "K" remained for one year at her village but exhausted all her resources. Her neighbour sought the help of others and took her to Poona. She could not get free admission in any educational institution there. No one was willing to keep her as a cook as she had three children. Being completely stranded she was sent to the Ashram with her three children by the Hindu Sabha, Poona. We informed prominent persons of her community but none came forward to help her. She carried on correspondence

with one of her distant relatives. She left the Ashram after a stay of a few months to join this relative.

27. A Brahma-Kshatriya Gujrati lady from Kathiawar was admitted in the Ashram at the age of 30. She was very happy after her marriage. Her husband had business in Africa and had made good fortune. Once he returned to his native place but died there suddenly. Fortunately he had made a will and appointed trustees. One of the trustees was a rich merchant from his wife's native place. He seduced her. When she became pregnant he began to blame her for her misconduct. She was thrown out of her caste and life became intolerable for her in the village.

There was a Christian young man who showed sympathy for the woman. He offered to take her out of the village and save her. She left the village with some money and jewellery. They came and stayed at Kalyan. When all the money was exhausted, the man left her and disappeared. Soon after, some non-Hindus began to molest her. She came to Ghatkopar. They followed her there. The Hindu Sabha workers at Ghatkopar came to know about her and sent her to our Ashram in a sick and penniless condition.

28. In the compound of a public institution at Parel, Bombay, a middle aged Maratha woman was found one day with a newly born child in her lap and a girl of 13 sitting by her side. They were brought to the Ashram by a kind gentleman. It was found on their admission in the Ashram that the woman was a widow, the infant was her illegitimate child, and the girl her daughter. After a few days' stay in the Ashram the woman wanted to go, leaving the child in the Ashram

but taking the daughter with her. We knew that she had no safe place to go to and no means of livelihood to maintain herself and her young daughter. We persuaded her to go alone leaving her daughter in our safe custody, find some job and then take the daughter. The woman insisted on taking the daughter also with her. From her past history we suspected some bad motive and therefore as a last resort applied to the Presidency Magistrate Juvenile Court, Bombay, for the possession of the daughter on the ground that the mother had no means of livelihood and the young girl was in moral danger. The application was granted. The girl is at present learning the three R's in the Ashram and has improved much in health.

29. A young widow came to the Ashram for delivery. She concealed her real history when she was admitted. But from the correspondence which she had afterwards with a certain man we could gather that the widow was in love with her sister's husband from whom she was pregnant. The sister was alive. The widow wanted to return to the same surroundings after delivery and the man also was very impatient to take her away, leaving the child to our care. We advised her not to return and stay as a mistress of her sister's husband. She was free to prolong her stay at the Ashram and get herself married to any other man of her choice. The man also was dissuaded from taking her away. But both of them would not listen to our advice. Though we are against bigamous marriages, under the peculiar circumstances we suggested a second best proposal that the widow should marry the man before leaving Bombay. This was also at first unacceptable to both of them, but they were at last prevailed upon to do so.

30. A widow, aged 21, lost her parents when she was a child. She was brought up by her aunt who got her married when she came of age. She, unfortunately, became a widow after having two children. She, therefore, with her children came again to stay with her aunt. She subsequently came in contact with a neighbour of alien faith who began to advance money to her from time to time to satisfy her craving for luxuries. After a few months he demanded back the money which by then had amounted to Rs. 400/- or failing this asked her to marry him. The aunt came to know of this. She was afraid that in her absence the man might entice the woman one day. She, therefore, got her admitted into the Shraddhanand Ashram taking upon herself the responsibility of maintaining her two children. The man tried to send letters to her in the Ashram posing himself as a Hindu. After a few weeks the woman was married to a man of her choice.

31. A young widow came to the Ashram with her infant son for protection. She was born of poor parents and was married to an old man. On the death of her husband she was left helpless in this world. A kind gentleman offered help for her education. She secured an employment but lost it owing to prolonged illness. A female brothel-keeper took advantage of her helplessness and forced her to live a life of shame. The widow had a son there. The brothel-keeper wanted her to part with the child which she refused to do. An altercation ensued. Being disgusted with life she was forced to lead in brothel, the widow and her son sought the aid of the Ashram. She is doing teaching and other responsible work in the Ashram. (From No.17 onwards the cases are taken from the Hindu Women's Rescue Home Society's Reports.)

The Rescue Home at a Glance.

Types of Women admitted in 15 years.

| | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|-----|--|
| 714 | Fallen. | 426 | Sent either by the Courts or by the Police. |
| 377 | Destitute. | 353 | Admitted for delivery of whom: |
| 197 | Rescued. | 176 | were widows, |
| 190 | Deserted by husbands. | 112 | unmarried girls, |
| 325 | Left their husbands. | 65 | married but fallen. |

Out of 1548 women admitted in 15 years, 468 were widows, 750 were married and 330 unmarried.

Disposal of Women.

| | | | |
|-----|---|----|---------------------------------------|
| 158 | Reconciled to husbands. | 58 | Sent to other allied institutions. |
| 566 | Sent back to guardians. | | |
| 150 | Left the Institute of their own free will. | 98 | Absconded. |
| 124 | Married in Ashram. | 57 | Sent as domestic ser- vants. |
| 201 | Sent back to Magistra- tes or the Police. | 21 | Died in hospitals. |

Many of these types overlap one another.

The above report is taken from The Hindu Women's Rescue Home Society's Report of 1942.

PART III
CHAPTER X
REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF HINDU WOMEN

प्रेयो मित्रं बंधुता वा समग्रा
सर्वे कामाः शेषधर्मावितं वा ।
स्त्रीणां भर्ता धर्मदाराश्च पुंसा-
मित्यन्योन्यं वत्सयोर्ज्ञातमस्तु ॥*

Imbued with medieval ideas, the orthodox group of the present day Hindu society may consider as novel the independent attitude of the modern woman and her struggle for freedom and the development of her personality. But, if we look to the Vedic times, we find, women enjoying far greater freedom in the field of education, self-development and marriage. Not only that but she was also regarded as a co-partner of man in all activities of life.

When the Aryans came to occupy India, they had to fight the hostile tribes already living in this country. The culture of these invaders was high and their outlook on life was material as well as spiritual. Since they had to fight for their existence and extension of their race and culture, women were considered by them as equal sharers of their fortune. As they went on conquering and consolidating their newly acquired territories, the work of preparing materials for war purposes was done by women. Simultaneously, they also made themselves useful members of society by taking up such peace-time occupation as of tilling the land and weaving the cloth.

* **Maitimadhawa Act VI p. 225.**

Along with their progress in conquests the Aryans also sought to propitiate the superhuman powers for their welfare, in this as well as in the next world, by means of sacrifices in accordance with their spiritual ideas. Sacrifices formed a very important and valuable part of their life. And for that purpose woman's co-operation was considered essential. Major sacrifices could not be done by men without the help of women. In the Rigvedic period, husband and wife had jointly to offer oblations into the sacrificial fire. "The couple with full concentration press the juice out of Soma plant and mix it with milk and offer the mixture to gods accompanied with extolling hymns".*

Although religion had a considerable hold on the people in Vedic age it was accorded only a secondary place. Their life's first concern was material welfare. Efforts to obtain peace in after-life came next. As they were keen on the perpetuation of their race to fight their enemies, the birth of a daughter was naturally not much welcomed, yet they never considered it necessary to do away with the girl. "There is no proof that the Vedic Indians practised the exposure of female children."† She was reared up along with male issues with equal care and treatment. Not only that, but just as in the case of boys their Upanayana (thread) ceremony was performed; they were enjoined to observe celibacy like their brothers from the time of Upanayana till marriage and were given education without any distinction. Only difference between boys and girls was that the former had to go to the house of the preceptor and stay with him during his scholastic period,

* Rigveda VIII 31.5

† Vedic Index, Vol. I. P. 286.

while the latter stayed with the father and received education either from him or elder brothers in the family.*

अध्यायनं च वेदानां सावित्रीवचनं तथा ।

पिता पितृव्यो भ्राता वा नैनामध्यापयेत्परः ।

स्वगृहे चैव कन्याया भैक्षचर्या विधीयते ।

वर्जयेदजिनं चीरं जटाधारणमेवच ॥

Women of the Vedic age were highly educated. This can be seen from the fact that not less than twenty women had the honour of being included amongst the composers of several Rigvedic hymns. By the time they reached puberty their education was almost completed. But their marriages were not performed until they reached the age of understanding i.e. 16 or 17 and that too not without their consent. There were also many instances of love marriages. "The state of society revealed in the Vedic age seems to point to considerable freedom on the part of both man and woman in selecting a wife or a husband... though no doubt parents or parent often arranged a suitable match."†

Ever since the Vedic age, marriage to a Hindu has meant a sacrament and not a contract. In the beginning, the marriage rites were plain and simple consisting chiefly of the grasping of the hand and prayer to Agni, Indra, Prajapati and Vishwadewas. It became complex at the Sutra period by the addition of Saptapadi, showing of Arundhati star and going round the fire three times. That woman enjoyed even after marriage equality of

* Position of Woman in Hindu Civilisation. Dr. A. S. Altekar P. 482.

† Vedic Index Vol. I. p. 482.

status can be seen from the mandate of Shwetaketu against adultery on the part of the husband as well as wife by laying down that "Whoever commits the offence would be visited with the sin of abortion or infanticide."*

When man and woman entered into the state of matrimony, they were considered as joint owners of all that belonged to the new household. They were on equal level so far as the theory was concerned. But all the same the wife was considered as a subordinate partner. It is not much to be wondered at. Because patriarchal society was then in vogue as it is to-day. And the head of a family was the only person to whom all other members were subordinate. None except the head of the family could hold immovable property which was all for the benefit of the whole household. Although along with the other members of the family, woman was debarred from holding separate property she held an equally important place with the man in religious functions, "neither could reach heaven without being accompanied by his duly married consort"† There is a singular reference to staking of wives by confirmed gamblers in Rigveda (Rig. X 34) wherein a protest has been raised against the practice. It may mean that here and there Vedic people must have found remnant of prehistoric idea of considering woman as an ordinary chattle to be staked at least in gambling. Apart from such exceptional references, the condition of women in Vedic times was on the whole satisfactory. Their movements were free. Though polygamy could be traced in a few cases, monogamy was the

* Sri Manmahabharata's Marathi Translation- C. V. Vaidya, p. 222.

† Position of Woman in Hindu Civilisation -Dr A. S. Altekar. p 409.

rule. Widow-remarriages were freely allowed. Even Niyoga (levirate) was in vogue. This custom may be due to strong desire of Aryans for more man power whereby they could carry on their plans for conquest.

Women retained their satisfactory condition at least in the beginning of next millennium commencing from 1500 B. C. Many women were still following the teaching occupation. It was in this period that the idea of Stridhan seems to have taken root. It was considered to be her separate property. Later, however, a deterioration in her condition set in. No doubt a wife's right to take care of Agni-hotra (the sacrificial fire) in the absence of her husband was still conceded to her, yet there appeared a tendency to curtail the religious rights and privileges of women in general. "None the less the Brahmanas clearly indicate a gradual decline in their position which is evident from the rule that requires the wife to eat after her husband."* One of the reasons alleged for the same is that the performances of sacrifices were becoming elaborate and complex and even the slightest mistake was supposed to cause the greatest harm.

As at that time the Aryans had to wage wars of conquest, they required the aid of women as productive workers in society. Gradually, as they came to settle down in Sutra period, the services of the conquered races to do productive labour became available, thus relieving women of much of their duties. Women's activities as helpers of men were not now needed. Instead they came to be taken as high class ladies, debarring them from attending public meetings. "Having now lost their importance as comrades of men in public activities, they came to be honoured merely as mothers."

* Vedic Index Vol. 1 p. 486.

This gradual deterioration of women continued in the next period of a thousand years which is the age of Sutras, epics, and early Smritis. The chief reason of it, is frequency of marriages of Aryans with non-Aryan women and their insistence on giving religious rights and importance to them equally with their Aryan wives. The non-Aryan women, however, being ignorant of the Vedas, were not able to do their part efficiently at the time of sacrifices. To avoid the wrath of the Gods, it was considered proper to stop women as a class from learning the Vedas and performing Vedic rites.*

Again in this period two "isms" had come into existence, which made onslaughts on Vedic religion. The majority of Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas had taken to Buddhism and Jainism respectively. Consequently the Brahmins became more watchful about their Vedic religion. They became more and more conservative. In order to keep their race pure, they advocated stricter rules of chastity for women and tried to marry their daughters as soon as they became matured. To every girl marriage became compulsory from the time of Bana, the poet, about 200 A. D., and the age of marriage was lowered down from 16 or 17 to 12 or 13. Education of girls became a secondary thing. Upto 200 A. D. the Upanayan ceremony of girls was performed at the time of their marriage. But after that it was completely done away with. Widow remarriages were tabooed.

We have instances of learned women like Gargi and others who used to oppose great seers such as Yadnyavalkyas in public discussions on the evolution of this visible world.† There is also a singular instance of a woman who

* Marathi Dnyanakosh V. 2. P. 26.

† Bruhdaranyaka Upanishadat 2: 4, 4-5.

had the freedom and courage to flatly decline "to marry her lover when she suspected that he was disinclined to reveal to her some of his Vedic dogmas and theories."* I wonder where that bold and assertive character of such women disappeared when they were reduced to a subordinate position of home-workers and child-bearers! Perhaps it may be due to the fact that women of subjected races were absorbed by Aryans who married them and gave them a status well-nigh on par with their Aryan wives. Polygamy became more common. The rulers set examples to others by creating harems. There is a reference in Mahabharat to Lord Krishna being offered hundred women by Yudhishthira. On the other hand the very woman who could in the Vedic period get divorce from husband in exceptional cases or could with impunity remarry if she happened to be a widow was now taught to adore meekly her husband as God whatever may be his character. Shwetaketu's law regarding adultery was given a go-by in as much as only men were excluded from it. The only relieving factor in the condition of women was the increase in the proprietary rights

We now come to the age of later Smritis, commentators and digest writers i.e. 500 A. D. to 1500 A. D. There is not the least doubt that in this period the Smriti-writers paid their tribute to women as mothers in a fashion unparalleled in western civilization. According to Manu and Vashishtha "The spiritual master (Acharya) stands above ten private teachers (Upadhyayas) in worth and dignity, the father above a hundred spiritual teachers but the mother above thousand fathers."†

* Taittiriya Brahmana II 3, 10/2.

† Manu ii 645, Vashishtha XIII 48.

"Manu does not allow sons to exercise even their legal right to claim a partition, as long as their mother is alive. After the death of the father, even when sons were majors it was the mother who, in practice, if not in theory, guided and controlled the household."*

Mr. J. J. Meyer in his *Sexual Life in Ancient India* says "At the centre point in this intimate family life is the mother, covered with much glory by Indian literature,...to the Hindu it is just this side of a woman's life that is the beginning and the end."

However, in this period a woman's position in general deteriorated still more. Her age at marriage was fixed at 8.

According to the commentators if that age was exceeded, her parents were supposed to commit sin. But on the other hand the boys were expected to undergo a course of training extending over twelve years at least, since the time of their Upanayana ceremony. This ceremony generally took place at the age of eight. That means boys would be above 20 at the time of marriage. The difference between the age of husband and wife was, therefore, greatly increased. The only exception to this was in the case of Kshatriya girls who were allowed to remain unmarried till 14. Education came to be imparted to daughter from such families only. The ignorance of most girls created a tendency among men to treat them lightly and "pass cynical observations about their weakness and worthlessness."†

* Dr. Altekar—"The Position of Woman in Hindu Civilization" p. 82.

Ibid. p. 431.

In short, women's status in these times was not a whit better than that of a Sudra. Strict formalities and restrictions were put on widows who were enjoined to lead an-ascetic life. Tonsuring of widows was practised to prevent any chance of their going astray. A couple of centuries after, that is about the eleventh century, the most cruel custom of Sati was widely practised, the object being to prevent any mixing of blood by our women falling in the hands of Muhamedan conquerors. The custom of Johar amongst the Rajputs at the time of issuing out of the fort to meet the enemy, is a glaring example.

The defeat of Prithviraj in the first battle of Panipat marked the advent of Muhamedan rule. Since then the progress of Hindu civilization was arrested and an era of blind faith and perpetuation of old customs followed. Pauranic literature exercised great influence over Hindu minds. The status of Hindu women, under such circumstances, could not be expected to improve any way. Child marriages continued. Restrictions on widows became more and more stringent. The Hindu women, like their Muhamedan sisters, adopted the Purdah. In Northern India the system was very rigorously enforced.

The same state of affairs continued during the regime of the East India Company until the Governor-Generalship of Lord William Bentick. He was shocked to see living persons allowing themselves to be burnt to death. After some consultations with leaders of public opinion he put a stop to Sati by making it a penal offence for those who took part in it. Even this attempt of his would have failed had it not been for the strong support from rational people like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others. We are indebted to them for putting an end to

this cruel custom once and for all. The regime of Lord Dalhousie brought another relief to widows in the shape of the Widow Remarriage Act 1856. This permissive act legalised marriage of a Hindu widow. Public opinion, however, was not as yet much in its favour. Hence very few widows could take full advantage of it until-recently. Even now widow remarriage has not become common. Yet it is not discountenanced.

We shall now examine the different developments in the woman's status so far as the legal side of it is concerned. Since the Vedic times the Hindus believed that all the legal precepts which govern Hindu life have a Divine origin. As in many other civilizations they were not taken to be the rules or laws laid down by men in authority. Hence a sort of sacredness was attached to the prevailing Hindu Law and therefore considered irrevocable. These so called heavenly laws enunciated in the Sutras, were tried to be interpreted by different authoritative sages who commented upon them and twisted their meaning to meet the particular condition of society, according to their own views of justice and expediency. In consequence different schools of Hindu Law in different parts of India came into existence such as Dayabhag in Bengal, Vyavaharamayukh in Bombay City and Gujarat and Mitakshara in U.P. Bihar and Western India. In South India Mitakshara is supplemented by Smrutichandrika and Saraswativilas. Hindu Law is, therefore, a peculiar combination of Heavenly laws coming to the general public through the rules made by commentators reflecting the local customs of the time. It is further modified by various decisions given by Pandits and subsequently by judges in different courts of India and the Privy Council. Thus present Hindu law appears to be

fragmentary. Hence, there is a movement to have uniform codified Hindu Law for the whole of India. One thing has got to be noted that so long as the making of changes in Hindu Law, remained in the hands of our interpreters, women were fortunate in getting more and more proprietary rights. But thereafter during the British period, the decisions of the highest tribunal presided over by the English Privy Councillors have limited the rights about Stridhan setting aside the more liberal definition of Mitakshara. "True Hindu Law followed nature and was not artificial, unnatural and cruel as it is represented to be and as is Hindu Law administered in modern courts."*

We have already seen that in the Vedic times women enjoyed equal status with men. Here we shall consider their property rights in those times. Women then were free to study the Vedas and perform sacrifices. It was, therefore, natural to expect that they should possess wealth of their own; for that purpose a daughter could inherit equally with her brother the property of the father.

अमाजूरिव पिता सचा सती समानादा सदस्तामिये भगम् । ×

The wife had coproprietary rights not only in the separate property of the husband but even in his joint family property. Neither of them could dispose of by sale or gift, any property without the consent of the other. Any such transaction without the other party's consent was declared null and void. In short she had full power over the purse along with the husband, as an equal partner. How beautiful is this idea of unique partnership

* Hindu Law-Ghose.

+ ऋग्वेद २-१०

between husband and wife bound by delicate ties of love. "The poetical ideal was decidedly high and we have no reason to doubt that it was often actually fulfilled." *

What a nice thing it would have been had this equality of the sexes been maintained till this day ! Perhaps there would have been no occasion for putting up the present fight for redressing the grievances of women. However it was not to be so. As the Aryans gradually spread themselves in different parts of India, they came into closer contact with races of imperfect civilization and naturally got themselves mixed with them in their ideas of life. That may be perhaps one of the causes which changed the outlook of men towards women. It was necessary for the invading Aryans to maintain their man power as against their subjected races. Hence early marriages and polygamy by marrying girls even from subjected races came into existence. The inclusion of these non-Aryan wives had the effect of reducing the position of Aryan wives along with non-Aryans to subordinate one. Instead of the glorifying ideal of partnership between man and woman the latter came to be considered only as a dependant on the former. This change continued from bad to worse in the times of the Smritis when the marriagable age was lowered to eight, followed by complete moral subjection. In their enthusiasm to maintain the chastity of woman they snatched her freedom and put her under protection of man from her childhood to her death.

पिता रक्षति कौमार्ये भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।

रक्षन्ति स्थविरे पुत्रा न स्त्री स्वान्त्र्यमर्हति ॥ मनुस्मृति.

Thus the husband came to be the guardian of his wife and she was enjoined to stay with him under the same roof or else lose her right for maintenance. This rule holds good even now. There is only exception to this. If the husband is cruel or keeps a concubine in the house, the wife may leave him and at the same time claim maintenance. Nay—the Hindu legislators went a step further. They “were humane enough to allow bare maintenance even to an unrepentant and unchaste wife to save her from utter destitution.”* Along with his wife, it was and is incumbent on a man to maintain his mother and infant daughter whether he had or has any property or not. Our commentators have given the wife equal freedom with the husband in the matter of filing a suit for enforcing conjugal rights. I, at least, have not heard of any woman exercising this right.

Though the claim to an equal share in the property of her consort had become only a thing of the past, subsequent legislators, however, gave woman increasing rights in respect of “Stridhan”. “Stridhan” can be traced to the Vedic times. Then it was known as Parinahya and it consisted of all the articles given to a wife by her husband and other relatives, and this became her exclusive personal property. According to Sir Henry H. Main the idea of Stridhan originated from what is known as Shulka. By Shulka is meant the articles or money given by a man to his father-in-law at the time of marriage. This being constant in number, the act of giving it by the bridegroom to the father of the bride did not change marriage into a kind of bargain. Besides whatever was given to the father he bestowed it on his daughter which since then became her stridhan. This

* Position of Women in Hindu Law. D. N. Mitter. P. 292

definition of stridhan was greatly amplified by Vidnyaneshwara. According to his Mitakshara school stridhan comprised property acquired by woman by inheritance, purchase, partition, chance and adverse possession. Woman could enter into a contract or stand surety to the extent of her stridhan. This wide definition of stridhan by Vidhnyaneshwara however, was not accepted by many. The self-earned money of the wife was not, according to dissenters, included in the stridhan. They divided stridhan into three classes. Over the gifts given by relations she enjoyed full ownership. While the gifts given by others and her self-acquired property were subject to the control of the husband. Property given for the purpose or in lieu of maintenance including arrears of maintenance during coverture or widowhood is the third type or class of stridhan. Under the British rule however, the rights over stridhan were greatly curtailed by judicial decisions in various cases. Howsoever narrow the definitions of stridhan may have become, yet Hindu woman's condition was far better than that of her English sister upto 1870. After 1870, the scales however, turned. English women are now enjoying far better rights than their Indian sisters.

Let us now turn to the condition of widows in so far as it affects, for better or for worse their proprietary rights. While discussing the social aspect of a widow's life we have considered the customs of widow-remarriage, Niyoga, tonsure and Sati. Her rights to give and take a son in adoption are varying according to different schools. Indeed the disabilities suffered by Hindu widows in social sphere are unique and have no comparison in any other jurisprudence. The same is the case with regard to her property rights. Where a widow does not inherit

the property of her husband, she is entitled to maintenance. This relief is, according to Jaimini Sutra a corollary to her position as co-owner with her husband. Maintenance can be given to her provided there is sufficient property for the purpose. The Dayabhag school of Bengal is much more liberal at least in the case of widows. "In Bengal, a widow cannot be deprived of her right to maintenance by any provision in the will of the husband."* That school also recognises her right to inherit the husband's property or his share in the joint family property, whether he be a member of a divided or undivided family at the time of his death. Mitakshara however, requires the husband to be separated from the joint family. In case he dies undivided the widow can succeed to self-acquired property only. All the schools are unanimous on the question of restricting this right of inheritance to chaste widows only. Upto 1937, a widow having son was not given any share in the husband's property. She had to be satisfied with whatever maintenance the sons would give. Since 1937, in accordance with Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, she along with her son is entitled to an equal share in the property of her husband. Even the widowed daughter-in-law and grand daughter-in-law of the deceased can by this act claim the share which their husbands would have got had they been living. The property thus obtained by them is however, a widow's estate.

This brings us to the question of the nature of property which a widow obtains by inheritance. The Smriti writers do not appear to have any intention to limit her right. We have seen already how Vidnyaneswar had widened the scope of Stridhan by including

* The position of women in Hindu Law. D. N. Mitter. P. 480.

in it even the property coming to her by right of inheritance, and stridhan according to him was her absolute property.

तदेव च स्त्री धनं यद् भर्तुतः स्वातंत्र्येण दानविक्रय भोगान् कर्तुमधिकारोस्ति दायभागः ॥

“ Mitakshara does not impose any limitations on the widow's power of disposition of her deceased husband's estate.”* Jimutvahan, the founder of Dayabhag school, has, however, deprived her of this freedom. And she was allowed only to enjoy the profits of the estate leaving the corpus intact for the reversioners. This restriction which was primarily applied to the province following the Dayabhag School, has unfortunately been extended even to women governed by Mitakshara school by the judicial decisions of British courts.* Thus at present widow's estate has become common to the whole of India. She has no right to alienate the property without the consent of the reversioners. Only in cases of necessity and for the spiritual welfare of herself and her husband she can dispose of a portion of the property binding the reversioners. The records of the courts show a great number of cases wherein reversioners have on the plea of abuse or waste questioned the alienation by the widow. The net result is that her position, whether the widow inherits any property from her husband or not, is equally pitiable.

Daughter comes next to the widow in heirship. As we have already seen above, in Vedic times an unmarried daughter and a son shared equally their father's property. In the times of the Smritis, she was given a fourth part of her brother's share. As the law exists today, if the deceased father's property is partitioned by the brothers,

* The Position of Women in Hindu Law. D. N. Mitter p. 529

* Ibid p. 533.

she gets the above said share for her marriage expenses. If she has no brother and mother she inherits the whole of the divided father's estate. The Dayabhaga School gives the following order of succession for daughters :

1. unmarried daughter, if not

2. one who has or is likely to have a male issue.

According to that school barren daughters, widowed daughters without male issue or daughters with female issues only are debarred from inheriting father's property. Of course, chastity is an essential condition for claim to inheritance. Moreover, daughters are only to get limited interest in the property, the reversioners being the next heirs of the father. These restrictions are, however, not to be found in Mitakshara school. Whether married or unmarried, daughters share their father's estate absolutely in Bombay.

The principle on which the law of inheritance, according to Mitakshara, is based may briefly be stated as follows. The author recognises the claims of female heirs generally. He has made consanguinity the basis of title to succession in the absence of preferential male heirs. The Bengal and the Benares schools as opposed to Mitakshara consider women incompetent to inherit unless specifically mentioned in the Smritis.

Whenever any change was sought to be effected with a view to better the lot of women, orthodox Hindus have always raised a hue and cry against it. Their main argument is that the laws laid down by commentators are interpretations of the sacred Texts which must never be transgressed. But we have seen above how the original liberal dictates of the Vedas have undergone changes at various stages, ultimately reducing women to the present

subordinate position. To raise the status of woman to equality would not be possible without taking drastic steps. The best examples of what I say are the Regulation prohibiting Sati and the act prohibiting child marriages known as the Sarada Act. The former Regulation was successful because the government were earnest and enforced it by punishing the miscreants. But the Sarda Act although put on the statute long ago, failed greatly in its object because of the government's negligence to enforce it rigourously and for want of public support and co-operation. It will thus be clear that legislation alone will not always be able to remove the disabilities of women. What other supplementary steps have got to be taken, we shall be in a better position to find out by reviewing the information supplied by the life history of 1348 women.

Since the first Great War vast changes have taken place in the life of the normal man. Whether they are good or bad, they have come to stay. The worldwide movements of the twentieth century affecting all the nations and classes of people have also affected Hindu society and its womenfolk. The present investigation clearly shows that the forces working in the transitional period have caused tremendous changes in viewing social institutions such as caste, marriage and family. The old ideas about them are fast disappearing but, unfortunately, no new permanent constructive ones have replaced them as yet. To the already unsatisfactory condition of Hindu women of the nineteenth century the movements in this century have largely contributed by bringing in modern ideas of living. In the absence of proper adjustment the woman's problem has become still more complex.

For example we will take the case of unmarried women. Out of the 805 women who form my first group of normal cases, 65% represent the younger generation being below 30. Out of 263 unmarried girls 13% have decided not to marry. Some of them are settled in life so far as their earning is concerned, Yet they have no desire to marry. It may mean they are trying to fight against the medieval notion of compulsion for every girl to marry. But if we look closer into their cases we find some of them though desirous of married life are forced to remain unmarried by adverse circumstances. There are other instances where the girls have to marry against their wishes just to satisfy their parents. This clearly shows that proper adjustment has not as yet taken place.

Majority of girls would naturally be eager to lead married life. So far they had to submit to the choice of their parents or guardians. But there is nothing strange if the girls wish in the heart of their hearts to be free to choose their own partners of life. In my inquiry I found the percentage of such girls to be 74 of the total number of those wishing to marry. Hindu society is not much advanced as to offer opportunities to such girls to select their own mates. Present day mixing of boys and girls in colleges and offices is serving some purpose in that direction. The more the women take part in different spheres of activities in life, the more occasions they will get of mixing and the solution of this problem will be facilitated.

It is strange to find that out of 263 unmarried girls only 28% would prefer marriage by registration although so much as 74% have strong desire to make their own choice of husband. As a matter of fact the Act of

Registration of Marriages is much more advantageous to women. But the small percentage given above shows that as yet many girls do not show any inclination to follow this mode of marriage. It is, however, true as stated by some of the subjects of my inquiry that the bride's party has no freedom to choose the mode of marriage. It is the right of the bridegroom to make the choice. That may perhaps be one of the reasons why many girls could not have formed any decision about the kind of marriage they would go in for. Apart from the above-said bold and educated earning girls, others have no choice in the matter and have to bide their time.

Calculating the average age of 263 unmarried girls, it comes to 24 and of those matriculated and above comes to 29. Comparing those figures with the average duration of women's life in this country which is 26.5 and the period of cessation of reproduction which is 37 as found in this inquiry, it appears to be much higher. It may perhaps be excusable in the case of girls who are taking education or are after some career, as they cannot be said to be wasting their life's precious period and secondly, some of them may remain unmarried for their whole life. But for the rest it is not advisable to remain unmarried for such a long time in their own interest and the interest of society. This delay in marriage is not the fault of these girls. The struggle for existence experienced by middle class people is getting stiffer and stiffer, forcing the boys also to postpone their marriage till the time they find their income sufficient to maintain the family. Besides the economic factor, such social customs as dowry and the restrictions of caste and Gotra stand in the way of free choice of partners. Although it is not possible to improve the economic conditions so easily we can at

least rouse public opinion against such social handicaps. Of course women themselves will have to take up the cudgel and boldly arrange their own alliances.

This postponement of marriage to a very late age has not a little contributed to the downfall of many of our young sisters. This is illustrated by the 98 cases of unmarried girls already described in the second part of the thesis. Not less than 45% of these are cases of seduction. About one-third of them were seduced by their near relatives; five were even sold. The average age of these girls comes to 17·5. It is really a pity that such a great number should have been forced to take the aid of Rescue Homes. There will be no two opinions that attempts should be made for the removal of the causes which brought them there.

We cannot say that a married woman's life is a bed of roses. For 427 married women referred to in the first part can safely be taken to have been married at the right time of their life, since the average age at the time of marriage comes to 18. But even against them as many as 13% couples' relation *inter se* are not very happy. If we analyse impartially, in 83% cases the husband is found to be at fault. As is already seen there are many pitfalls in the path of a woman's marriage. But even after marriage one cannot guarantee happiness. "Marriage is a lottery" according to Maha Mahopadhyaya P. V. Kane.*

It is gratifying to note that out of 427 marriages under consideration 15% have been marriages of choice, out of which only 2 turned out to be unhappy. Comparing.

* Hindu Dharma Shastra Vichar, P. V. Kane, p. 78.

this with the above percentage there is no harm in stating that when marriages are contracted as a result of free choice of the parties themselves, there is more chance of their becoming successful.

For those marriages which have become failures the law has not provided any way out of the impasse for Hindu women. In the absence of any remedy for those married women who cannot amicably pull on with their husbands, many are placed in very hard circumstances. This fact is clearly brought out in the second part where not less than 219 out of 257 married women have to stay away from their husbands. Many of these unfortunate persons have been subjected to illtreatment at the hands of husbands-sometimes even at the risk of their own lives. That is why in 62 cases the Rescue Home authorities were not able to restore their wards for reasons of safety. If no divorce is allowed, these women cannot try their luck at second marriage. Then what is to be the fate of these downtrodden creatures? Even the Rescue Homes authorities have been forced to make this query.

According to Justice Mitter "divorce is unknown to Hindu Law generally" but "custom has ingrafted it on certain sections of the community belonging to the lower castes in particular".* Dr. Altekhar, however, says that only under certain circumstances Manu has allowed divorce and has given permission to remarry if the first marriage is not consummated. In actual practice divorce and remarriage even after first consummation was common in society not excluding the higher Varnas. This practice was stopped sometime in the 5th century B.C. as the wave

1* Position of Women in Hindu Law-D. N. Mitter, p. 342, 343

of asceticism passed over Hindu society. Why should we not revive divorce and remarriage when we feel its want in the present times ?

The question of remarriages arises either in the event of the death of the husband or where continuance of marital relations, for certain reason is undesirable. Let us now consider the circumstance in which husband has more than one wife. We are already aware how the presence of co-wives becomes a source of misery to the other. This experience is common to both the higher as well as lower classes of society. It is a mistaken belief that polygamous marriages are happier amongst the labourers and farmers. The fact is no two women whether married or otherwise can live happily with one man. Hence monogamy is as necessary as the right to divorce. Polygamy may have proved useful when the numerical strength of society needed an increase in numbers. But when there is a general complaint of overpopulation it would be ridiculous to defend polygamy. Moreover mere increase in number irrespective of its quality is not at all desirable. Research in the general health of the public has revealed how it is becoming poorer day by day. Hence there is a move to popularize birth-control. Monogamous marriages would be a step in the right direction. Besides the number of women is small and if one man has more than one wife there would be others who will have no chance of getting even one. This is anti-social.

In this connection I would like to draw the attention of my readers to the question of infantile mortality discussed in detail in Ch. IV Part I. As has been pointed out no less than 227 per mile children have died within one

year of their birth. This rate, already shocking in itself, increases still more in case of illegitimate children. Does it not behove us to put a stop to this wastage of human energy?

Amongst the Hindus it is widely believed that a woman is fortunate if she dies during the life time of her husband. So women actually pray to God for the fulfilment of this wish. Perhaps this belief is due to the miserable life a widow is forced to live. Her position rendered pitiable under the law; her dependance for the livelihood on the charity of her husband's relatives; her constant anxiety to maintain herself and her children; the perpetual fear of relatives depriving her of her property by coercion or undue influence, all these have already been described in detail. It has also been found out that average age of a widow ranges from 20 to 22. Despaired of any further happiness in the future, it would be small wonder if some widows fell a prey to the immoral machinations of those who feigned sympathy for them. 70 out of 188 widows from the Rescue Homes were subjected to seduction. Life must be a living hell to those women especially when they were forsaken by their seducer. To add to their misery, there is the fear of giving birth to a child. The solution to all this state of affair would be complete freedom to remarry. The experience in the past has, however, not been encouraging. The present inquiry has shown only one in a hundred willing to remarry while only 35 out of 188 widows residing in the Rescue Homes could be persuaded to remarry. This apathy towards remarriage would go only when the outlook of the society is changed and remarried women are equally respected and associated with like other married women.

A review of widows' condition and their difficulties will not be complete without a discussion of the question of birth of illegitimate children. These children are treated with contempt and scant courtesy by society because, they think, a contrary attitude would be interpreted as encouraging immorality. How far it would be consistent with the sense of justice to visit the sins of their parents on the innocent progeny is also a question. Of course this problem is not peculiar to our society but is common to every society in the world. Excepting Russia and a few states in the U. S. A. no society has thought fit to give them equal status with legitimate children. It is somewhat consoling to find our Rescue Homes entrusting a few of them at least to benevolent childless couples.

So far we have examined the Hindu woman's life in its social aspect. We shall now look into the economic side of her life which is a trifle brighter than the former. I have already shown in the Ch. V, Part I that 30% of 805 women are in the real sense of the word in charge of the home exchequer. It is comforting to note that in these few cases at least she is considered the mistress of the house. At the time of my inquiry that is about three years back the average amount of expenses per head over which these women had control was Rs. 37 p. m. Of course this amount compares very unfavourably with the high standard of life in cities.

In the eyes of the world an Indian stands very low in respect of this per capita income. It is no wonder then that out of 805 middle class women only 7% should own property and that only 3% should get some income out of it. In spite of the mandate of the Hindu law requiring every woman to be given some Stridhan, the

present inquiry discloses only 61% of the married women as possessing Stridhan. The only consoling fact is that husbands of 49% women have insured their lives, while 20 unmarried and 31 married women have got their own life insured.

In the obsence of any property, 152 women out of 805 are gainfully employed. Sixty-seven per cent of these earning women are required by circumstances to supplement the income of the family while 43% have singly to support themselves and their dependants. Fifty-one women were working prior to this inquiry but had ceased to do any gainful work when I interviewed them. Thus according to my investigation 25% of middle class women are found to be working. Assuming this percentage to be incorrect if we look to the general middle class outside the perview of my inquiry, still it can safely be said that many of them go in for employment. The last war had given ampler opportunities for them to do so. The cessation of hostilities has brought about unemployment for many of them.

Considering the nature of work which the above 152 women are required to do it can be divided into 29 different heads. Majority of them are teachers which class, as we know, is the least paid of the intellectual workers. The maximum emolument received by a woman either by employment or profession has been found to be Rs. 500/-. Of course this is a rare instance. Posts carrying higher salaries are not as yet open to women.

In addition to their official duties some of these 152 working women are also doing social work. A few others from the non-working class are spending their

leisure hours in the same philanthropic work. The percentage of total social workers has been found to be 13, while 33% are members of one or more institutions.

Ordinarily speaking the majority of middle class women do not enjoy excellent health. This can be attributed either to overwork, or want of necessary rest, or unbalanced diet and under feeding, or to all the three combined. The average weight of women between 18 to 25 is $97\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. while the height is 5 ft. In the case of those above 25 the height remains constant while the weight increases only by $9\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. which is a very small increase indeed !

Whether education has any effect, favourable or otherwise, on the general health of women, we shall now proceed to consider. The average weight of educated women (i. e. matriculated or above) is found to be more than the general average. While it is still higher where they are gainfully employed. The weight of partially educated (i. e. below matric) working women is a little lower. These results show that neither education nor employment affects women adversely. No doubt home difficulties and pressure of outside work will surely deteriorate the health of those who had not the fortune of getting higher education but had to seek employment because of circumstances. In other words employment itself is not necessarily harmful so far as health is concerned in the case of those who seek to raise the standard of living by adding to the family income and succeed in properly adjusting their lives. In spite of all this, it must be admitted that the average weight of women in general is far from satisfactory.

Looking to these women's daily routine, 13% of them complain of hard work without sufficient time to rest. Eighty-three percent have stated household duties as the chief item of work for the day. Others who are either students or are employed or social workers, have to spend much of their time in their respective work. The present investigation has disclosed that only 87% get hardly three hours leisure on an average during the day out of whom only 3% utilise it in outdoor games.

In the circumstance, it will be no wonder if we find the ratio of satisfied women to dissatisfied ones to be 2 : 1. That means 34% women do not feel that they are spending their life in the manner they would like to. This is a very important conclusion and one which must be given due consideration. If we analyse the causes of their dissatisfaction as given by them, they are as follows:— 34% economic conditions, 33% social conditions, 27% family circumstances and 6% physical disabilities. This percentage is found out from the normal group only. If to it we add the other group described in part II, the percentage of dissatisfied women will be much higher. Those who were dragged into present calamities by circumstances beyond their control would naturally be thoroughly dissatisfied with their life.

A person is judged by his ideals irrespective of his or her success or otherwise in achieving them. In the case of women, happiness and comfort of their family would be the first consideration; 32% of the replies have placed that ideal before them. Stepping beyond their family-circle 30% have made social service as the goal of their life. It is noteworthy to find only 22% have given a thought to the development of their individuality. "Eat,

drink and be merry, " is the motto of 10%, while 5% are fighting for economic independence.

Educational inquiry has shown that 26% women are literate, 44% have studied upto the matric, while 30% are above the matriculation standard. According to the Reform Act of 1935, the qualification for a woman voter is literacy. Taking that into consideration all these 805 women can safely be taken as qualified voters.* If a referendum is taken on the necessary changes in Hindu Law, so far as these women are concerned, the voting would be as follows: 623 for and 46 against monogamy; 498 for and 160 against divorce; 571 for and 71 against inheritance for daughter; 640 for and 16 against inheritance for wife. Generally speaking, three-fourths majority is considered quite sufficient to bring about changes in a constitution. According to that principle, the above referred to changes in Hindu Law ought to come about. To the question "What improvements should be made to better the present condition of Hindu Women," the following replies have been received. Out of the total 805 women in the first group, 158 have advocated compulsory education with an economic bias; 109 demand economic independence and 73 ask for equal status with men in all respects; while 54 wish for freedom of thought and action. The remaining have kept silent. However, the replies received show which way the wind is blowing!

Last but not the least important question is about the way in which a woman's position would be made ideal according to individual conceptions of idealism. Fifty-eight women have given wider consideration to this

* The Present Adult sufferage was not to be thought of at the time of my inquiry.

question and are quite sure that women's problems will be happily solved only in a socialistic independent India. Others give social reforms precedence over political. Some think the total extinction of evil customs like dowry, Pulla and a stricter enforcement of Sarda Act are necessary. According to a few, the present age at marriage is rather high and has to be timely brought down. For this purpose, they feel the need of institutions like clubs, gymkhanas etc. To solve the difficulties of married women advisory boards are suggested by some. Some need facilities and information regarding birth-control. Encouragement of widow remarriages is pleaded by a handful. All these suggestions are well worth considering.

This concludes the panoramic review of the 1348 subjects of the present inquiry. Let us see what kind of picture has emerged out of it; At the top of it we find a few educated earning women who are fully satisfied with the life they are leading. As a contrast we come across a number of women at the other end, down trodden, becoming objects of institutional care, a plaything of circumstances, and at times object of sale and resale or ordinary chattel to be staked in gambling. Between these two extremes the fate of women is moving to and fro. There is a greater probability of its going down instead of coming up. The reason is quite obvious. Those few fortunate who are born in ordinarily favourable circumstances generally find smooth sailing. But the condition of those who are born in adverse circumstances is invariably much worse. We will have to control the forces that usually act and react on these women with a view to benefitting them.

CHAPTER XI.

WOMEN MOVEMENT.

Until a century ago woman's condition all over the world was well-nigh the same. We have already seen in the preceding chapter what it was in the Hindu Society. Excepting its special peculiarity due to the sanction of polygamy and Stridhan Hindu women had great similarity with that of European women in general and English women in particular. In the age of chivalry women were on a high pedestal and were a source of inspiration to knights. For the honour and love of his lady he was supposed to be ever ready to fight and even lay down his life. To him she was beauty and charm incarnate. In India too in Epic times woman was deified.

But this deification was based on principles of utility rather than sentiment. Indians in epic ages had realised the real value of a woman as mother and she was therefore honoured more than any body else. The day commenced by humble salutation to the mother and then to the father in Indian homes.

This age of chivalry, however, was a short one. But the expectation of beauty and charm in ideal woman remained in the society. Her main function was to gratify the sense of pleasure in man. To attract, to please and to console man was to be the underlying idea of all her education. They were supposed to know different fashions of the day as well as singing, dancing and other fine arts. In short they were to be trained in "genteel" sciences. According to Rousseau, a woman's education was to be planned in relation to man. She was to be taught to win his respect and love and be

pleasing in his sight. The conception of this ideal in woman consequently led to its natural sequence in making marriage to be the only goal in her life. A spinster over forty was considered a social failure who was of no use to the world! Woman was not supposed to be able to live independently of man. This inferiority complex was so much instilled in her that she herself admitted the superiority of man in all respects. Throughout her life she was expected to remain under his protection either as a daughter, sister or wife. Legally the husbands had full right over their wives' person. Protest was immoral. "..... the property, the earnings, the liberty and even the conscience of a wife all belonged to her husband as did also the children she might bear."* Thus socially and legally a woman's position was one of subordination and dependence. Divorce in England was not allowed except after combrous procedure through an Act of Parliament. Only two women were fortunate to get such divorce from Parliament. Husband's murder was legally termed "petty treason" punishable with burning.

Such was the condition of women at the close of the eighteenth century when society was shaken by the doctrines of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The French Revolution changed the ideals rather than the established order. Of course there was a section of society, that too not a small one, which did not approve of the new ideas. It was but the natural result of long standing subordination. At this juncture Mary Wollstonecraft published her book "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" in 1792 and raised the banner of rebellion. Her publication was neglected in the beginning but its message roused the people of the nineteenth century.

* The cause-Ray Strachey. p. 15.

Other forces also were at work. The Industrial Revolution brought in its wake intolerable conditions for the labourers. It reduced the economic importance of woman. The change from skilled workers to cheap labourers spelled disaster! Whatever kind of work they did they were always badly paid. "Oppressed by the intolerable conditions following the Industrial Revolution, maddened by the hunger of children, the squalore of the disease-breeding warrens...they were driven into protest."* They were the first to support Mary Wollstonecraft's demand for political rights. They realised that to improve their conditions socially, legally and politically their presence in the Parliament was essential. Hence the question of woman's suffrage was taken up in right earnest.

In J. S. Mill women found a valiant champion of their cause. When he stood as a candidate for Parliament, he placed the question of women's suffrage in the forefront of his programme. Not only that but in his "Subjection of Women", he claimed equality for women. When the Parliamentary Reform Bill was introduced in 1867, he moved an amendment extending the franchise to women and it may be noted that actually eighty members voted for the amendment.

American women were not lagging behind their English sisters. In 1848 Women's Rights Convention, the first of its kind in any country, adopted the "Declaration of Sentiments" after the pattern of the "Declaration of Rights of Man." In this demand for full social, legal and religious liberties, the American Woman Movement was born. The fight for their rights continued more or less on the same line as that of English women.

1. Women-Winifred Holtby p. 45.

In England the question of women's franchise became a major political issue since it was first introduced in 1867. Two years later, the first public suffrage meeting with Mrs. Peter Taylor in the chair was organised. Public speaking was then looked upon as something immoral. Openly challenging the ban, women went on with their speeches and activities. In 1870 a suffrage bill was again introduced but was rejected in the committee-meeting by Mr. Gladstone. The question of suffrage was thus deferred to later years.

Women, however were gaining slowly in other fields. In 1869 Municipal franchise was extended to women rate-payers. Next year the Education Act allowed them to vote and sit on School Boards. In 1881 Cambridge University admitted women to Tripos examination. A year after, the Married Women's Property Act was passed. This Act gave women full rights over their own property. Again when County Councils were established two women were elected to them, but they were unable to take their seats until the Qualification of Women Act was passed in 1907.

On other fronts too women like Mrs. Josephine Butler were fighting. After the pattern of Napoleonic Code, Contagious Diseases Acts were passed in England. With a view to eradicate venereal diseases, these Acts provided for medical examination of prostitutes and licensing of brothels. If by a State Regulation women could be penalised, why not their partners who were sharers of the same act? asked Mrs. Butler. She found the Ladies' Association. Its ultimate object was to fight for one moral standard both for men and women. Due chiefly to the efforts of this organisation, the Contagious Diseases Acts were repealed after sixteen years.

This side front, however, split up the suffrage societies. There were women like Mrs. Humphry Ward who protested against the suffrage movement itself. Notwithstanding their opposition new suffrage bills were introduced between 1892 and 1897, which met with the same fate as the previous ones. In the meanwhile, first New Zealand and then South Australia enfranchised women. This gave a fresh impetus to the movement in England.

The South African War of 1898 led women to suspend their activities only to be renewed with double vigour after 1903. In that year Mrs. Pankhurst formed the Women's Social and Political Union. She had her husband's full co-operation in furthering women's rights. When in 1904 Mr. Begg's Franchise Bill was defeated members of W. S. P. U. lost all patience. Normally women are against the use of violent methods. On the contrary they love peace and order. Their training too is also directed towards the same end. But, when to their great dismay, they realised betrayal of promises by Liberals their peaceful inclinations assumed a violent form. In 1905 began the Militant Movement.

This movement roused the whole nation. Public attention was focussed on the question. The suffragettes, as the members of Women's Social and Political Union came to be called, courted suffering by voluntary imprisonment and went on hunger strike etc. The authorities at times resorted to forcible feeding maiming some for life. All this had no effect on the Government. The public, however, was greatly stirred by the attempts of suffragettes. Within themselves the suffrage societies were divided into more than two groups. In 1907 the

Women's Freedom League under the Pethick Lawrences separated from W.S.P.U. under the Pankhursts. During Mr. Asquith's ministry a bill to enfranchise women was once more introduced in Parliament and again it was defeated. The Militants' campaign continued unceasingly. Women like Emily Davison and Ellen Pitfield courted death. Nearly two hundred women went on repeated hunger and thirst strikes.

The outbreak of War in 1914 roused the national spirit in the suffragettes. They immediately suspended all their activities and joined hands with their brothers against the common enemy. Nation's call urged the women "to do their bit". In ship building, aircraft, ordnance, chemical, steel and iron works, in business houses, in banks, women did their best. "About 150,000 were enrolled in official services of whom nearly one-tenth served in France. Practically nothing came amiss to them." *

These voluntary services rendered to the nation by the fair sex were rewarded by passing the Representative of the People Bill on 6th February 1918. After fifty years of struggle, the political rights of women were recognised, though it took ten more years to equalise the franchise and remove the inequality in the legal position of women.

It was not only in the political field that woman had to fight for her rights. How she was starved intellectually is very well expressed by Florence Nightingale. "To have no food for our heads, no food for our hearts, no food for our activity, is that nothing? If we have no food for the

* The Cause-Ray Strachey P. 344

body, how do we cry out, how all the world hears of it, how all the newspapers talk of it, with a paragraph headed in great capital letters Death from Starvation! But suppose one were to put a paragraph in the Times, Death of Thought from Starvation, or Death of Moral Activity from Starvation, how people would stare, how they would laugh and wonder!" *

Before 1870, the elementary and secondary education of boys and girls, was left to Sunday schools, private schools and a few endowed schools. In 1870, for the first time, the system of national education was founded which applied to girls as well as to boys. This was the starting point for the reform of women's education. It was a moot point whether the girls were to be educated on the same lines as boys or whether there were to be different curricula for boys and girls. Amongst women themselves there were not a few who opposed education on the same lines. When University examinations were first opened to girls, they protested on the ground that they would "foster the spirit of confidence and independence which is too common among the girls of the present day". They were afraid that such education would render them unfit for "that subordinate part in the world to which I believe, they have been called". In spite of this opposition, the sponsors of women's education were able to get over the first stage of differences based on inequality.

There yet remained another problem to be tackled and that was about finding efficient teachers. For that purpose entrance into the Universities was sought. In addition, a Teacher's Training College was founded which trained women for examinations. Their insistence was for

* Women-Winifred Holtby P. 53.

identical tests of intelligence for men and women without which recognition of their essential equality could not be possible. Women had to fight for a claim to higher education. Some universities freely admitted them. Others imposed certain restrictions, while Cambridge refused admission until recently. To-day the standard of teaching in girls' schools is equal to that in boys' schools. Not only that but also some new systems of imparting education are founded by women such as Montessori and the Mac Millian project of open air nursery schools which have received world-wide recognition.

There is still a great handicap for women struggling in intellectual field which comes from weight of tradition and home influence. Girls attending schools have not only to do pre-school jobs such as delivering milk etc. like boys, but in addition they have to mind babies and help their mothers at home. Besides parents' influence counteract all that the teachers may do to prepare them for life as rational human beings. In the case of a teacher, poverty is a great block in her way. Many times her family demands and professional duties are at tug-of-war. Very often she has to yield to the century-old traditions subordinating her own ideas. "Because of these handicaps, the vindication of woman's intelligence is not yet quite accomplished. The instruments lie to her hands, but the freedom to use them is not yet wholly hers."* Even to this day woman's education suffers when a question arises between a boy's and a girl's education. In spite of all this, women have been struggling hard to get higher education and not a few have won great distinction and rare honours.

* Women - Winifred Holtby. p. 58.

The attempt to remove the differentiation in the standards of morality was also a part of Woman Movement. Double moral standards were preached to men and women. Accordingly, adultery was connived at in the case of men while it was a serious offence for wives. To pamper the lust of men and at the same time to preserve the chastity of married women there has been existing the prostitute-class. It may be argued that prostitution is not repugnant to women. Had this been the case women would have readily taken to this profession like other callings. The very fact, that an immense secret international kidnapping service was organised for procuring prostitutes, as revealed in 1927 and 1932 League of Nations' reports upon the White Slave Traffic, shows the repugnance with which women treat this calling. None of the countries has been able to wipe out the curse of prostitution completely. Only in Russia selling of body in exchange for money is done away with. Moral concepts are undergoing radical changes since the first Great War. The old ascetic morality is giving place to individualistic theory of morality. "For the rising generation *morality is not the law of God—the same to all. It is the choice of the individual*".*

Political enfranchisement gave an instrument in the hands of women with which they have been able to forge many Acts urgently needed for social welfare. The Guardianship of Infants Act of 1925 gave both the parents equal rights and powers over their children. By the Matrimonial Causes Act 1923, a woman could get divorce on the same grounds as man. Widows, Orphans and Old Age Contributory Pensions Act gives children's

* Whither Woman - Y. M. Rege p. 97.

allowances to widows, orphans and old people. Another act made possible the legitimization of children on the subsequent marriage of their parents. The Registration of Midwives and Maternity Acts, Children (Employment Abroad) Act, extending protection to children upto 18, Age of Marriage Act, raising age of marriage to 16 for both sexes, Children and Young Persons Act 1932-33, providing further protection to children and regulating their employment and an Act forbidding the passing of the death sentence on a pregnant woman-all these Acts were 'passed by the urgency and pressure of women.'*

Outside Parliament women have proved their efficiency and capability in various ways during the last two World Wars. In fact by their zeal and application to whatever work they were put to, they have proved their indispensability to the nation. They worked shoulder to shoulder with their brothers in all the departments of national work. Their equal participation in the defence of the nation and civilisation won for them sympathy and respect of the people.

Having reviewed the success of the Woman Movement so far, one may be tempted to conclude that women have secured fully all that they strove for. "She has gained equal political, social and legal rights with man. So that she has now become his comrade and companion".† Observing superficially this may seem to be true. But critical observers will bear with me when I say freedom of behaviour and power to legislate

* Women's Partnership in the New World-Maude Roydeu p. 2.

† Whither Woman.-Y. M. Rege p. 101.

is not the only goal of the modern woman. Economic equality and full opportunity for self-development and use of her capabilities to serve the society and the nation are still far from sight; ".....above all, economic equality is still a distant dream".* "Women in no part of the world are considered to be the equals of men".†

We have already seen how women proved themselves quite capable and efficient during the first World War and how their work was quite indispensable. But slump followed the war and woman's entry into economic field was held responsible for men's unemployment. Upon demobilisation men demanded the jobs they had left. To make room for potential breadwinners and fathers of families, women were asked to return home. But people hardly realise the fallacy that when women go in for jobs they do it with a view to economic independence. The facts are however, quite different. Most of them have no choice. They have to choose between starvation and work! Besides many a woman has more than one dependent to support. In U. S. A., the richest country in the world, "from 41% to 50% women have dependants".‡

In Germany and Italy new ideas about racial superiority were gaining ground. To maintain the standard of the race they directed women to mind only their natural functions of house-keeping and child-bearing. Under democratic rule which was established after the First War, women occupied high administrative posts. Some were members of the Reichstag. In fact there was

* The cause-Ray Strachey p. 385.

† Women's Partnership in the New World-Maude Royden p. 2.

‡ Women Who Work : Grace Hutchins p. 153.

a general awakening amongst German women and they were dreaming of kindling the torch of truth and humanity in a barbarous world. But their dreams remained dreams only. Economic forces overpowered the democratic regime and the Nazis came into power. By constant propaganda it was dinned into the ears of women that they should look after their homes. Marriage and reproduction were rewarded by the State. This did not mean that all the marriages were happy, as Kirkpatrick has rightly remarked, "marital happiness has not been greatly increased as yet (1939) by National Socialism".* As against this "go back" propaganda figures show that out of the working population in Germany not less than 1/3 were women amongst whom 36% were married having family! This was the condition during peace times just before the Second War. We can very well imagine how these figures must have risen during war times when men's labour must have been wholly absorbed in war activities. The sum and substance of the Nazi policy was to ban women from better paid and intellectual jobs but to keep them as manual labourers. They could not in fact dispense with their services as ordinary workers. "The conclusion must be that National Socialism failed to achieve its ideal of womanly work, however interpreted. Women workers proved indispensable...an increase in the number of women employed outside the home,.....Above all mothers are still at the machine doing tasks ill-adapted to their maternal function."† War necessities forced Nazis to call women to factory work in contradiction to their avowed principle requiring women to stay at home for increasing population.

* Woman in Nazi Germany C. Kirkpatrick p. 237.

† Ibid p. 210.

It is believed in some quarters that women in other countries, especially during peace times, were not required to do outdoor work. Actual facts are, however, quite different. Even before the Industrial Revolution we know women were co-workers of men in the labouring class, although we have no exact figures to show their extent. Introduction of the machine-age forced women to change their sphere of labour from homes and fields to factories and mills to lend economic support to the family. It was not a matter of their choice. The destruction of cottage industries deprived the lower class women of much of their income. The following figures of different nations give the actual state of affairs. In 1934 out of the total labour force 33% were women in Great Britain, 40% in France and 22% in U. S. A. In the latter country 28% of the working women were married. In only 30 out of 534 occupations women were conspicuous by their absence. Besides as Factory Workers women were also found in fields. They were also doing work as teachers, nurses, clerks, domestic workers etc.

Although in almost all the professions women have acquitted themselves well with men—nay in some have even excelled them—still their salary and conditions of work are not as quite satisfactory as those of men. In Britain, U. S. A., and in almost all capitalist countries women are paid less than their male co-workers. "Capitalism depends for its very existence on a large body of surplus labour power ready to be bought at the lowest price". "Women may be paid less than men for equivalent work, but more commonly they are given work on which the rate is less.....women's earnings average about 41% below men's"*

* Women Who Work: Grace Hutchins p. 130.

Both in factories as well as in fields women have to work for long hours along with men lest they may lose their jobs. No doubt at the instance of the Labour Organisation, founded by the Treaty of Versailles, some countries followed their demarcations concerning women's employment before and after childbirth, during the night and in unhealthy circumstances. On the other hand Trade Union regulations handicapped women to some extent. Their small salary would not allow them to make equal contributions with men. Hence they played a subordinate part in Trade Unions. They were often debarred from becoming members and excluded from well paid and highly skilled processes. It is only in Soviet Russia that women are treated with greater consideration than in the Western capitalist countries. There women as well as men are supposed to work only 7 hours a day and only 5 such days constitute a week. There is no sex distinction in the matter of payment. Same salary for the same kind of work irrespective of the sex is the rule. According to Lenin "the full liberation of woman and her real equality with man requires a communal economy, a common social organisation of production and consumption and the participation of women in general production."* The present socialist society of Russia accepts full social responsibility for the health and welfare of women and children. They have done away for ever with women's intellectual inequality; at the same time they have taken strict account of her physical peculiarities. Four months maternity leave on full pay is granted to women, while for 9 months she is given all the necessary facilities for nursing the baby.

*Women Who Work-Grace Hutohins p. 14,

Besides she is not burdened with physical labour beyond her strength. The State takes full care of the health of the mother and the child. No woman is permitted to take up underground work or any such work as tanning and curing. Unlike Western women, Russian women never objected to such kind of protective laws as they have not to fear any competition because of sex.

The memory of the excellent part played by the Russian women in the last II World War is still fresh in every body's mind. In 1941 as many as 45% of the workers were women. In June 1944 they were not only in the majority but in many branches of industry they constituted almost the entire working body. The improvement was not only numerical but also qualitatively. Before 1917 more than 50% of working women were engaged in domestic work. By 1937 the percentage was reduced to 18 while 35% were engaged in large scale industry. Every year the number of women working at lathes, as fitters in the metal working industry, milling machine operators and tool and die makers has been increasing.

The same improvement was seen in the case of posts requiring intellectual capabilities. "In 1939 nearly 500,000 women were chosen deputies to local soviets. More than 17000 women figured in the election to Federal Soviets in 1937-38. These were elected officials".

In the last few pages we have taken a short review of Woman Movement in western countries and Russia. In our country too a similar movement is being carried on. We shall briefly touch it here. In the last chapter we have observed how women's condition was paralysed in the pre-British period. For the upliftment of women

they must be made to realise their existing conditions and their rightful place in society. For this purpose education is the only means. We shall therefore begin with the movement for Women's education.

In Sir Charles Woods famous dispatch of 1854 regarding Indian education, he had specifically drawn the attention of the Government to female education. Of course it was restricted to primary education. The thread was taken up by newly started reformist sects such as Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj, who gave a great impetus to women's education. Many women were trained to be teachers and nurses. In 1883 we had the first Indian woman graduate. Thereafter many pioneer women like Pandita Ramabai, Mrs. Rukhmabai and others had to face severe criticism at the hands of the public for taking higher education and independent careers. In spite of all opposition Rukhmabai became a doctor and helped her sisters. No doubt such women were very rare. They only set examples to the coming generations. Not a few men also contributed to the struggle started by these women.

Their cause was subsequently taken up by the Indian National Social Conference which deserves more than a passing reference here. Amongst other items of social reforms, this Conference gave attention to reforms relating to women. The Indian National Congress being considered merely a political body this Conference was formed as the result of deliberations by persons amongst whom were Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunath Rao, Hon'ble Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Mr. Narendranath Sen and Mr. Janakinath Ghosal. According to Mr. C. Y. Chintamani "Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunath Rao is the

father of this body and Mr. M. G. Ranade the wet nurse."* Some of the important resolutions passed by the conference in the interest of women may be found in Appendix A, The Annual Sessions of this I. N. Social Conference were held upto 1947. Their resolutions were appeals to the Government and the Public. *Inter alia* they urged imparting of primary, middle and higher education to women as well as opening of Home Classes for the convenience of adult women. They also recorded their strong disapproval of child marriages, old and young marriages, Hunda and Palla systems, polygamy, the custom of tonsure and entertainment by *nautch* girls on ceremonial occasions, Widow remarriages and inter-caste marriages received encouragement at their hands. The women of to-day are greatly indebted to these men-workers for the keen interest taken by them. Many of the improvements in the life of women are largely due to the agitation and awakening created by these learned men. Dadabhoy Naoroji, Jagannath Shankershet, M. G. Ranade, Sir N. G. Chandavarkar, Agarkar, G. B. Vaidya, G. K. Gokhale, Deodhar and many others deserve unstinted homage from Indian womanhood. Activities in the same direction are at present carried on by the Bombay Presidency Social Reforms Association of which the late Sir Patkar was the greatest and most active president. Special mention may be made of Dr. Karve, our old veteran champion of women's education. The living monument to his life-long activities is the Widows' Home and the university for women known as S. N. D. T. Indian Women's University. The most laudable innovation of this University is the imparting of knowledge through

* Indian Social Reform-C. Y. Chintamani. Appen. P. 365

the mother tongue in general as well as special subjects necessary for women.

Until fifty years back women from different provinces in India had no much information about one another. To bring them together was a great problem. According to Mrs. Cousins, movement for creating associations of women started from 1912. The Bharat Stree Mandal, Poona Seva Sadan, Women's Indian Association, the Sarojini Datta Mahila Samaj, the women's Brahmo Samaj are a few amongst others. Even in the formation of many of these the co-operation of men helped a good deal. The series of lectures delivered by Dr. Annie Besant on "Wake up India-called people to work out their own salvation by freeing their girls from the curse of illiteracy and child marriage, by liberating the so called outcastes (since renamed Harijans by Gandhiji) from all religious and social degradations, and by freeing the whole nation from foreign domination."* These lectures had the effect of unifying the disjointed efforts of women from different provinces. Women became alive to their rights.

Politics also attracted the attention of women. They were members of Indian National Congress and the National Liberal Association from their very commencement. In 1917 when the Secretary of State for India, the Hon. Mr. Montague visited India to survey the political situation of this country in connection with India's demand for Swaraj, a deputation of women headed by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was organised mainly through the efforts of Mrs. Cousins to claim the right of voting. This deputation was followed by various public meetings in support of the franchise. The arguments advocated by

*Indian Womanhood To-day M. E. Cousins p. 27

women leaders were convincing. The Parliament, however, shirked its responsibility by saying that the question of woman franchise was a domestic issue. Accordingly between 1921 and 1929 Legislative bodies of different Provinces granted, without any opposition, franchise to women. It was a unique success for Indian women's political move. We have seen how English women had to struggle hard for 50 years to get the franchise in the teeth of opposition by men. In India it was an easy job for women simply because the men were courteous enough to recognise their rights as citizens.

In 1929 the different institutions working for the upliftment of Indian women thought of coming together on one platform for joint deliberations. All India Women's Conference held its first session in that year at Poona and since then is holding its sessions annually for discussing matters regarding Indian women in general. The credit of initiating this conference goes mainly to Mrs. Cousins, the then Secretary of the Women's Indian Association. In the autumn of 1926 she issued a circular letter appealing "to women all over the country to form local committees and hold constituent conferences in each of the Provinces and in certain other clearly defined districts and Indian States for the purpose of declaring their views on problems of education. Taking up the hint dropped by the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, calling Indian women to "tell us with one voice what they want, and keep on telling us till they get it," this root problem was taken as the main subject for discussion in the first session of the conference. The annual sessions of this conference have now come to be the main forum from which the different disadvantages, disabilities and drawbacks of women have been given

vent to and whose voice has made itself felt in the few laws that are enacted for the benefit of Indian women.

A summary of the subjects covered by this conference is given in Appendix B. Innumerable resolutions dealing with all stages in education from literacy and mass education to higher and university education are passed by this body. The necessity of free and compulsory primary education, of agricultural education, of co-education and the like, is from time to time urged. They also passed resolutions on teaching the ideals of motherhood and making the home beautiful and attractive as well as on the selection of optional subject which amongst others ought to include domestic science, fine arts, social science etc.

Besides education the conference also carried on a campaign against the evil customs which obstructed the onward progress of women. They supported the "Prevention of Child Marriages Act" and demanded more rights for women to inherit the property of their husbands. They protested against polygamy, urged for divorce, removal of untouchability and other social reforms.

At the time of changing the constitution of Indian Government this conference vehemently pressed for woman franchise. When by the 1921 Act wifehood was made a qualification for voting and some seats were specially reserved for women, this very conference raised its emphatic voice against these privileges. They claimed the right to vote as citizens and not because they were married.

The labour class also attracted the attention of this body which passed many resolutions on this and akin

topics. Not only that but they also published some "Tracts". Although this Association had scrupulously avoided taking part in ordinary politics yet with one voice they demanded independence for India.

Similar to the All India Women's Conference we have other Associations of women such as National Council of Women, Bombay Presidency Women's Council, Bhagini Samaj, Arya Mahila Samaj, etc., All of them in their own way are doing the work of ameliorating the conditions of Indian women.

Realising fully how women's problems are intermingled with the problems of the whole country as such and how they would not be satisfactorily solved by themselves until the constitution of the Nation is changed, women like Sarojini Naidu, Vijaya Laxmi Pandit vied with men in taking part in the national struggle for the freedom of India. It clearly shows how far the present day women are prepared to share equally with—nay even more than—men the responsibilities and hardships not excluding the rigours of prison life under a foreign Government. I say under a foreign Government because national government would never have treated the political prisoners in the way the British Government did. Over 5000 women willingly walked to the prisons to serve various terms of imprisonment within three years of Mahatma Gandhiji's starting the Satyagraha movement in 1929. After a lull of few years when this non-violence movement restarted with double force, shoulder to shoulder with men, undaunted, unshrinking, they boldly faced indiscriminate firing by the authorities. There were also not wanting women who worked underground. Women of the type of Usha Mehta, Aruna Asaf Ali are not exceptions. The part played by women in the Indian National

Army led by Captain Lakshmi will be written in golden letters in the pages of Indian history.

The concrete result of the efforts of both men and women for the upliftment of women in India is the passing of several Acts. A reference to these laws has already been made in chapter X. Some of them are given in chronological order in Appendix "D". Even the Indian States have taken up the lead given by the British Government and enforced such laws in their States. The most noteworthy of these States are Baroda and Mysore. All these States deserve thanks for their goodwill towards women of their States. The Indian National Congress has promised in its Karachi Session to give equal opportunities to women. The draft constitution of the Indian Union also has incorporated equal rights to women.

We shall now turn to the Indian labour class women just as we did above in the case of Western countries. In the words of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya: "For every thousand labourers there are 457 women to 543 men. The average earnings of these labourers range from two to four annas according to the season. But every where women are paid less—in some places about half of men's wages."* Great number of women are found working in different factories. It is a general experience that employers always prefer men-labourers to women-labourers "to avoid the inconvenient provisions relating to women such as maternity benefits, prohibition of night shift etc. Greater mechanisation and halfhazard legislation have considerably added to the

* Awakening of Indian Women—Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya.
P. 28.

difficulties of the women workers.”* The various protective laws passed and enforced for the benefit and welfare of women workers have as a matter of fact adverse effect on them in making their employment a botheration to the employers. Moreover all the work done by women is considered unskilled labour with the result that payment made for it is naturally bound to be less. “Another factor which greatly affects the women workers is the system of indirect employment or dependent labour, i. e. they receive wages through a principle worker. Out of one thousand dependent workers 733 are women. This is the dark and sorry tale of nearly 90% of women in India”.†

India being a signatory to the Geneva Convention No. 45 of 1935, the Government of India laid down a ban on the employment of women underground. The Whitley Commission had recommended gradual elimination with a view to having no women underground by 1939 at the latest. In response to the strong demand made by the All India Women's Conference, 1934, which was backed by country-wide agitation, the Government of India got out all underground women labour in 1937. This good act was undone by the very Government by withdrawing the ban in 1943 under the pretext of shortage of coal production. “This measure evoked strong criticism in the House of Commons and there was a storm of protest in this country.”‡ Even the beligerant countries in their darkest days never found it necessary to force women to work underground. Our indifferent Government,

* Awakening of Indian Women-K. Chattopadhyaya p. 31

† Ibid P. 28

‡ Women in Mines -Renuka Ray p. 15

however, lent a deaf ear to the outcry raised by the Indian public. Investigation in the mining areas show that there is no prohibition against pregnant women working underground and they are doing so in large numbers.

The movement carried on by women in different countries for getting equal status with men, though not fully successful, has no doubt improved their condition to a large extent. It cannot, however, be said to have reached an ideal stage. Men do not regard women as their equals yet, and economically at least much more has still to be strived for.

Of course if a nation or society in general is not in a satisfactory condition, it is bound to worsen the lot of women. Therefore, to give full scope to woman's ambitions, ability and creative instincts, the environment of society and a nation must be an ideal one, politically as well as economically. Granting this to be the case and granting that she gets full equality, what is to be the purpose of her life?

CHAPTER XII

WHAT NEXT ?

" I declare for the conventional equality of women, i.e. to say for the determination to make neither sex nor any sexual characteristic a standard of superiority or inferiority for the view that a woman is a person as important and necessary, as much to be consulted, and entitled to as much freedom of action as man."*

Two centuries of political subjection have reduced the Indian nation to abject poverty and starvation. Indian women forming nearly half the country's population, naturally share this situation with men. In the case of the former, however, it becomes worse because of her secondary position in society. Of course the mass of women, being not sufficiently educated, are not able to realise their position properly. Fortunately a ray of hope for brighter days is seen on the Indian horizon as the result of the National Movement. But the advent of independence cannot be expected to solve all the problems affecting women. Hence we have to find out ways and means for their solution independently.

It is a grim fact that the proportion of women to men in India is just the reverse of other nations even in pre-war years. Since the beginning of this century the number of women as compared to men is decreasing in India as revealed by the figures of every subsequent census. The 1931 census shows 940 women for every thousand men. While in Great Britain in the same year there were 1087 women for every thousand men. The natural result of this

* First and Last Things--H. G. Wells, p. 125.

disproportion is an encouragement to child marriages and disparity of ages between husband and wife. Besides it tends to increase prostitution and kidnapping of girls. The cause of this disproportion is to be found in the higher death-rate of women than men which is due to general debility and high maternal mortality. According to Megau, "Every year two lacs of women die during maternity." Naturally women's average duration of life is less than that of men which itself compares poorly with that of other countries.

Such is the Indian women's condition from the population point of view. Speaking socially, her condition is not in any way better. Her happiness, her status, in fact her whole life is dependent on man. Marriage is the only goal placed before her. She is not free to choose her partner in life nor the time and the mode of her marriage. Does her life or status any way improve after marriage? No. Even then she is only a creature in the hands of her husband to be used as he likes. If he is sensible he can make her position enviable. Unfortunately, in the majority of cases misery and drudgery fall to her share, and being trained to face the things as they come, she meekly submits to her lot. As has been found from my inquiry she leaves her husband only under the greatest provocation. For she fully knows how society disdains women who forsake, or are forsaken, by their husbands. Of course, there are some women as shown in the second part of the thesis, who because of perverse mentality and wrong bringing up, cannot lead a steady normal life. But such abnormal women are only exceptions.

Widow remarriages being not as yet freely encouraged, the number of widows amongst the Hindus is very

large. The custom of early marriages though made illegal by Sharda Act, especially where a young girl is married to an old man, has resulted in a vast number of child widows. The Age of Consent Committee declared that about 42% of the girls were affected or likely to be afflicted by early marriage. According to Kamaladevi, "By all moral codes it is rape, but our social conscience is hard bound by dead old usages and the sharp edge of these dumb innocent victims penalised for life by cruel customs hardly touched it".*

In contrast to child marriages, we are now-a-days facing the problem of very late marriages. The hard struggle for existence amongst the middle class people coupled with narrowing of the field of selection of the life's comrade by strict restrictions such as caste and sub-caste, Gotra etc., have per force increased the age at marriage. We have seen how that has brought about the ruin of many a girl. One can easily imagine how tantalizing must be the condition of a girl continuously impressed with the idea that marriage is all-in-all in a woman's life if she is not married to a boy at the proper time !

There is nothing like education which enables a person to improve his or her lot and lead a fuller life. But what do we actually find in India? Not even 8% of the population is literate. Here too, illiterate women outnumber illiterate men. How can one expect Indian women to do their bit in the service of the country, under the democratic Swaraj?

* Awakening of Indian Women-Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya
Page 16.

Because of physical and intellectual backwardness, women are also economically inefficient. Statistics show that four-seventh of the Indian population is dependent on the other three-seventh, Most of these dependants are women and children. According to Profs. Jathar and Beri women's productive work is negligible*. Where women go in for lucrative work, we have seen how their earning is comparatively little. Moreover one cannot say that she can positively lead a smooth and independent life out of her earnings. If married, she is not free to use her money. Society has given husband the ruling power over her as well as her earnings. Besides, we must take into consideration the double strain that a working woman from the labour class has to undergo. I mean, that of her occupation and the performance of her home duties such as cooking, washing and nursing. "A woman's problem is most acute when there is a relation of unbalance or disharmony between her reproductive life and work life. The women's problem may be defined as a relation of unbalance between the unique reproductive function of woman and her work function, so complicated by individual differences and public opinion that there is confusion and unhappiness for herself or members of her group."*

The plight of an unmarried girl or a widow seeking remunerative work outside home, is much worse than that of a married woman. Her budding physique and single life often attract the evil eye of her employer, co-workers or a neighbour. In that case she runs the risk of falling in the estimation of society. Owing to the

* Indian Economics Vol. I—Jathar and Beri p. 49.

* Woman in Nazi Germany - C. Kirkpatrick. p. 35.

stringent rules of the caste system she is even ostracised by her caste people. In these circumstances it is no wonder if such a hapless girl or widow is tempted to the apparently easy life of a prostitute. While discussing cases from Rescue Homes we have noticed how young girls, without parents or coming from poor families, are led away to be sold and resold for the purpose of prostitution by persons who may best be termed as the very banes of society.

Such are the difficulties of working women, be they farmers in a village or labourers in city factories. The village woman has to look after all the household work ; drawing water from a well, grinding, cooking washing etc. Only time is no consideration for her. Just the reverse is the case of a woman living in a city. Unlike her village sister, she has not to draw water from a well but has only to open the water tap and get water. Similarly the grinding mills are ready to grind her favourite cereal for her within a thousandth part of the time her village sister requires to do the work. But then she is not free to regulate her activities as she likes. Punctually at the sounding of the siren, she must present herself at the door of her factory, for late-comers are not admitted by the time-keeper and the woman has to lose her day's wages. In addition to these handicaps all the temptations and disadvantages of a city life such as sickness etc. are likely to mar her health and dwindle her income to some extent. To crown all, whatever little she may be able to save, the husband is there to squander it if he is addicted to vice,

Generally speaking middle class women may be more or less free from the worries of labour class women. But

the economic condition of the lower middle class women is not very satisfactory. In spite of her whole-day drudgery she finds it difficult to make both ends meet. In many cases she does not get even a small respite to recoup lost energy. While visiting chawl to chawl during my literacy campaign, requesting them to spare one hour for the literacy class, more often than not, I met with a refusal for want of even half hour's leisure to spare for education. In the absence of any other more congenial preoccupation for her, repeated confinements drain her health and vitality. She is not taught the use of any contraceptives. As a result, the birth-rate and the rate of infantile mortality in India are one of the highest in the world. Little wonder then that due to this pressure she becomes peevish and dissatisfied with her life. "..... if we examine our normal mothers, we should find that most of them are mothers because they could not help themselves ... the whole process is a drift to fatal ruin." *

The above description gives the dark side of middle class woman's life which is slowly being brightened up with the introduction of education. This education and the present access to paying jobs has improved their status to some extent by making them independent. However, economic independence is not the final solution to the women's problems. In the case of a boy once he is able to secure a permanent job according to his taste, he feels a sort of security in life. He then can safely go in for marriage and start his life. That is not the case with a girl. After qualifying herself as best as she can, even if she gets a suitable job, she cannot always go in for

*. Women & Marriage in India- Thomas p. 195.

marriage. In some cases she has to support her aged or disabled parents, brothers and sisters. We have found such cases in the course of this inquiry. In others, their hand is not accepted in marriage because of their age. In few cases men refuse them fearing that they would not remain under their control. Because of the forced spinsterhood or the unwillingness on the part of the girl to marry, she finds her life very lonely. A feeling of frustration comes upon her. In other words she cannot adjust her economically independent life with married life. Of course there are some women who have achieved this difficult task. Highly educated, gainfully employed, at the same time leading a married life, these women are able to manage their household and children without much trouble. According to their own statement, even their health does not appear to have suffered any way. The health of partially educated women seems to have slightly deteriorated. Few have found it difficult to manage simultaneously outdoor work and home work. This is but natural. It becomes a great problem to arrange for the proper care of the children and at the same time attend to the duties at the prescribed time. If the children are grown up well and good. Otherwise to entrust them to servants for a long time is not in their interests. On her return from full time job quite exhausted, how far a woman will be able to pay due attention to the children is a question. Of course none of the subjects of my inquiry has mentioned such a fact. I will deal with the problem later on.

If the woman in question, whether earning or non-earning, belongs to a joint Hindu family, she may feel a sort of support in other members of the family, provided all of them are of congenial and amicable nature. Even

if, by her ill-luck, widowhood comes to her lot reducing thereby her status to a secondary rank, she will at least find security and surety in the family. But this comfort is not unmixed. There are instances, as found in this inquiry, where her helpless position has been exploited by some members of the family. Again where the members are at logger-heads, all the charm of the joint family disappears. Modern individualistic ideas and the peculiar economic circumstances of the time are breaking the structure of the joint Hindu family into numerous independent families. In such small families, a woman may find some independence and power over the purse. She can mould her life and that of her children according to her own ideas. But then in the event of her widowhood she finds herself all the more in a lonely and helpless condition. Joint family or separate family, the life of a woman is not free from difficulties. How she can best steer her course between the shoals and rocks of life is the problem we have to tackle.

Coming to inter-caste marriages we know they were strongly disapproved upto recent years. Due to broadening of outlook by intellectual contact with the world outside India and the consequent awakening among the people to the futility of unnecessary barriers between hundreds of castes and sub-castes, we now see inter-caste marriages being performed. No doubt the proportion of such marriages is still very small. But there are signs of its rising. This is really a healthy change. Of the many harmful effects of the caste-system, the worst is the superiority and inferiority complex between castes and castes and as a matter of that even between sub-castes themselves. I recollect a free fight having taken place between

members of two sub-castes of the fishermen community settled on the opposite banks of a river. Each claimed relative superiority and what was the criterion of that superiority? It lay in the fact that one spread his net round-hand while the other under-hand. We know of people looking down upon one another on the strength of such trifling grounds. This tendency has proved itself a great handicap to the unification of the Hindu community as one single unit. It has further narrowed the field of marriage by restricting marriages to the members of their own circle. "Whatever functions caste might have fulfilled however socially and individually useful it might have been in the past, to-day the one outstanding characteristic that it shows is to act as a barrier to marriage between members of different castes and sub-castes. A consensus of opinion seems to have been prevailing among our leaders of thought that the form, in which the institution has been functioning during the last few centuries has definitely proved harmful and antagonistic to the birth of a real community and nationality feeling."*

There arises incidentally the question of progeny from such inter-caste marriages. From direct opposition people have now come to conniving at it. But as yet these marriages have not received full recognition from the people; hence the question of marriages of children of these inter-caste couples is a great problem the society has to solve.

Still more difficult is the problem of illegal children. The father does not care to own them, and in many cases even the mother has to forsake them through fear of shame. In these cases how these little ones are to grow

* Social Work and Sociology—Dr. G. S. Ghurye p. 78.

up and what is to be their place in the society is a knotty question. It is very noble of the Rescue Homes and Orphanages to offer shelter to a few of them. But what about the rest? Unless the State steps in and solves the problem I am afraid quite a big number of members of the community would be lost to the service of the country.

The present day awakened woman is attempting to solve these various questions concerning her sex and children and incidentally of the nation. As has been noticed in Part I from the results of my inquiry as many as 33% of the women enquired of, are members of different institutions working for the upliftment of women and the country. Thirteen percent are active social workers while 30% evince a strong desire to do their bit in that direction. Again the sacrifices of their all-in-all by thousands of women in the national struggles during the last 25 years are still green in the memory of our countrymen. But such women as compared to the whole female population of the country are bound to be very few. There are hundred times their number who are yearning to render their quota to the national activities but, because of their unbreakable family ties and poverty, are not able to enter the fight. Excepting those who are in a position to employ servants at home, others find it irksome to attend lectures and meetings in time, after looking to children and home duties. That is why we find comparatively lesser women than men taking part in public activities.

We have seen above the difficulties of the middle-class women. Let us now find out what the approximately 1% rich class women are doing. They are not required to go in for remunerative work. Their household duties

and care of children are considerably lightened by the help they receive from the servants in the house. Unlike middle class women their presence in the house is not indispensable. In reply to my questionnaire a rich and educated woman has remarked "In aristocratic classes woman is more or less an ornament and nothing else". These women naturally find time hanging heavy on their hands. We cannot blame the uneducated amongst them, men or women, if they in the absence of any better way of utilising their time and money, squander away their riches. Of course not a few of the educated amongst them are devoting their time and energy in social and political fields and they can conveniently do so.

From the foregoing general review of the life of women drawn from the labour, middle and the rich classes, it becomes quite evident that whichever class she may come from, she has to tread the thorny path full of insurmountable hurdles. "None should suppose that life in marriage or without it, childless or prolific, is or even can be easy. It is hard and noble, or it is hard and ignoble; but always it is hard".*

A woman's life is indeed hard. But it is not impossible for us to improve her lot. The task will be easier if the woman herself is enabled to have an insight into her own condition. She can then herself try to avoid the pitfalls in her way and chalk out her own path. Given the help of modern science, she can become self-dependent and not have to look to others for help, every now and then.

To enable her to get an insight into life, education is the only aid. There are no two opinions at present,

* Women's Partnership in the New World-Maude Royden
p. 138.

atleast regarding female education. The consensus of opinion, favours the spread of literacy among men and women through out India. After the Congress Ministries took up the reins of government in Provinces in 1937, there was a great drive for the spread of literacy amongst the masses. Since then every year the Government has allocated a certain amount for the purpose though the Governmental assistance is not sufficient to wipe out illiteracy completely from the country. Apart from this adult literacy work, when the question of chalking out the lines of female education and for that matter the question of defining the policy of education in general, comes up before the people, we find a complete lack of unanimity of opinion. They are unanimous only on the fact that the present curricula of studies are far from satisfactory. Much stress is being laid on the theoretical side of education which has little use in practical life. How to modify it is still a debatable point. It is a general expectation that a person who has finished his education should turn out a good citizen, useful as a productive member of the society. At the same time, there must be proper field ready to absorb him for which he has qualified himself. Then and then only, education can really be said to help individual economic needs and the productivity of a country. Every boy or girl, emerging out of primary, secondary or higher stage of education, should at every stage be taught one art or profession at least. Only students with high intellectual capacity should be permitted to go in for higher education. It is not for me to lay down here the educational policy and its programme. Educational experts are competent enough to deal with it

We shall, however, discuss what sort of education should be imparted to girls. There are certain educa-

tionists in India as well as in Western countries who do not approve of the same type of education for boys and girls. According to them the physiological differences between the sexes are bound to react on the mental and intellectual capacities. Their functions are also separate. Co-education is strongly opposed by these people. Prof. Welton is one of them. Howard sees temperamental differences between the sexes though he does not agree regarding the intellectual differences. On the contrary eminent persons like Peter Sandiford and Dr. Danice Starch consider these intellectual differences to be negligible and more qualitative than quantitative. In the opinion of Havelock Ellis "our knowledge of sexual differences in the manifestation of sexual impulse is fragmentary and incomplete."* Even then he admits the existence of innate differences between the two sexes. Thus we find no similarity of ideas between two psychologists. Naturally where researches into brain physiology are still rudimentary one cannot expect decisive statements from any quarter.

Leaving aside the theoretical side of the question, we shall now take its practical side into consideration. Men like Prof. Welton and Mr. Rege make much about physiological, intellectual and emotional differences between the sexes. Mr. Rege thinks, "There is, therefore no escaping of the fact that there are inherent psychological differences which sharply distinguish man and woman. Here there is no question of their relative superiority or inferiority. They only point out to the fundamental differences of the sexes in their function and mission; and as such, woman ought to receive such education as would be compatible with her mental

* Man and Woman-Havelock Ellis p. 143

and temperamental qualities.”* I cannot understand why these men should lay so much stress on these differences? Do they suggest that all men are alike each other intellectually and emotionally? Are there no differences between individual and individual? In fact there are no two individuals alike. Do they further suggest that men and women do not belong to the same species? Where these differences do not prevent same education being given to men, there is no reason to advocate separate education only to women who are members of the same species. I fully agree with English and American women who are demanding same education for girls as well as for boys. Mr. Rege admits “It is now proved beyond doubt that woman has as much intelligence as man in pursuing the highest possible education.”† Once that is admitted will it not be a crime to lose that intelligence to mankind by forcing them to physical drudgery of home duties and matrimonial functions only? Again is there any guarantee that these duties do not harm the woman? If that were the case we ought to find Indian women to be in the best of health. Unfortunately it is just the contrary. It may be argued that the health of Indians in general is poor because of the low standard of living. There again the standard can not be improved unless there is education and full scope for making its use. That is why we can not afford to lose whatever advantage our nation can possibly derive from the equal intelligence of women along with men. If separate education is laid down for women, there would be no competition and in its absence education would not be as efficient. In their draft of Indian Woman's Charter of Rights and Duties, the All

* Whither Woman. Y. M. Rege p. 225.

† Ibid page 225-26.

India Women's Conference have rightly stressed this point of similar education for boys and girls. In clause (4) subclause (b) they demand in no hesitating voice.....

"There shall be no basic difference between the education of man and woman as their duties as citizens are the same".

This brings us to another point which the opposers of similar education often urge in support of their contention, i. e. about woman's mission in life. It is stated that woman's mission is quite different from that man. Her only function is to bring forth and rear children, to keep the home tidy and please her man on his return home. According to their idea men like Hitler direct women back to their homes in the interest of the nation. Is that really the mission of a woman? Superficially it appears to be so. But to a close, careful and impartial observer its fallacy is easily detectable. God created human beings men as well as women that they may, by their own exertions and use of talents improve the world and bring peace and happiness in it. Man and woman were to be supplementary and complementary to each other. At home and outside both are to have equal facilities, equal rights and equal duties and responsibilities. Man can not do without the co-operation of woman in the production of labour in any economic order. You go to fields and farms, factories and mills, in democratic or fascist, socialistic or capitalist order, woman's labour is found indispensable. In return men must also help women in their home duties and rearing of children. Mahatma Gandhi insisted on men sharing with women work in the common kitchen of the Ashram. The underlying principle is that the mission of life is common to both except the physical phenomenon of bearing and rearing children.

Society needs both; without either life is impossible. It is no use trying to raise the importance of one at the cost of the other.. Present day women, like a few of the past have shown their metal in various missions, Women like Mrs. Sarojini Naidu in literature, Mrs. Vijaya Laxmi Pandit in politics, Captain Laxmi in fighting forces, are a few names mentioned here as examples. Even science has claimed women like Madam Curie. After the death of her husband she continued her experiments and after years of hard and incessant work succeeded in giving radium in its pure state to the world. All these examples will clearly show to an unprejudiced eye that given equal chances and opportunities woman will be found the equal of man.

So far as the health of the educated women is concerned, my inquiry reveals that education-even higher and special-has not deteriorated their health. On the contrary, having broader outlook of life and more freedom and facilities for recreation, they look more cheerful and sprightly than their uneducated and secluded sisters. Even fecundity does not seem to have suffered on account of education. We cannot judge the fecundity by the number of children a woman has. An educated woman naturally and rightly thinks it better to have few intelligent and healthy children than to have dozen rickety and dull ones. Our common experience finds majority of illiterate women being troubled with frequent deliveries resulting in the utter ruin of their health.

The next question that attracts our attention is whether there should be co-education or separate education. The orthodox and ultra-conservative people strongly oppose co-education at any stage. But they forget the

fact that both men and women have to come together in future life not only as husband and wife but as co-worker in different fields. It is a well-known fact that if anything is deliberately kept away from a man, he becomes more curious about it than he would be if it is kept within his reach. It is, therefore, in the interest of all-concerned that boys and girls should be trained together without making any fuss over the sex distinction. If proper care is taken to instil sound moral principles in them and at the same time care is also taken to open their eyes to the pitfalls of young age, co-education is sure to do more good than harm. "Educational institutions are rightly looked upon as breeding ground of close friendships."* Besides it is in educational institutions that caste distinction is more conspicuous by its absence. It is in the nature of children more than of elderly people to come together without any prejudices. All India Women's Conference also have in their above referred to Charter demanded co-education.

As a part of the course of training boys and girls desirous of leading married life should be given special instructions how to make his or her married life a happy one. One year's course should be specially prescribed for girls in addition to the ordinary course, on the lines of mother-schooling in Nazi Germany. Particular attention must be paid to dietetics, house-keeping and Eugenics. U. S. A. too has such a course included in its programme of studies.

Higher education is not possible for all and sundry. Persons having capacity and special aptitude for it alone should go in for it. In that case why sex should be made

* Social Work and Sociology—Dr. G. S. Ghurye P. 9.

a barrier? Besides women taking higher education have not at any time given up their functions as a woman. One of the subjects of my inquiry, who is a lady doctor, informed me that in the course of her practice many educated women approached her for advise if they did not get any issue for a couple of years after marriage. After two or three issues these very women have sought her help for initiating them into the science of birth-control. Nor has such education affected adversely a woman. Out of 54 cases of marital disharmony as found by me in my investigation in only 2 cases the women were aducated. As I have stated in previous chapters even their health has not suffered on account of higher education. Educated employed women are in a better position to make proper adjustment of their employment with home duties than their partially educated sisters.

It will, therefore, be seen that if a girl is given education at least upto the time of marriage and if the education has an economic bias, she will be mentally equipped to face all the ups and downs of life. Of course to attain this object the State must strictly enforce Sarda Act. There even the age limit must be raised from 14 to 16 and 18 to 20 for girls and boys respectively. Such a demand was made by Indian National Social Conference long ago. (Vide Appendix A, Resolution No. 20). And moreover the State must make the basic education compulsory as already demanded by The All India Women's Conference in their Charter. The curriculum must include training a few easily available occupations which will serve the candidates in times of difficulties.

After taking education, it follows in the course of nature that a boy or a girl should enter the matrimonial

stage of life. Time old custom of making a selection of the bride and the bridegroom by the elders must necessarily now come to an end. It was all right when marriages were performed during childhood. But if the same custom is insisted when the parties are grown up boys and girls properly educated, sometimes the elders are brought into a ridiculous position. It is but in the fitness of things that girls not less than boys should feel a desire to select their life's partner. Of course their selection may be guided by their guardians.

The question will be how and where are the parties to know each other with a view to making their selection? As I have already pointed out in the results of my inquiry 74% of girls wishing to marry, want to make their own choice. But they complain of the absence of facilities to do so. In addition to educational institutions, a few centres may be opened under the supervision of some elderly men and women of good character to give opportunities to the intending parties to know each other. The responsibility will lie with the supervisors to watch these youngsters and take care that no undue advantage is taken. "There is a great need for centres, run under the supervision of highly educated men and women of character working as social workers, where young men and women can go in their leisure hours for pleasurable exercise and recreation, and can have facilities for increasing their knowledge. It is in such centres that they would be able to cultivate suitable acquaintances and form appropriate friendships, while spending their leisure hours in pleasurable and useful activity."* Such centres will incidently help to solve the problem of late marriages.

*. Social Work and Sociology—Dr. G. S. Ghurye P. 9 & 10.

Once the selection is made their union should not be hampered by such ill-conceived notions as caste, gotra, dowry or Pulla, or similar other customs. Even if there is a question of inter-caste marriages, time has now come when they should be encouraged for unification of Hindu irrespective of castes. Indian National Social Conference also is of the same opinion (Vide Appendix A Resolution No. 8). The States of Mysore and Travancore must be congratulated for having given a lead in that direction.

It is usual with Western people that after the parties make their own selection, they do not go in for marriage until they become sure of their financial position, the reason being to secure a decent home and standard of life for the couple and its issues. With Hindus, this idea was not of much importance because of joint family system. But now that the joint family is giving way to individual families, as only 33% of the women inquired by me, stay in joint family, it is but meet that the intending couple should first think of this economic problem if they wish to enjoy a happy life. Of course this question depends largely on the economic position of the country. Other factors which make or mar the happiness of the new family also deserve consideration. The husband and the wife should understand their responsibilities in life, which their education would make clear. Secondary position of the wife must go and she must be treated with due honour as equal partner and the mistress of the house. This will necessarily come to pass if she is not forced to be dependent on her husband as at present. If she is an earning factor, she must be given the full benefit of her income, If the home circumstances are such that she can not go out to earn, her work at home

requiring a good deal of sacrifice of her health and energy should be recognised not only in money but also in appreciation of her self-less attitude. In their Indian Woman's Charter of Rights and Duties the All India Women's Conference has, *inter alia*, demanded that "the woman who works in the home shall have a right to a part of husband's income to be used by her as she likes."* Undoubtedly this is a good demand. But the question will arise what that part is to be and who is to decide that point. Besides such allocation of a certain amount to the wife as remuneration, you may call it recognition if you will, will reduce her position to that of a mercenary person working in the house. Such a relation is bound to reflect on the sweet and tender relations that ought to exist between the husband and the wife. I would therefore like to suggest that the work of a woman as a home-maker be recognised by the State-better in some money allowance-while the appreciation in feeling and sympathy should come from the husband. This suggestion of mine is supported by Prof. K. T. Shah in his Principles of Planning, wherein it is suggested that "Domestic work of housewives must be acknowledged and remunerated as on a par with all other activities under the plan". Even the All India Women's Conference, I understand, is driving on the same lines when they demand that, "In any scheme of social insurance that Government may introduce for the benefit of the workers who work outside home ... the home-maker shall be included for the purposes of benefit". (vide Indian Women's Charter p. 12). The only difference is that they demand the contribution to the fund from the

* Draft of Indian Womans Charter of Rights and Duties clause VIII-A.

husband's income if wife has no separate income, instead of from the State. The underlying motive of my suggestion is that the most sacred relationship between husband and wife as partners in life should not be disturbed by introduction of mercenary ideas in any way. As in the old Vedic days and as advised by Kamandaki in *Malti Madhav* (Act VI) married life should be an ideal partnership of which the members-husband and wife-are to have equal rights and liabilities.

Where the woman is doing work outside home, she ought to be given all kind of help and convenience to carry out her duties efficiently both at home and outside. Here the State has to step in as this help has to be given on collective basis. General creches must be opened to enable the nursing mothers to leave their babies under able, kind and sympathetic care while they have to be away on their duties. This arrangement would keep their mind free of anxieties for their children and enable them to execute their duties with full attention on their work. Where the children are a little grown up, the State must provide them with Montessorie or Kindergarten schools.

Besides pre and ante-natal clinics along with birth-control clinics should be opened in every village to be within the reach of all women to render them necessary aid. There is a great controversy over the question of birth-control. I think it will not be advisable for me to enter into it here. No doubt self-control as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, is far superior to birth-control. But this self-control must come from both sides. Woman being open to maternity risks may be able to control herself whenever she thinks it necessary. The same kind

of control however, cannot be expected from an average man. Taking into consideration this human weakness the next best remedy of birth-control will be welcomed especially where eugenic considerations require it. The All India Women's Conference passed a resolution recommending birth-control. (Vide Appen.B.-Social.) The present system of woman delivering at home with the help of unqualified midwives is one of the reasons of high maternal mortality. The earlier it is stopped the better it is. The right method is to start maternity hospitals at least in every Taluka town. In this age of science, the use of modern appliances should be freely made to minimise the drudgery at home. "The home and the farm must be mechanised as much as the factory and the workshop; and men as well as women must be saved from mere drudgery in every case where mechanical or electrical energy can be a substitute for muscular effort".*

Marriage is after all a venture upon which the marrying parties embark with a hope of complete success. The marrying couple should realise that it is a happy but serious venture with all its risks and therefore each should try his or her best to accomodate the other. Of course, however pious our wishes may be there will be cases where a discordant note will be heard. For the benefit of such discordant family, advisory centres must be established rather by the State than by private bodies to give proper guidance.

Where the venture is a failure, that is where the husband expires leaving behind him a widow, she should not be rendered helpless. She must be provided with some kind of occupation which will bring her some in-

* Principles of Planning-K. T. Shah, p. 68.

come lest she be a burden on others. If education were made compulsory and if some kind of practical and convenient vocation were taught to women, a widow will not have to look up to others for help. Till that time vocational courses should be offered free to widows. Regarding her remarriage I have already dealt with that topic at length in a previous chapter. I need not cover the same ground again.

Let us now see how far laws can help our sisters. We have already seen how passing of such acts as Child Marriage Restraint Act and Hindu Widows' Rights to Property Act has helped Women by giving them some comforts and rights. Many more acts are still necessary. The Hindu Law Committee who have now drafted the Hindu Code unifying all the different schools in India, deserves attention from women's point of view. They have dealt with only those subjects which come within the power of the Central Government.

Amongst the many intricate points of Hindu Law, it deals with intestate succession, marriage and divorce, minority and guardianship and maintenance. We shall consider here only those suggestions of the Committee which concern women, other matters being outside the scope of the present thesis.

With regard to intestate succession, the Committee proposes to remove the sex disqualification and to abolish the Hindu woman's limited estate. Under the present law sex made all the difference in succession. The daughter was excluded in favour of the son. As a daughter she got maintenance and marriage expenses from father's family. After marriage only maintenance by her husband without getting any right over his property. Stridhan along with the property owned by her before marriage and her

personal gains during coverture is to be hers. But her power over it is limited in Bengal. It is however more liberal in Bombay and Madras. Under the proposed code the daughter gets half the share of a son in her father's property. That is balanced by the provision of the son getting half the share of his sister in his mother's Stridhan. I think this will only be a half measure. When the Committee is thinking of removing sex disqualification, I do not understand the reason of the halting and half-hearted step.

Since the passing of the Hindu Widows' Rights to Property Act 1937, a widow gets an equal share with her son and grandson in her husband's separate property. In joint family she is entitled to husband's interest in joint property and to claim partition. In both these cases she gets only a limited estate with all its implications. Under the new Code the nature of this ownership is changed from limited estate to absolute ownership.

Under the present law the widowed daughter-in-law is given a share in her father-in-law's property equally with the widow and the son. Now, that the Committee proposes to give a daughter a share in her father's property, they think it equitable to give only maintenance to her from her father-in-law's property. The daughter-in-law is now given a legal right to get maintenance from her father-in-law's estate if she does not get it from her husband's or son's estate. Before 1937 her right was only moral. In other words her father-in-law was morally bound to support her. By the proposed change this right will be legal.

About maintenance there is no appreciable change in the new Code. One thing to which attention may be

drawn is that provision should be made for education of daughter from her father's property similar to the provision for her marriage. During my inquiry I have actually come across a case where the daughter was not given education although the father had left ample money. (Vide ibid p. 91) Education in these days is as vital a necessity for daughters as for sons, since in these days of dire necessity both men and women may have to work to make both ends meet. My inquiry has actually shown that 67% women have sought gainful employment to help the family. So long as the State has not taken the responsibility of education, its provision has got to be made from individuals. The Code in short, "gives Hindu women the same rights of inheritance that Muslim women have enjoyed for ages, and Parsi women for several years, but less than those given to Christians by the Indian Succession Act, under which women take an equal share with their brothers in the father's property."*

The Code has not made any remarkable changes regarding minority and guardianship also. With regard to adoption too the Code has followed the lines of the existing law with a few changes so as to make it uniform all over India. The practice of adoption of dancing girls is abolished. I wish the Code had curtailed the rights of a father to give a son in adoption even without the consent of the mother.

Part IV of the Code relates to marriage and divorce, a very important point affecting every Hindu, man or woman, rich or poor. We have already seen in Ch. VIII

* The Draft Hindu Code - K. Shiva Rao. P. 12.

the evil effects of polygamy and what disaster it has wrought in many cases, women being always the sufferers. Year in and year out the educated and thinking bodies like Indian National Social Conference, All India Women's Conference and the Hindu Women's Rescue Home Society of Bombay have been clamouring for the abolition of polygamy. A great majority of the subjects of my inquiry has demanded the same thing. The Committee must be thanked for introducing monogamy into the Code which will surely bring a great relief to Hindu women. Another good thing they have done is the removal of caste and Gotra barriers. Part IV clause 6 of the draft Hindu Code states "no sacramental marriage shall, after it has been completed, be deemed to be or ever to have been invalid, merely by reason of one or more of the following causes, namely:—

- (a) that the parties to the marriage did not belong to the same caste;
- (b) that the parties belonged to the same Gotra or had a common Pravara; or
- (c) unless there was force or fraud, that the consent of the bride's guardian in marriage was not obtained.

The exit of the caste and Gotra restrictions which limit the field of Hindu marriage and handicap a proper choice of the mate, will be a happy augury for changed conditions of life. A reference to chapter IV of this thesis will bear out what I have said here.

Under the Code the marriage is of two kinds, sacramental and civil. The requisites for the former are five in all. The first one has already been dealt

with at length. The last one which requires obtaining of previous consent of bride's guardian in marriage if she has not completed her 16th year, is a desirable one. For the Sarda Act has not proved itself effective to prevent child marriages. The civil marriage under the Code can be contracted on the lines of Special Marriage Act of 1872. The difference is only with regard to succession. Under the old Act the succession was governed by Indian Succession Act while under the Code the succession is governed according to the rules laid down by the Code. This means that the parties contracting a civil marriage do not cease to be the members of Hindu community.

Under the Code decree of nullity of marriage may be obtained on the presentation of a petition to the District Court or High Court on the grounds of impotency, prohibited relationship, parties being Sapindas of each other, lunacy at the time of marriage, the existence of former husband or wife of either party their marriage being still in force and where the consent of a guardian was obtained by force or fraud.

The introduction of monogamy is by itself not sufficient to give the required relief to women. It would perhaps end in misery to both the parties. Polygamy was giving freedom to one party at least to get its satisfaction by marrying a second time where the first marriage did not prove to his liking. Monogamy will take away this liberty from man. To remedy this defect the Code very aptly suggests divorce under certain conditions. Just as in the case of a decree of nullity, an aggrieved party to a marriage by a petition to the District Court or High Court pray for dissolution of his or her marriage with the other on any one of the following grounds :—

- (1) incurable unsoundness of mind with not less than seven years of care and treatment ;
- (2) suffering from virulent and incurable form of leprosy not contracted from the petitioner ; or
- (3) desertion of the petitioner for a period of not less than seven years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition ; or
- (4) conversion to another religion ; or
- (5) suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form for not less than seven years and lastly,
- (6) if the husband has kept a concubine or if the wife is a concubine of any other man or leads a life of a prostitute.

I think the period of seven years thought by the Committee as necessary for obtaining a divorce is rather too long a period. I fail to understand the reason why even in such cases as incurable unsoundness of mind or venereal disease, the petitioner should be required to wait for such a long period. It is inflicting a punishment on the innocent party for no fault of his or hers. In my opinion three years period would be much reasonable and just sufficient. Venereal disease can easily be cured in much shorter time by modern methods of medical treatment.

No doubt all these grounds are very good by themselves. But from my personal experience during the present investigation I feel the necessity of one more ground that is of cruelty. As shown in Ch. VIII there are many cases where the husband's cruelty had gone to the length of cutting the nose or an ear or even threatening the life of his wife. In such cases to force the

woman to stay with her husband would be monstrous. In the fitness of things she ought to be allowed to divorce him. The Baroda State has appreciated this ground and has included it in its other grounds for divorce. Yet one more ground deserves consideration here.

Clause 2 of Sec. 30 of the draft Code requires a decree for a dissolution of marriage to be confirmed by the High Court. It is a very good check on people taking recourse to it freely. In this connection, I should like to say a few words here.

Before granting a final decree for the dissolution of marriage, the Court should be permitted wherever, in the light of the circumstances, it thinks fit to order the parties to be judicially separated for a period, of not more than six months, to enable them to be reconciled to each other. This order may be termed '*Decree Nisi*' which must be confirmed by final decree on an application by the petitioner. This point suggests itself to me because in a few cases wiser counsel has prevailed and reconciliation has been brought about after a short stay in Rescue Homes. This suggestion is made in good faith that the order for dissolution should not by its hurried application let go any chance of bringing parties together as far as possible. Such a provision will be essential if the ground of cruelty is included. Of course the wife must be given maintenance during this period of judicial separation. The functioning of the Advisory Boards, as suggested previously in some other connection, will help this process of reconciliation in a number of cases.

In cases where application for divorce is allowed and the dissolution of marriage is finally granted we will have to consider the position of the divorced woman. If the

State takes the above suggested step to make compulsory basic education with economic bias, women in whatever condition will be able to look after themselves. Only coupled with compulsory education the State must provide every person—man and woman—with fitting work and see that it is properly remunerated. But all this is to be in the order we earnestly wish to come into existence.

For the present, however, the condition of uneducated and for that matter of even a few educated who will not be having jobs at their calling will surely be a pitiable one. I would suggest that until the new order comes into force the court should order the husband to give his wife maintenance befitting her standard of life, were she not divorced, for no fault of hers during the period she has no suitable job or until she remarries.

Recently a bill is passed in the Central Legislatures granting separate residence and maintenance to a wife under certain conditions. Under the law as it stands to-day, as we know, if the husband insists the wife is forced to stay with husband, and if she refuses is not to be allowed maintenance. The new bill will certainly be a great relief to such wives for whom life with their husbands is worse than death by starvation.

There is a section of orthodox public that opposes divorce on the ground that it would be freely taken advantage of by men and women. This argument, I think, does not hold much water. For in those communities in India in which there exists such kind of provision there are not many cases of application for dissolution of marriage. The fear of disruption of family is simply baseless and not substantiated by facts where a

divorce is permitted. A few point their fingers to America in support of their contention against divorce. But even there people are enjoying family life to a large extent in a better manner than in India. "At all events, increasing divorce rates do not spell ruin to marriage. Far from being its enemy divorce is rather its saviour."* When love marriages come to be the order of the day no outside force will be much necessary to keep them together.

In Ch. X I have taken a review of the replies received to my questionnaire, and cases from Rescue Homes, previously analysed in Part I and Part II, to give an idea of the present social position of Hindu women^s I have also taken a comprehensive survey of status of Hindu women from Vedic Times. Incidentally I have touched the problem of womanhood in general to help us to grasp the problems fully. We have seen how the political and economic circumstances of the country influence the status of its women. All the same woman's problem has got its own peculiarities. The problems affecting Hindu women are much similar to those affecting the women of other countries. There are however special features of Hindu community which are not common to society in other countries; I mean, the caste system, the joint-family system, child marriages, restriction of remarriages etc, I have also pointed out various laws affecting Hindu women and the changes essential for the betterment of society. I have suggested and discussed reforms that in my humble opinion are in the interests of my sisters in general irrespective of class, or status. Let us take it for granted that all these reforms

* The Future of Marriage in Western Civilisation—Westermark P. 152.

and many others that may be found necessary are brought about giving women equality of status and freedom of action. What is it that women expect to achieve thereby? The same question was raised at the end of the chapter on Woman Movement and I will try to give its answer in these concluding pages of my thesis.

The French Revolution, as we have seen roused in women also the sense of freedom and equality. It has been the underlying idea of the fight carried on by the Woman Movement of the Western countries. We have also seen how Indian women with the help of educated and social minded men have struggled for their freedom since the beginning of this century. A question naturally arises in one's mind; are these women demanding freedom for freedom's sake and equality only to ape man? Before answering this question it must be admitted that the Indian Woman Movement is being carried on by educated rich and upper middle class women, the mass being still not much interested in it because of their all round backwardness. Let us now try to fathom the underlying motive of these pioneers of women. It was never their intention to give up entirely their natural mission as woman. The motherly instinct in woman is still uppermost even in the highly educated women. With very few exceptions, others do desire to go in for married life and become mothers. As has already been pointed out the only difference between them and other uneducated women is in their conception about the number and quality of children one should have. The uneducated is brought up to believe the bearing and rearing of children as her only mission. A cultured woman will only like to produce limited but healthy progeny which will best serve the country. But

this is not her only mission in the world. Being a human being, she yearns to take active part in the upward evolution and process of life. Imitating man is not the only goal before her. She wants to be an equal partner, an equal sharer, with man in all the ups and downs of life. It is not in the nature of woman to shirk work and sacrifice. Her main motive is to stop her exploitation at the hands of men, and be able to contribute her share in the future world policy. She is fully cognisant of the duties and responsibilities which devolve on her along with rights and freedom. We must not be deceived by a few who, being blinded by the freedom which they have obtained after a hundred and fifty years struggle, are, in the real sense of the word, aping man. We must know that this is a transition period from total subjection to full freedom and equality wherein some excesses are bound to occur. Besides she is not sure of her present position. She is afraid of being once again forced back to her home work in case of reappearance of any new Hitler or Mussolini. If she is assured of the stability of her present freedom she is sure to do her best in the interests of the mankind. For that purpose it is quite essential to have a stable and independent Government comprising the best from democratic and socialistic orders wherein no part of the nation—neither man nor woman—may be exploited, and wherein every individual, so long as one is able to work will be confident of getting work provided by the State according to his or her abilities with just and appropriate remuneration, and in case of infirmity of being provided with enough food to keep the body and soul together.

If this happy state of affairs comes about and women's household duties are recognised by the State and besides

the natural mission of sex, they are given labour with adequate remuneration, their exploitation by men as of yore or by themselves as in few cases at present will surely be avoided. As a matter of fact more than 50% of the female world is engaged in labour but it comprises mostly of women in the lower strata of the society. The upper middle class and the rich class are made to idle away their leisure in the false and fastidious ideas of their beauty and frailty. It is a matter of common knowledge that without work man or woman will never be happy.

To my mind I feel the only key to the solution of my Hindu sisters' present social position is to throw open to them all avenues of labour—not only menial, not only industrial, but even higher intellectual posts—after giving them the necessary education. They must be treated by men as human beings first, and as females next.

To my sisters, at the same time, I would like to point out that once men begin to treat them as suggested above they should not forget their responsibilities as females but side by side help society on its march towards peace and happiness.

In conclusion, I pray to God that He should give good sense, both to men and women, to behave as equals and co-operate with each other to bring peace and happiness to our beloved country and the world.

Questionnaire

SOCIAL POSITION OF HINDU WOMEN

N. B. :—Women answering these questions need not give their names and addresses. Information supplied will be kept strictly confidential. Full co-operation of educated women is solicited for this research.

(Mrs.) **C. A. Hate**, M. A.,
Research Assistant,
University Department of Sociology,
University of Bombay.

- 1 Birth-Date
- 2 Caste and Sub-caste
- 3 How far are you educated ?
 - (a) University examination ?
Year of the same.
 - (b) Any distinctions ?
- 4 Had you any definite aim in taking education ? If so, state it.
 - (a) Have you been able to achieve it ?
- 5 State accomplishments, if any.
- 6 If you are unmarried, do you intend to marry ?
 - (a) Will you make your own choice ? Please state the basis on which you will decide.

- (b) Are there any clubs or associations in which you can meet such a man ? If not, how do you hope to make your choice ?
- (c) Will you marry under the registration system ?
- (d) Or, the existing Hindu system ? State reasons.

7 If you are married,

- (a) Was it a marriage of your own choice ?

How did you meet your chosen partner ?

How long were you acquainted with him ?

Please give the basis of your choice.

- (b) Or, was it a marriage of arrangement ?

Do you think any other consideration than that of your happiness affected the selection ?

If so, state the considerations.

3 (a) Year of your marriage.

- (b) Year of the beginning of living with your husband.

- (c) Was any dowry given at the time of marriage ?

- 9 Do satisfactory relations exist between you and your husband ?
If not, state the points of difference or circumstances which cause dissatisfaction.
- 10 Are you widowed ? If so, when ?
(a) Do you intend to remarry ?
(b) Do you experience any disadvantages because of your widowhood ?
- 11 Is house-keeping in your hands ?
How much do you spend per month ?
- 12 Are you a mother ?
Give the number of children in their order of birth, stating their sex and the year of birth.
In the case of deceased children state the years of death also.
- 13 Are you a member of joint family ?
Do you like to stay in the joint family ?
State the number of people who constitute it and their relationship to you.
- 14 (a) Have you any property ?
(b) Have you any fixed income per year or per month ?

- (c) Is the life of your husband or yourself or of both insured ?
 - (d) What is your 'Stridhan' ?
- 15 Are you gainfully employed ?
- (a) Why ?
 - (b) What is your salary or wages ?
 - (c) Kind of work.
 - (d) Conditions of work.
 - (e) Hours of work.
 - (f) Are there satisfactory relations between you and your employers ?
 - (g) Do you get any advantages or suffer disadvantages because of sex ?
- 16 If you are not gainfully employed, do you attend to any work outside your household duties ?
If so, state the nature of the work and the hours you spend in that work.
- 17 Do you find any difficulty in managing your household because of your work outside home? What arrangements have you made for the management of your household work ?

- What arrangements have you made for looking after your children?
- 18 Do you manage to make any monthly savings?
 - 19 Have you any dependants?
Give their relationship to you.
 - 20 If not working now, were you working before?
Do you feel any hardships because you are not employed in gainful occupation?
 - 21 Do you generally enjoy good health? If not, what is the complaint?
 - 22 (a) What is your weight and height?
(b) What is your usual diet?
(c) What exercise do you take?
(d) Are you interested in games?
(e) What is your usual recreation?
 - 23 What is your daily routine?
(a) How much leisure do you get daily?
(b) How do you spend it?
 - 24 Are you a member of any club or an association?
If so, give its name, aims and objects?

25 Are you satisfied with your present condition in life ?

If not, what are the causes of dissatisfaction ?

What change do you desire ?

26 What is your aim or purpose in life ?

27 Do you desire any changes in the condition of Hindu Women in general ?

If so, state them and the method by which you think they can best be achieved.

28 Do you wish to get the Hindu Law of Marriage changed in order :

(a) to make marriage monogamous ?

(b) to provide for divorce ?

(c) to get some inheritance for daughter ?

(d) to get some inheritance for wife ?

General Remarks :—

APPENDIX A.

Important resolutions concerning women passed in different sessions of Indian National Social Conference held from 1887 to 1917.

1. Resolution I, Third Conference, Bombay, 1889
I. N. S. C. : That in the opinion of this Conference, the distinction made by the Penal Code, between the general age of consent (12 years) laid down in Section 90 and the special age prescribed in Clause 5 and the exception in Section 375, is both unnecessary and indefensible, and that with a view to prevent early completion of marriages, which leads to impairment of physical health of both husband and wife, to the growth of a weakly progeny, cohabitation before the wife is 12 years old should be punishable as a criminal offence, and that every effort should be made by awakening public conscience to the grave dangers incurred to postpone the completion of marriage till the age of 14 at least, as being in accordance with the dictates of our ancient medical works and modern science, and countenanced by the approved sentiment and practice of the country that every member, joining any of the Social Reform Associations connected with this Conference should be asked to pledge himself, not to complete in his own case or in the case of his children, who are minors, any marriages before the bride completes her 14th year.
2. Resolution I, Fifth Conference, Nagpur, 1891
I. N. S. C. : Having regard to the conflicting decisions of Indian Courts regarding the validity

of the custom of receiving money in consideration of giving a girl in marriage, and to the widespread prevalence of the custom, and being convinced that such a custom is against the spirit of Hindu Law, and is immoral and injurious to the interests of society, this Conference recommends all Social Reform Associations to join together in one effort to denounce and discourage the said custom, and ensure that in case moneys are received by the father or guardian of the girl, the same shall be held as a trust in the interests of the girl, and the trust duly enforced.

3. Resolution No. 7, Sixth Conference, Allahabad, 1892 I. N. S. C.: That the disfigurement of child-widows, before they attain the age of 18 and even after that age, without the consent of the widow recorded in writing before a Panch and a Magistrate be discouraged, and caste organizations be formed to arrange for social penalties to be inflicted on those who aid in disfiguring child-widows without their consent. (Repeated in 12th Conference 1899, 16th Conference 1902, 17th Conference 1903, 18th Conference 1904 and 22nd Conference 1908).
4. Resolution I, Tenth Conference, Calcutta, 1896 I. N. S. C.: That in the opinion of the Conference the permanent progress of our society is not possible without a further spread of female education and that the best way is (i) to proceed on national lines by employing in female schools, female teachers of good character and descended from respectable Hindu families, (ii) to establish

training schools to secure a sufficient number of qualified female teachers, (iii) to open home classes for grown-up ladies who cannot attend regular schools with extra female teachers to visit and help, at stated intervals, such ladies as read at their homes, (iv) to employ Pundits versed in Sanskrit to read passages from Puranas, and impart religious and moral instruction to ladies, (v) to take steps to publish text-books suited to the requirements of female schools, and (vi) to impart instruction in needle work, hygiene, culinary art, domestic economy, and training of children in secondary schools. (Repeated every year from 12th Conference 1899 to 30th Conference 1916).

5. Resolution X, Tenth Conference, Calcutta, 1896 I. N. S. C.: That, in the opinion of the Conference, it is desirable not to discourage the remarriage of child-widow, when their parents or guardians wish to give them in marriage according to the Hindu Shastras. (Repeated at every Conference from 12th Conference 1899 to 30th Conference 1916).
6. Resolution VII, Eleventh Conference, Amraoti, 1897 I. N. S. C.: That the experience of the last 40 years' working of the Widow Marriage Act of 1856 has, in the opinion of the conference, established the fact that the Act fails to secure to the remarrying widow the full enjoyment of her rights in the following respects:—First, that such widow is made to forfeit her life-interest in her husband's immoveable property for doing a lawful act when such forfeiture would not have resulted if she had

misconducted herself; secondly, that even in respect of Stridhan proper, over which her power of disposal is absolute, there is a general impression that she loses proprietary rights over her moveables in favour of her husband's relations, who otherwise could not have interfered with her free disposal of the same; thirdly, in many cases, she and her second husband are not only ex-communicated but the right of worship in public temples has been denied to them, and no relief has been given to them in the Civil Courts; fourthly, in some parts of the country, she is subjected to disfigurement before she has arrived at the age of majority without any freedom being given to her to exercise her choice. In all these respects the law of 1856 has proved inoperative to protect her, and the Conference is of opinion that steps should be taken by the Social Reform Associations who favour such reform to adopt remedies to relax the stringency of caste usages, and to secure a reconsideration of the principles of the Act with a view to remedy its defects.

7. Resolution XVI, Eleventh Conference, Amraoti, 1897 I. N. S. C. : That as the law at present stands, there is apparently no protection to a widow or an unmarried girl above twelve or below sixteen who is a consenting party to an act of personal dishonour at the hands of strangers. In the opinion of the Conference the consent of such a girl between twelve and sixteen should, as in the case of kidnapping be held to be inoperative to protect the man who violates her honour.

8. Resolution XII, Twelfth Conference, Madras, 1899 I. N. S. C. : The Conference notes with pleasure that during the course of the year, five inter-marriages between persons belonging to different provinces have taken place, and some progress has been made in Guzerath, the Punjab, and the Central Provinces in promoting inter-marriages between sub-castes. This reform has the advantage of being sanctioned by the support of several ecclesiastical authorities, and is one which is urgently needed by small communities. The Conference, therefore trusts that more vigorous efforts will be made by the Social Reform Associations to give effect to this desirable improvement. (Repeated every year from 13th Conference 1899 to 30th Conference 1916).
9. Resolution IX, Fourteenth Conference, Lahore, 1900 I. N. S. C. : (a) The Conference notes with satisfaction that most of the reports received from the various Provinces furnish evidence that earnest efforts are being made to raise the marriageable age of boys and girls, to prevent the exaction of large sums of money, and to curtail expenditure on marriage occasions. It is, however, obvious that there is great room for improvement until the age is raised to at least 12 to 14 for girls and 15 to 21 for boys, and the Conference accordingly recommends that Local Associations formed for the promotion of Marriage Reform should not slacken their efforts until the standard laid down by the Walterkrit Rajput Hitakarini Sabha and acted upon by most of the Rajput States in that Agency and Malva has become the rule with all castes

throughout India, and the scales of expenditure laid down by the same organizations are accepted as the maxima limits.

(b) In the opinion of the Conference the sale of girls in marriage, ill-assorted marriages, polygamous marriages and exchange or Badla marriages are all opposed to the spirit of the Shastras and are abuses of the institution of marriage tending to degrade the marriage-tie, and the Conference recommends that strenuous efforts should be made by Reform Sabhas and Associations to discourage these abuses- (Repeated in 14th Conference 1900, 19th Conference 1905, 20th Conference 1906, 25th Conference 1911, 29th Conference 1915, 30th Conference 1916).

10. Resolution V, Fourteenth Conference, Lahore, 1900
I. N. S. C.: The Conference notes with pleasure that there is a general agreement in all Provinces about the desirability of promoting the cause of purity, and of discouraging the practice of giving Nautch parties, and it learnt with satisfaction that earnest efforts are being made in this direction in several places such as Lahore, Bellary, Mangalore and others. There is, however, considerable room for improvement everywhere, & the Conference is of opinion that the necessity of stricter observance of personal purity in speech, thought and action should be insisted on by every Association in the pledge of membership as a matter which can admit of no compromise, and that the use of Nauch girls in religious services and social parties and processions and abuses of the Holi be checked everywhere and more innocent entertainments substituted in

their place. (Repeated in 14th Conference 1900
27th Conference 1913, 28th Conference 1914).

11. Resolution VI, Fifteenth Conference, Bengal, 1901 I. N. S. C. : This Conference notes with satisfaction the steady decline of polygamy in the country, and recommends the adoption of measures which would accelerate the disappearance of Kulinism, an institution for which there is no precedent or parallel in other parts of the country.
12. Resolution XII, Fifteenth Conference, Bengal, 1901 I. N. S. C. : This Conference notes with satisfaction the advance made in the raising of the marriageable age for boys and girls, and hopes that the efforts made in this direction would be steadily continued.
13. Resolution IV, Sixteenth Conference, Ahmedabad, 1902 I. N. S. C. : This Conference rejoices that according to the returns of the recent census, the age of marriage both for boys and girls has shown a decided tendency to rise in many parts of the country, and would impress on all social reform bodies and advocates to make use of this favourable opportunity to press forward this most important item of the social reform programme, by endeavouring to raise the marriage age of girls to 16 and boys to 20.
14. Resolution VI, Sixteenth Conference, Ahmedabad, 1902 I. N. S. C. : This Conference wishes once again to place on record its condemnation of the practice of extravagant expenditure on marriage, whether in the shape of a payment for the bride or the bridegroom or in feasts and entertainments:

and hopes that the good sense of the community will co-operate with the efforts of Social Reform Associations to mitigate this crying evil. (Repeated in 17th Conference 1903, 18th Conference 1904, 20th Conference 1906, 27th Conference 1913, 29th Conference 1915 and 20th Conference 1916).

15. Resolution XIV, Sixteenth Conference, Ahmedabad, 1902 I. N. S. C. : This Conference begs to put on record its opinion that the custom of Zenana is of a pernicious character in that it affects prejudicially the physical and mental development of women and the Conference desires all sympathisers of Social Reform to do their best to foster and promote public opinion against the custom in those parts of the country and in those classes in which it is prevalent. (Repeated in 17th Conference 1903, 18th Conference 1904, 20th Conference 1906, 27th Conference 1913, 29th Conference 1915 and 30th Conference 1916).
16. Resolution XV, Sixteenth Conference, Ahmedabad, 1902, I. N. S. C. : This Conference deplores the custom which obtains in certain parts of the country of the beating of breasts by women in public streets on occasions of death, and desires that earnest efforts should be made to stop this unseemly practice. Repeated (in 17th-Conference 1903).
17. Resolution XI, Twenty-Second Conference, Madras 1908, I. N. S. C. : This Conference cordially supports the movement started to better the condition of orphans by starting orphanages and otherwise and noting with satisfaction the movement started to

protect girls & young women from being dedicated to temples, prays for public sympathy and support of these movements.

18. Resolution V, Twenty-Third Conference, Lahore, 1909, I. N. S. C. : This Conference invites all communities concerned to give their earnest attention to ameliorate the condition of Hindu Widows by placing no obstacle in the way of their remarriage or providing them with educational facilities and Widows' Homes so that they may become better qualified than now to be Sisters of Mercy and useful and respected members of society. (Repeated in 29th Conference 1915).
19. Resolution VII-Act III of 1872-Twenty-Fourth Conference, Allahabad, 1910 I. N. S. C. : That this Conference is of opinion that the requirements of Act III of 1872, or repudiation of religious belief on the part of parties to marriage, is unnecessary and inexpedient and urges that the law be so amended as to omit this undue interference with religious beliefs.
20. Resolution III, Twenty-Sixth Conference, Bankipore, 1912 I. N. S. C. : That this Conference records its deliberate opinion that the minimum marriageable age for girls should be raised to 16 and for men 25 years to afford them opportunities for their physical and intellectual development. (Repeated in 27th Conference 1913).
21. Resolution V, Twenty-Seventh Conference, Karachi, 1913 I. N. S. C. : That this Conference, places on record its deep gratitude to the Government of India for introducing into the Imperial Legislative

Council a measure for the better protection of minor girls and recommends that, in order to widen the scope and increase the usefulness of this piece of legislation, the following alterations be made therein before it passes into a law :—

- (i) The words "unlawful and immoral purpose" in clause 2 of the Bill should read as "unlawful or immoral".
 - (ii) Explanation 2 to clause 3 of the Bill should be "illicit sexual intercourse without lawful marriage."
 - (iii) A new clause should be added, raising the age of consent from 12 to 16 as against all persons except the husbands by lawful wedlock in as much as enlightened public opinion of the Indian community is in favour of the reform.
22. Resolution VII, Twenty-Seventh Conference, Karachi, 1913 I. N. S. C. : That this Conference recommends that the Government of India be approached with a request to pass a permissive and not compulsory law enabling a Hindu marriage to be registered and declaring such registered marriages to be monogamous.*

* Taken from the Reports of the Indian National Social Conference.

APPENDIX B

Abstract of important resolutions passed at various sessions of the All India Women's Conference from 1927 to 1945.

1. Educational

A. PRIMARY EDUCATION

Free and compulsory primary education for girls as well as for boys by Local Bodies. Suggestions to make it efficient ; scale of salary of the primary teachers to be raised, well ventilated buildings to be provided for schools, properly trained teachers especially women teachers in earlier stages of education as far as possible, good text books relating to psychology and environment of the child, midday meal in the poorer districts, kindergarten, Montessori classes for pre-school children, stress to be laid on training in handicraft.

The Conference protested against the omission of girls from any scheme of compulsory education.

B. SECONDARY EDUCATION

Vernacular to be the medium of instruction; English, Hindi or Urdu to be compulsory; education for girls to be remodelled so as to include optional subjects such as Home Craft, Home Nursing, First Aid, Dietetics, Needle Craft, Cookery, Laundry, one of them at least being made compulsory.

C. COLLEGE EDUCATION

Fine Arts, Advanced Domestic Science, Journalism, Social Science, Architecture should be added as optionals to the present curricula.

Special encouragement should be given to women students to study Law, Medicine, Fine Arts and Social Science.

D. TRAINING

The Conference felt the necessity for trained teachers and suggested ways and means for the same. (Vide Report of XV Session p. 128).

GENERAL

The Conference felt the necessity of literacy, mass and adult education. Introduction of Sargent Scheme.

The conference recommended co-education and requested Allahabad and Benares Hindu Universities to remove the bar against co-education.

Parental co-operation with the teachers should be secured.

II. Social

The Conference supported Child Marriage Restraint Act and advocated registration of marriages and births.

The Conference decided to form Sarda Committees to prevent, and to bring to light, breaches of the Law.

The Conference demanded that the age of consent be raised to 16 and 18 for married and unmarried girls respectively.

Polygamy was strongly disapproved by the Conference.

The Conference placed on record its opinion that there should be complete equality between the sexes in the matter of inheritance and control of property. It

strongly protested against the existing discriminations in Hindu Law against the rights of women and demanded that existing laws be so amended as to make them just and equitable.

The Conference suggested that Hindu Law be amended to make monogamy compulsory; custody of the child be given to the mother unless there is just cause for withholding the same; age of marriage be raised to 16 for girls and 20 for boys.

The Conference condemned enforced seclusion of women.

The Conference recommended compulsory registration of Dais and midwives.

The Conference supported the establishment of birth-control clinics.

The Conference demanded adequate representation on Legislative and Local Bodies and urged that sex should be no bar for Government service.

The Conference asked for direct election and disapproved of separate electorates for women and non-reservation of seats on a communal basis.

The Conference strongly urged the Government to take steps to stop the immoral traffic of women and children.

The Conference was of opinion that Children Acts to be introduced in Provinces and States where they do not exist; that untouchability to be removed by passing laws and by opening the temples to so called untouchables.

The Conference supported indigenous industries and advocated use of Swadeshi goods, in particular Khaddar.

The Government was requested to bring in prohibition and to discourage the use of opium and other harmful drugs.

The Conference emphatically protested against obscene literature appearing in newspapers & magazines; It appealed to Government to take drastic steps to put down this demoralising aspect of the Press.

III. LABOUR

In view of the fact that a large number of women were employed in factories the Conference urged the following measures for their welfare: employment of a woman doctor, woman inspectress, establishments of creches and nursery schools, provision of healthy dwelling houses and play grounds; maternity benefit legislations. No child under 14 to be permitted to work in factories.

The Conference while advocating the introduction and passing of Maternity Benefits Acts, regretted that their application led to unemployment amongst women labourers. The authorities concerned were requested to look this matter in a human rather than in a mercenary spirit and to so frame provisions as to eliminate results then obtaining.

The Conference condemned the action of the Government of India in withdrawing the prohibition of women to work underground in the coal mines in India and urged upon the Government to restore the ban immediately.

GENERAL

The Conference protested against wars of aggression and earnestly hoped for the establishment of a permanent world-peace.

The Conference urged women to bring about communal harmony.

Food situation also attracted the attention of the Conference.

While keeping itself aloof from party politics the Conference demanded India's Independence by passing the following resolution :

"This Conference feels that the question of Indian Independence cannot be delayed any longer and that the prevailing distress and chaos in the country can only be surmounted by the transfer of complete power to the Indian people and the establishment of the National Government enjoying the full confidence of all. It is also of the opinion that the constitution-making body as envisaged by the British Government cannot be a truly representative body, elected as it will be on a very restricted franchise, and therefore demands that the Constituent Assembly be elected on adult franchise with full sovereign powers which alone can frame a democratic constitution for a free India'".

APPENDIX C (*Giving Tables*)

Table No. 1

(*Showing castes and sub-castes of women*)

| | | | |
|---------------------|-----|---------------------|------------|
| 1 Chitpavan Brahmin | 183 | 21 Vaishya | 4 |
| 2* Saraswat .. | 100 | 22 Deorukhe Brahmin | 3 |
| 3 Brahmins | 84 | 23 Kapol Bania | 3 |
| 4 Deshastha Brahmin | 53 | 24 Bhargav Brahmin | 2 |
| 5 Chandraseniya | | 25 Brahma Kshatriya | 2 |
| Kayastha Prabhu | 49 | 26 Lohana | 2 |
| 6 Maratha | 43 | 27 Vanjari | 2 |
| 7 Somavanshiya | | 28 Koli | 2 |
| Kahatriya Pathare | 38 | 29 Lad Vania | 2 |
| 8 Daiwadnya Brahmin | 37 | 30 Lad Bania | 2 |
| 9 Karhade Brahmin | 29 | 31 Audhich Brahmin | 2 |
| 10 Pathare Prabhu | 29 | 32 Lingayat | 2 |
| 11 Bania | 23 | 33 Anavil Brahmin | 1 |
| 12 Bhandari | 14 | 34 Vania | 1 |
| 13 Kasar | 10 | 35 Patel | 1 |
| 14 Jain | 8 | 36 Agari | 1 |
| 15 Pathare | 7 | 37 Khatri | 1 |
| 16 Vaish Vani | 7 | 38 Panchal | 1 |
| 17 Dash Vania | 7 | 39 Brahmo | 3 |
| 18 Shimpi | 6 | 40 No Caste | 32 |
| 19 Nagar Brahmin | 5 | | |
| 20 Adya Gaud .. | 4 | Total | <u>805</u> |

Table No. 2

(Showing aim in taking education & success at it)

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| Aim : Economic independence | ... | 217 |
| Successful in getting economic independence as being employed in gainful occupation | ... | 66 |
| Not successful | ... | 65 |
| Preparing | ... | 86 |
| No aim of economic independence but earning | ... | 81 |
| Aim : Culture | ... | 111 |
| Aim : Liking for education | ... | 35 |
| Aim : Social work | ... | 33 |
| Successful in doing social work | ... | 20 |
| Partially successful | ... | 13 |
| Aim : Utilise time | ... | 15 |
| Aim : Help family | ... | 12 |
| Successful in helping family | ... | 6 |
| Women supporting dependants | ... | 66 |
| Not successful in helping family | | 6 |
| Aim : Serve Literature | ... | 3 |
| Aim : Compose Poetry | ... | 2 |
| Aim : Educate Children | ... | 2 |
| Aim : Secure educated husband | ... | 2 |
| No Aim | ... | 63 |
| Not answered the question | ... | 104 |

Table No. 3

(Giving accomplishments of the women)

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Sewing | 223 |
| 2. Embroidery | 96 |
| 3. Music or playing on musical instruments | 68 |
| 4. Painting or Drawing | 54 |
| 5. Swimming | 17 |
| 6. Nursing | 9 |
| 7. Proficiency in Hindi | 5 |
| 8. Photography | 3 |
| 9. Proficiency in games | 3 |
| 10. Typing | 3 |
| 11. Driving | 3 |
| 12. Dancing | 2 |
| 13. Girls' Guide | 2 |
| 14. Riding | 2 |
| 15. Training for social work | 1 |
| 16. Toy-making | 1 |
| 17. Paper-work | 1 |
| 18. Acting | 1 |
| 19. Miscellaneous | 15 |
| 20. Not given any accomplishment | 415 |

Table No. 4

(Showing average age of unmarried girls)

| | | |
|--|-------|----|
| General average age | ..... | 24 |
| Chitpavan Brahmin | ..... | 22 |
| Brahmin |, | 21 |
| Saraswat Brahmin |, | 22 |
| Deshastha Brahmin | ..... | 22 |
| Daiwadnya ,, |, | 22 |
| Karhade ,, | ..... | 22 |
| Maratha | ..... | 21 |
| Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu ... | ..... | 24 |
| Somawanshiya Kshatriya | ..... | 28 |
| Pathare Prabhu | ..... | 27 |
| Bania | ..... | 24 |
| No caste | ..... | 29 |

Table No. 5

| | Year of marriage | Year of living with husband | Dowry given | Dowry not given |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Daiwadnya | 17 | 17.5 | 2 | 26 |
| Maratha | 16 | 16 | 2 | 17 |
| Karhade | 16 | 16.5 | 8 | 11 |
| Chandraseniya Kayastha— Prabhu ... | 19 | 19 | 9 | 14 |
| Somvanshiya Kshatriya— Pathare ... | 20 | 20 | 1 | 7 |
| Pathare— Prabhu ... | 19.5 | 19.5 | 4 | 7 |
| Bania | 16 | 16.5 | — | 7 |
| Kshatriya | 21 | 21 | 13 | 2 |
| No Caste | 21 | 21.5 | 3 | 12 |
| Vaishvanee | 14 | 14 | — | — |
| Kasar | 14 | 14 | 1 | 5 |
| Bhandari | 14 | 14 | — | 6 |
| Educated — women ... | 21 | 21 | 16 | 53 |

* In one case Palla was given,

Table No. 6

(Showing Stridhan of women)

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| No. of Married women | 542 | |
| No. of women having - | | |
| Stridhan | 334 | 61% of the total married |
| No. of women having - | | women. |
| Stridhan in Cash .. | 137 | |
| Maximum Cash | Rs.20,000 | |
| Minimum Cash | Rs. 125 | |
| Average Cash | Rs. 2,642 | |
| No. of women having | | |
| Stridhan in gold ... | 128 | |
| Maximum Tolas | 150 | |
| Minimum Tolas | 2 | |
| Average Tolas | 19 | |
| No. of women having | | |
| Stridhan in Shares ... | 1 | |
| No. of women having | | |
| Stridhan in ornaments | 69 | |
| No. of women having no | | |
| Stridhan | 208 | 39% |

Table
(Giving details about

| Kind of work | No. of women | Average salary or income | Maximum salary or income | Minimum salary or income |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Secondary teachers | 44 | 84.5 | 300 | 35 |
| Primary " | 42 | 58 | 150 | 26 |
| Physical instructors | 3 | 80 | 100 | 40 |
| Sewing teachers | 3 | 14 | 20 | 10 |
| Music " | 1 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Private tutors | 5 | 15 | 20 | 10 |
| Head Mistresses : S. S. | 1 | 160 | 160 | 160 |
| " " P. S. | 1 | 59 | 59 | 59 |
| Lecturers | 3 | 100 | 150 | 75 |
| Research workers | 2 | 125 | 150 | 100 |
| Superintendents | 1 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Secretary | 1 | 500 | 500 | 500 |
| Administrator | 1 | 170 | 170 | 170 |
| Doctors | 8 | 283 | 500 | 50 |
| Nurses | 4 | 80 | 200 | 35 |
| Matron | 1 | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| Demonstrator | 1 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Clerks | 8 | 96 | 160 | 50 |
| Typists | 2 | 73 | 96 | 50 |
| Supervisors | 2 | 227 | 380 | 75 |
| Saleswoman | 1 | 35 | 35 | 35 |
| Insurance agents | 2 | 12 | 15 | 10 |
| Artist | 1 | Not Definite | ... | ... |
| Labour investigators | 2 | 162 | 200 | 125 |
| Leather worker | 1 | 23 | 23 | 23 |
| Managing a mess | 1 | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| Literacy teacher | 1 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Sepoy | 2 | 28 | 30 | 27 |
| Ayah | 1 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Cooks | 6 | 15 | 20 | 8 |
| Total | 152 | | 500 | 8 |

No. 7
women's employments)

| Hours of work | Satisfac- tory rela- tions with employer | Not satisfac- tory | Advan- tages | Disadvantages |
|---------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| 6 | yes | .. | 4 | 10 |
| 6 | yes | .. | 3 | 5 |
| 6 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 3 | - | .. | .. | .. |
| 3 | - | .. | .. | .. |
| 2 | - | .. | .. | .. |
| 6 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 6 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 3 | yes | .. | .. | Less pay, no rise |
| Not fixed | yes | .. | .. | Overwork |
| Not fixed | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 8 and more | yes | .. | .. | Prejudice against women |
| Sole time | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 6 | yes | .. | yes | 3 Women find disadvan- tage |
| 6 to 7 | - | .. | .. | .. |
| 24 | - | yes | .. | yes |
| 3 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 7 | - | .. | 2 yes | 1 yes |
| 7 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 7 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 6 | yes | .. | yes | .. |
| Not fixed | - | .. | .. | yes |
| 6 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 7 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 8 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| ... | - | .. | .. | .. |
| 2 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 9 | yes | .. | .. | .. |
| 10 | .. | .. | .. | yes |
| 10 | yes | .. | .. | yes |

APPENDIX D

Regulations and important Acts passed affecting Hindu women since the advent of the British in India.

1833 Regulation prohibiting Satee.

1856 The Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act: This Act legalizes the remarriage of Hindu widows.

1872 Special Marriage Act as amended in 1923 provides that marriages may be celebrated before a Registrar between persons each of whom professes one or other of the following religions, that is to say, the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh or Jain religion.

1874 Married Women's Property Act : This Act makes provision for the enjoyment of wages and earnings by married women and for insurance on lives by married persons.

Earnings and wages of married women to be their separate property.

Section 6 provides simpler method which dispenses with the necessity of a regular trust-deed, but creates a natural Trust in favour of the assurde's wife and children. It forms no part of the estate of the deceased and can not be made available for the benefit of the creditors.

1927 The Indian Limitation (Amendment) Act 1 Section 3 (a) an acknowledgment signed, or a payment (of interest or part payment) made in respect of any liability, by, or by the duly authorised agent of, any widow or other limited owner of property who is governed by the Hindu law, shall be a valid

acknowledgment or payment, as the case may be as against a reversioner succeeding to such liability:

1929 Child Marriage Restraint Act as amended in 1938.
Definition. 2. In this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context,—

- (a) "child" means a person who, if a male, is under 18 (eighteen) years of age, and if a female, is under 14 (fourteen) years of age;
- (b) "child marriage" means a marriage to which either of the contracting parties is a child.
- (c) "contracting party" to a marriage means either of the parties whose marriage is or is about to be thereby solemnised; and
- (d) "minor" means a person of either sex who is under eighteen years of age.

Punishment for male adult below twenty-one years of age marrying a child.

3. Whoever, being a male above eighteen years of age and below twenty one, contracts a child marriage shall be punishable with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees.

Punishment for male adult above twenty-one years of age marrying a child.

4. Whoever, being a male above twenty-one years of age contracts a child-marriage shall be punishable with simple imprisonment which may extend to one month, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both.

5. Whoever performs, conducts or directs any child marriage shall be punishable with simple imprisonment which may extend to one-month, or with fine which may

Punishment for solemnising a child marriage.

extend to one thousand rupees, or with both, unless he proves that he has reason to believe that the marriage was not a child marriage.

6. (1) Where a minor contracts a child marriage, any person having charge of the minor whether as parent or guardian or in any other capacity, lawful or unlawful, who does any act to promote the marriage or permits it to be solemnised, or negligently fails to prevent it from being solemnised, shall be punishable with simple imprisonment which may extend to one month, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both : provided that no woman shall be punishable with imprisonment.

(2) For the purpose of this section, it shall be presumed, unless and until the contrary is proved, that where a minor has contracted a child marriage, the person having charge of such minor has negligently failed to prevent the marriage from being solemnised.

7. Notwithstanding anything contained in section 25 of the General Clauses Act, 1897, or section 64 of the Indian Penal Code, a Court sentencing an offender under Section 3 shall not be competent to direct that, in default of payment of the fine imposed, he shall undergo any term of imprisonment.

1929 Hindu Law of Inheritance (Amendment) Act :
This Act extends to whole of British India but it applies only to persons who, but for the passing of this Act, would have been subject to the law of Mitakshara in respect of the provisions herein

enacted, and it applies to such persons in respect only of the property of males not held in coparcenary and not disposed of by will.

2. A son's daughter, daughter's daughter, sister, and sister's son shall, in the order so specified, be entitled to rank in the order of succession next after a *father's father* and before a father's brother.

Provided that a sister's son shall not include a son adopted after the sister's death.

1937 The Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act as amended in 1938.

2. Notwithstanding any rule of Hindu Law or custom to the contrary, the provision of section 3 shall apply where a Hindu dies intestate.
3. (1) When a Hindu governed by the Dayabhaga School of Hindu law dies intestate leaving any property, and when a Hindu governed by any other school of Hindu law or by customary law dies intestate leaving separate property, his widow, or if there is more than one widow all his widows together, shall, subject to the provisions of sub-section (3), be entitled to the property in respect of which he dies intestate to the same share as a son :

Provided that the widow of a predeceased son shall inherit in like manner as a son if there is no son surviving of such predeceased son, and shall inherit in like manner as a son's son if there is surviving a son or son's son of such predeceased son;

Provided further the same provision shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the widow of a predeceased son of a predeceased son.

(2) When a Hindu governed by any school of Hindu law other than the Dayabhaga school or by customary law dies having at the time of his death an interest in a Hindu joint family property, his widow shall, subject to the provisions of subsection (3), have in the property the same interest as he himself had.

(3) An interest devolving on a Hindu widow under the provisions of this section shall be the limited interest known as a Hindu Woman's Estate, provided however that she shall have the same right of claiming partition as a male owner.

(4) The provisions of this section shall not apply to an estate which by a customary or other rule of succession or by the terms of the grant applicable thereto descends to a single heir or to any property to which the Indian Succession Act, 1925, applies.

1942. The above Act was made applicable to agricultural property also in the Bombay Province by the Bombay Government.

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